

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Monday, September 13, 1993**

8:00 p.m.

Date: 93/09/13

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

MR. SPEAKER: Please be seated.

head: **Consideration of His Honour
head: the Lieutenant Governor's Speech**

Moved by Mr. Severtson:

That an humble address be presented to His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor as follows:

To His Honour the Honourable Gordon Towers, Lieutenant Governor of the province of Alberta:

We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.

Moved by Mr. Decore that the motion be amended by the addition of the following words: but that the Assembly condemns the government for failing to develop a comprehensive fiscal plan which presents proper budgetary and human service priorities, since the most severe budget cuts made by this government have been extracted from Albertans who form the most unfortunate and vulnerable sectors of society, such as children, the poor, and the disabled.

[Adjourned debate September 10: Mr. Day]

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Fort McMurray. [some applause]

MR. GERMAIN: I notice, Mr. Speaker, that I don't get as much applause as some of the members from Calgary, but I am working on it. [applause] Thank you, thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I first want to add my congratulations to others you have heard congratulating you on your election and also at the same time the Deputy Speaker and the Deputy Chairman of Committees. I look forward over the next four years to working with you and to sitting in this House.

This is the occasion of my first formal speech to this House. *Hansard* will record it as such, but history will little worry about it. So I want to use the 20 minutes that I have been allotted, first of all, to see if I can bring this speech in under budget at 18 minutes and, secondly, to talk about something much bigger than myself and indeed something much bigger than the Fort McMurray riding. I want to talk in a general way about the north. I want to talk specifically about northern Alberta, and I hope that in the comments that I make, there will be other members on both sides of the House that are concerned about the north and will join me in the thought processes that I verbalize here tonight.

Now, first of all, Mr. Speaker, northern Alberta, if we call all of that area north of Edmonton northern Alberta, represents about 65 percent of the land area of this province. So it is a significant area, and for the comments that I will make later, I believe it is the engine of our economic recovery in this province. In preparing for this speech, I went back to 1906, and I asked to look at a copy of the first throne speech that was made – I believe it was March 15, 1906, the first throne speech ever in this House – because I wanted to see what was in that throne speech about the north and I wanted to see what was in this throne speech about the north.

Surprisingly, I find that there are more differences in the province today than in 1906 than there were in the two throne speeches. Let me illustrate. First of all, in the throne speech of 1906 they talked about an environment for job creation. The wording craftsmen of the day described it in this way. They said: "It shall be the especial care of my Government to encourage such settlement by every available means." They were talking there about jobs for new Albertans. In the throne speech last week we were talking about jobs to be created for 110,000 Albertans.

There was commentary in that first throne speech about infrastructure. In that speech they talked about "progressive policy with regard to the construction . . . of roads and bridges," an area that the minister of transportation knows well today. In the throne speech last week there was, of course, a general commitment to the infrastructure of this province.

They had a utilities issue back in 1906, Mr. Speaker. In 1906 they were concerned and they talked about the requirement that telephonic communication between the different sections of the Province should be rendered as inexpensive [and efficient] and as effective as possible.

Already we recognize in this House that we will have to deal with issues that affect all Albertans that deal with the regulation and the equalization of at least one of our utilities that exists today, and that is the utility of power.

In the speech opening the 23rd Legislature, Mr. Speaker, they talked about a fair and comprehensive way to encourage business development. If I can take the House back to 1906, public accounts were mentioned in a profound way in that speech. In the very first throne speech of this province they talked about delivering public accounts in the earliest possible moment with approval at the earliest possible date. Of course, in our speech we talked about opening the books.

If these throne speeches are so similar, what then has changed in this province, Mr. Speaker? Well, what has changed in this province, I suggest to all members of this House, is where the divide between wilderness and nonwilderness now lies today. In 1906 most of Alberta lay in wilderness. Today that wilderness has receded so that it remains primarily in the far north of this province.

There is a degree of optimism in the throne speech, and I find that same degree of optimism in the north all the time. It is what makes people go to the north, live in the north, and try their best to succeed in the north. The north has been generous. The north of this province has always been generous in awarding those who accept it on its terms, and where those in the north fail, the north will even give them a little solitude and a little quiet to reflect and lick their wounds and try again. When people succeed in the north, the north rejoices with them, and there are valuable economic reasons to point out in this House that everybody in Alberta should rejoice with those who succeed in the north.

So what this means is that we, this Assembly, should always support the north, and we should support those companies and corporations who elect to try and do business and succeed in the north. They are often trying to maintain a delicate tightrope between environmental issues, sustainable development, and the creation of jobs and economic wealth for this province. Without detracting in any way from the many good jobs that are found in southern Alberta, it is clear that the high-paying jobs, the engine of recovery in Alberta will be the development of the north in the next decade and the decades to come.

It would be inappropriate if I spoke standing as the Member for Fort McMurray without mentioning two companies that provide much employment for the residents of Fort McMurray, and those are the oil sands plants of Syncrude and Suncor. Both of these

plants try very hard to create jobs, fund to the provincial tax revenue, and also to do it in an ecologically responsible way. Two of many examples are that Syncrude Canada has recently released a small herd of buffalo on some of its reclaimed land. The purpose of that release of buffalo is to simply see if that buffalo species can be returned to the wilderness after the wilderness mat of green has been lifted up, the oil extracted out of it, the mat put back down, and hopefully the reintroduction of buffalo. Suncor, the neighbouring plant slightly to the south of Syncrude, is working with Alberta Power, one of our well-known energy producers in this province, on an area to generate power for all Albertans and yet act in terms of saving the environment by scrubbing more sulphur out in the stacks.

Now, this is where we can help each other. This is where we can help each other in this House. The population of the north is very small. Less than 10 percent of the population of Alberta lives in that area that I described earlier that represents 65 percent of the landmass, less than 10 percent. So we need each other. As powerful as my voice is and as powerful as the voices of my colleagues in this House that live in northern Alberta are, we are but a small percentage of the total population. We should never forget that what's good for areas like Fort McMurray is good for cities like Calgary, is good for cities like Lethbridge, is good for cities like Pincher Creek, Fort Macleod, the Crowsnest Pass. On the highway south from Fort McMurray flow the dollars and cents that help stimulate this province's economy.

So we should help each other, and we should support each other. We should all collectively in this House be troubled if there is any delay, any delay at all, either a figurative or a literal roadblock to the development of the north. If people get scared away from cities like Fort McMurray because they feel nervous about the hospital situation, it should trouble all of us in this House. If the road to Fort McMurray to allow for the easy flow of goods and products is not one of the safest and one of the most secure in the country given the harshness of the climate that it must go through, we should all feel a sense of personal hurt on that, and we should all work together to improve the infrastructure, to make the north work, because when the north works for Alberta, it works for all of Alberta.

8:10

Now, all of this is well and good, but it must come with a caution. It must come with a caution, Mr. Speaker, because we cannot have uncontrolled, terrorized development of the north. Every time a shovel scoops in the north and a truck carries away some of the substance of the north, they take away more than just the soil. They take away the soul and some of the spirit as well. So we have to have development in the north that is conscientious and is ecologically sound.

Can we find those answers? I believe we can, Mr. Speaker. I believe this House can help find those answers, and I'm grateful to be able to participate in this 23rd Legislature to look for some of those answers in a nonpartisan way with all members of this Assembly. Anybody who can get the north working, working big time, ecologically sound, can bring us back to the heady days of this province when there's more than enough for the schools, more than enough for the roads, more than enough for the hospitals, and more than enough good jobs. We have to work hard to do it. The people who can do it will be heroes. They will be heroes in this province, and I kind of hope that there are some heroes in this room tonight.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for giving me this 15 minutes. I was five minutes under budget, 25 percent under budget. Thank you, sir.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Vegreville-Viking.

MR. STELMACH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a great privilege to speak to the throne speech this evening on behalf of my constituents of the new constituency of Vegreville-Viking. [applause] Thank you.

First of all, I would like to congratulate you on your historic election as Speaker of the House. The support you received as Speaker is a testament to your fairness as a parliamentarian. As a new member of this Assembly I look forward to your guidance as we proceed through this session.

My constituency, Mr. Speaker, is home to some of Alberta's greatest ambassadors. Of course, it is the home of Canada's most famous and respected parliamentarian, the Rt. Hon. Don Mazankowski. Don Mazankowski served as MP for Vegreville for 25 years, and I consider him a friend and mentor as I enter this stage in public life. Vegreville-Viking is also the home of the Sutters, the famous hockey family from Viking. Five Sutter brothers have played in the National Hockey League, and they are all well known for their tenacity and their dedication to their sport. My constituency is also home to the world's largest mallard duck, which sits perched in the village of Andrew. The hon. member to my right wants to know whether the duck laid the egg in Vegreville. I would like to answer by saying: no, it did not.

My constituency is the location of the original homesteads registered by the first Ukrainian settlers to come to Alberta. They came to the Star-Edna area over 100 years ago, and many of their descendants still live in the area. The settlement of Alberta's prairies was a difficult period in our history, one of many challenges, but, Mr. Speaker, they did not have government to rely on. They only had their own initiative and community to depend on, and they did very well in building this province.

The waves of settlers who followed from Europe and the United States brought with them a vision, a vision of a free and prosperous country and one that would offer their children a bright future. They also brought with them traditional values and beliefs, belief in strong family units, belief in community, neighbour helping neighbour. Their values included commitment, perseverance, and faith, faith not only in themselves but faith in God as well. I hope to bring these same values and beliefs to this Assembly.

The constituency of Vegreville-Viking is mostly agricultural based. As we all know, the agriculture industry has faced many challenges over the past decade. It has seen farm commodity prices remain at depressed levels over the past few years while increasing input costs have eroded profits. Because of this reduced profitability young people are reluctant to take over the family farms because of the risks involved. As a result, our rural population is getting older, our towns and villages are not growing, and our school population is declining.

Mr. Speaker, I am encouraged with the words of the Speech from the Throne because it is good news to young farm families. The direction this government is taking in continuing to negotiate with the federal government to reduce regulation, to reduce duplication of services, and to reduce provincial trade barriers will provide greater marketing opportunities for the businessmen of tomorrow. The fact that the government will refocus Alberta's international trade offices to implement and promote investment and trade will provide assurance to the agricultural community that this government is aware of the importance of agriculture to Alberta's economy.

Mr. Speaker, we must recognize that the largest employer in Alberta is small business. We must as a province keep our young people at work, and we must continue to improve the climate for small business to operate. We must establish a business climate

that attracts new business ventures and new industries. We have to keep in mind that with the introduction of new technology come new opportunities. Home-based businesses seem to be the industry of the future. This will go a long way towards improving our local economy.

Good news again in the Speech from the Throne: the thrust of government to reorganize, deregulate, and streamline government will enhance business opportunities in this province. I believe that establishing a tax reform commission to use public consultation to review Alberta's tax system will maintain and improve the tax advantage our province enjoys over other provinces in Canada. Our tax advantage is critical in our efforts to enhance the opportunities for businesses in Alberta. Our focus for tax reform must not only be for the benefit of corporate business but for the benefit of small businesses as well. Small business may be the key industrial sector in the economies of the 21st century. Small business will create the majority of our new jobs. These will be stable, long-term jobs, Mr. Speaker, not government created jobs. Government created jobs may be a quick fix to get votes, but it does nothing for the long-term benefit of our province.

The constituents of Vegreville-Viking believe in quality of education. They believe that education is an investment and that we must invest in education if we are to be competitive nationally and internationally. An educated population will be the most important factor if we are to balance our budget and eliminate our debt. My constituents believe strongly that only through an educated citizenry will we erase discrimination, create jobs, maintain our values and beliefs, reduce poverty, and, quite frankly, elevate the human spirit. They do want, however, equity in the financing of education in Alberta. They believe that every student should have an equitable amount of revenue for his or her instructional program.

My constituents are also aware of the fact that the Department of Health consumes over 30 percent of the provincial budget. They are of the opinion that spending more money on health services is not viable. They believe we must work towards encouraging a shift from institutional care to home and community care. We must focus on improving the overall health of Albertans through the prevention of illness and the promotion of wellness. There are, Mr. Speaker, several things we must do: we must eliminate overlapping and duplication of services; target cost reductions and provide incentives to reduce costs; identify and implement alternatives to the existing fee structure; develop a balance of accountability between public and privately owned labs and diagnostic services; provide a continuum of care within a geographical area on a co-ordinated and cost-effective basis; and ensure that our seniors are provided with long-term care in the communities in which they have lived and that they have an opportunity to remain with their spouses during their later years.

We have initiated changes in our constituency. I am proud to be a member of the team that amalgamated two hospital boards: the Archer memorial board, a facility owned by the United Church, and the Lamont auxiliary nursing home. We now have in our community one board, one chief executive officer, one dietary, pharmacy, housekeeping and physio function, which lead to tremendous cost savings.

8:20

There is considerable concern about the existence of rural hospitals, especially after the comments made by the Liberal leader during and after the election: that rural hospitals in rinky-dink towns must be closed. Mr. Speaker, can someone across the House define what a rinky-dink town in Alberta is? How can the

opposition claim to speak for all Albertans if any community outside of Edmonton or Calgary is considered rinky-dink?

Mr. Speaker, rural hospitals with 60 beds or less account for only 7 percent of the health care budget. Yes, there must be changes leading to greater efficiency and better financial control. We all know that, but we cannot indiscriminately close down rural hospitals. Rural Albertans have earned and deserve equitable health care.

My constituents are aware of the financial difficulties we are facing as a province. They know that to help maintain a higher standard of living, our government has borrowed itself into debt. They also know that this practice must stop, that we must recognize our economic circumstances and adapt our expectations accordingly. Our government has received a strong mandate from the people of this province to eliminate the deficit and debt. Governments must become more efficient and cost-effective. Financial responsibility must be in the forefront of our plans, and we must decide which programs are critical to the future of Alberta and which ones are nice to have. Until we are out of debt, the nice programs must go.

As elected officials we must set examples of fiscal restraint. Elimination of the MLA pension plan, reduction in the number of cabinet ministers and the size of their salaries, reduction in the overall cost of government: these are all examples of fiscal restraint by elected officials that the people of Vegreville-Viking wholeheartedly endorse. Putting our financial house in order by balancing the budget within four years and paying down the provincial debt removes a huge burden that our children would have to shoulder. It would provide a better and brighter future for our next generation. That is what we are here to do: to make decisions based on what is best for our children and for the province of Alberta. Mr. Speaker, I believe the plan outlined in the throne speech does just that, and I am proud to be a part of this government as we chart the course that Alberta will take into and through the 21st century.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan.

MRS. ABDURAHMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again may I congratulate you on your election. Like my colleague from across the floor I also look forward to your advice and guidance as a rookie within this Assembly.

Although it's not the first time I've spoken within this Assembly, I believe it is called the maiden speech that I will be delivering this evening. I think it's fair to say that by any stretch of the imagination I'm certainly not a maiden, being a mother of four and a grandmother of nine.

I'm pleased to rise before this Assembly as the representative of a young, vibrant, forward-looking constituency with a long and proud history, and I'd like to offer a brief introduction of the Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan constituency. Strathcona county was named after Lord Strathcona, a man who was instrumental in building the Canadian Pacific Railway, which opened up the west in the 1800s. While the area was settled in the late 1800s, it was the discovery of oil south of Strathcona that ushered in an era of unprecedented prosperity. By 1950 an area we all know as Refinery Row became home to Imperial Oil, Gulf – now Petro-Canada – and Texaco, to name but a few. During the 1970s and the 1980s further industrial expansion took place. These were major and highly sophisticated operations such as Shell Canada refinery and the styrene plant, B.F. Goodrich petrochemical plant

in the Scotford industrial area. This was followed most recently by the Dow expansion.

Strathcona is a young, vibrant community with a unique blend of urban and rural. Its population of 21,000 does not include the hamlet of Sherwood Park, with a population of 36,000, which my colleague Bruce Collingwood represents. I do, however, represent a portion of the hamlet south of the Wye Road in that constituency.

Agriculturally the soil in this area is some of the finest farmland available. The Hutterite colony has been a resident in the area for a good many years, and there are many long-established market gardens, plant and tree nurseries.

Tourism plays a major role with our Elk Island national park, the many popular lakes, and the Polar park run by Al Oeming, which certainly also contributes to our recreational attractions. Sports and cultural activities around culminate in the soon to be opened Festival Place in Sherwood Park. Strathcona county's succinct and far-sighted philosophy is Growth through Partnership.

The city of Fort Saskatchewan has as its motto Frontier to the Future. Its origin lies with the original explorer, Anthony Henday, arriving in 1755 to establish the lucrative fur trade at Birch Hills. In 1795 Fort Saskatchewan was known as Fort Augustus, which was then a trading post established in the North West Company. In 1872 the first pioneers, Francois and Joseph Lamoureux, or Lamorey, arrived and settled, establishing a land claim on the North Saskatchewan River. In 1875 we saw the North-West Mounted Police arrive, building the fort on the Saskatchewan which became a haven for settlers during the Riel Rebellion of 1885. Fort Saskatchewan became a town in 1904, with the railroad arriving in 1905 and the building of the provincial jail, which has since been relocated to a different location within the city.

Sherritt Gordon Mines, followed by Inland Chemical, Peace River glass company, Dow Chemical, and many more well-known companies discovered Fort Saskatchewan to be a town of the future and established plants and factories there. In 1985 Fort Saskatchewan achieved city status.

The Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan constituency has a long, proud, and very distinguished history. The diversity of its people and occupations is truly representative of this great province. As a new Albertan and Canadian I feel it's so important that we acknowledge our history and learn our history. It's something that I'm extremely proud of.

Because both its agricultural and industrial components are of great concern and significance to my constituency, the uncertainty of the ongoing dispute regarding the machinery and equipment tax and the Electric Energy Marketing Act must be resolved. This is essential if we are going to move ahead in the world economy. Mr. Speaker, if we are to be successful in global marketing, this inability to deal with these issues has gone on entirely too long.

8:30

Another area of great importance to this constituency is agriculture. Mr. Speaker, within our boundaries we have grain, feedlots, dairy farms, elk ranches, ostriches, llamas, poultry, and market gardening. It is extremely important that this great variety of agricultural enterprises be preserved and enhanced. It's my opinion that this government should facilitate these industries on an ongoing basis, giving them the ability to identify and focus on the present short- and long-term markets. The agricultural community must be directly involved in the consultation process and not simply be informed by government of what government thinks is best for them. This attitude is at best insulting and at worst parentalistic.

It saddens me to stand in this Legislature and acknowledge that this province's greatness is at risk due solely to the lack of accountability and the fiscal management this government has demonstrated. How could this tragedy possibly have happened? Let me illustrate only one small example. Divisionary politics has been practised for the past decade. What do I mean by divisionary politics? Plainly stated, it means pitting region against region, urban areas against rural areas, with select constituencies being conspicuously, no, blatantly favoured. It's caused by the lack of government will, determination, and resolve to implement their own legislation.

Mr. Speaker, we are all one people of this great province of Alberta, and a truly responsible and, most important, democratic government would represent us all equally. Merely following the status quo is simply not going to significantly improve and build upon the achievements of our province. This government must eliminate all partisan politics and make their decisions based on what is right for all Albertans, not just a select few. I believe it is the result of this government trying to become all things to all people and believing that they could create wealth that has led us into this morass. The politics of expediency became the norm, which has now presented us with an incredible debt as well as an inheritance of cynicism and distrust by the public.

How do we as a Legislature restore trust? It can only be achieved by becoming fully accountable to the public, by demonstrating honesty and integrity at all times. The key, however, is total accountability. Albertans have a right to information that affects their day-to-day lives. Meaningful freedom of information is essential, which is certainly not being manifested by the government Bill that is currently being put forward.

This government clearly has no action plan whatsoever. The first principle of this action plan indicates that government must remove itself from the marketplace. To date, in spite of a promise to do so, this certainly is not occurring. In my opinion, we must allow the pioneering and entrepreneurial spirit that built this exceptional province to once again flourish.

There has to be a greater acknowledgement that the key to significant job creation will only be achieved through small business. Mr. Speaker, I'm continually astonished, as I learn more about the constituency of Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan, by the incredible diversity of the people and the wide variety of small business in this area. It is imperative that this government formulate an environment to encourage and nurture small business. I believe they are totally overregulated, which is a complete disincentive to the small investor. The reality that we face today is the fact that the multinationals are restructuring and downsizing, and increased employment will only be achieved through strong and confident small businesses.

In a recent town hall meeting on health with my constituents – and 71 members were in attendance – I found them extremely angry, upset, fearful of their futures, not only in health care but in other programs that Albertans have cherished these past years. The one thing that struck me was that it was said time and time again that they were prepared for cuts, but when they start to hear that a hospital is going to be constructed in Westlock, they will not accept those cuts. In fact, it went as far as my receiving a phone call from some members who were at the roundtable in Red Deer telling me that it was a unanimous recommendation to this government that that construction should not go ahead.

I would like to bring to this House's attention the issues identified at this point in time and also some suggested remedies that will be presented to the Minister of Health by my constituents. I'll just very quickly highlight some of them, because, as I say, it's the intention for them to be tabled with the minister.

The first area within health care – and it's not something that's new; it's been discussed for a number of years – is the lack of accountability within our health care system, whether it be physicians or other health care givers. We certainly have a number of actions that we're suggesting be required, but the one that I'd like to bring before this Legislature this evening is that I would suggest we implement a benchmarking system compared to the one used in the energy industry. This benchmark allows for the analysis of management practices by company and sector and their impact on performance levels. In other words, physicians should have an outcome measurement attached to not only their privileging but through their quality assurance program; likewise with other health care professionals.

Efficiencies and effectiveness. I've been part of the health care delivery system through policy for over 12 years. This has been discussed time and time again. We've come up with six actions required. These could have been undertaken a long time ago, yet we haven't seen many of them implemented. The one area that I want to identify is the right service at the right time by the right person.

Focus on health. I can't disagree with my colleague from the government side. I sat for nine years on a health unit board, and we talked to the past government and the present government that it's a wellness system that should be in place. To this date we still don't have it. Over and above that, we are now seeing programs that are essential for prevention and health promotion being cut. So what I would suggest to our Minister of Health is that we've got to ensure that moneys flow into the area of health promotion and prevention if we are going to have a wellness focus on our health care delivery system.

Consumer awareness. Something that has to happen – and I heard over a year ago, discussed in Edmonton, that there's no point in creating a wellness system if the consumers aren't aware of how to use that system. So we should be looking at a way of bringing it to the consumers' attention, and once again we've certainly got recommendations. Consumers and frontline workers are not involved in the decisions made about health care. One of the things that at the time it happened I disagreed with, but after my experience I certainly would hope to see it expanded: the previous Premier, Don Getty, required provincial hospitals to have a member of the nursing staff represented at the table of the boards. I found that a most effective way of having frontline workers' input, and we are suggesting that we should seriously look at that. Structural changes are essential. The system is self-serving in its structure, and once again I congratulate Archer memorial hospital in Lamont for their foresight in the consolidation. We need to see more and more of that happening. Every one of us in this House has to work together to see that this is achieved and not allow the people out there who are self-serving to protect their own domain. We have a number of recommendations there.

8:40

I also have an area that touches on the drug patent Act and so on, and I'm not going to go into that this evening, but the one thing that I would suggest that we seriously consider when we're looking at reconstruction of acute care hospitals is the community health centre delivery model. I firmly believe that the scale of economy there could do more for the community than an acute care facility, and I'd urge this government that rather than build another facility as acute care in Westlock, let's look at the community care concept which all health care could be delivered out of, reducing significantly the cost and using the acute care hospitals in that geographic region.

Mr. Speaker, we are also looking at a town hall meeting in education. It's a very important area for my constituents. I'm not going to attempt to touch on the issues this evening through my maiden speech because we will once again be presenting a paper to the Minister of Education.

Mr. Speaker, before closing, I just want to reiterate that as Members of the Legislative Assembly I think it's important that we all have ongoing contact, whether it be through town hall meetings, and bringing that information back not only to our own caucus but to the ministers in the present government, because only then will we get this province working.

Mr. Speaker, I will conclude by stating and acknowledging that people create wealth, not government. This government must exhibit the will and the foresight to allow the people of Alberta again to be pioneers in their own province and make their way confidently and prosperously into the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

MR. DUNFORD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to rise today to give my maiden speech to this Assembly. I'm pleased to participate in the debate on the motion approving the Speech from the Throne.

Firstly, I want to congratulate the Lieutenant Governor on the direction that he has provided to our government. It is now our responsibility to follow that direction, and I am confident that we will accomplish all of the goals under the able leadership of our Premier, the Hon. Ralph Klein. I also wanted to congratulate you, Mr. Speaker, on your election to the Chair. You have a tremendous responsibility to ensure that the legislative affairs of this province are properly carried out, and I would commend you on the dutiful way in which you have carried out your responsibilities.

I want to also thank the constituents of Lethbridge-West for the honour of representing them in this Assembly. They have put their trust in me to bring their views and their concerns to this Legislature, and I will do my best to deserve this trust.

Mr. Speaker, it is important to the constituents in Lethbridge-West, as it is to all people across this province, that this government fulfill its promise to balance the budget and to get provincial spending under control. It is for this reason that I'm pleased to see this commitment contained in the Speech from the Throne. I am especially encouraged by the commitment of this government to promote our Alberta Advantage. In his Budget Address, the Provincial Treasurer also reinforced the strategy of this government to build on our low-tax advantage, to build on our strengths in agriculture, in energy, forestry, tourism, small business, and high technology, to work to strengthen our Alberta Advantage and sell it aggressively around the world, to promote Alberta as a place to live, to invest, to work, and to do business.

Now, I'm encouraged by this commitment to our Alberta Advantage, because I believe that the advantages that Lethbridge and its surrounding area have to offer – the southern Alberta advantage, if you will. In our efforts to sell the Alberta Advantage around the world, southern Alberta is a great place to start, and Lethbridge is at the heart of this vital and productive part of the province. The slogan for Lethbridge is Everything under the Sun. Lethbridge is a vibrant, prosperous city. With amenities such as hotels, restaurants, shopping, and parks, it is an ideal base from which to explore the many attractions of southern Alberta. As well as being the largest service centre in the Chinook Country tourist zone, Lethbridge offers the ideal setting for conferences, meetings, and special events.

Thanks in part to the Alberta tax advantage, Lethbridge has a large manufacturing sector, and we have had recent additions to Hostess Frito-Lay and Pratt & Whitney. Lethbridge is also very proud of its outstanding liberal arts university, the University of Lethbridge, and the fact that it is the home of the first public junior college in Canada, the Lethbridge Community College.

There is an amazing diversity of natural attractions in southern Alberta, and Lethbridge has its share of natural beauty as well. Lethbridge prides itself on offering the best recreational facilities and amenities of any city of its size in Canada. Lethbridge has its beautiful coulees, and within those coulees Lethbridge boasts an urban park system with 60 kilometres of trails that provide beautiful areas for walking, jogging, and cycling. As well, for those needing a respite from the bustle of city life, the Nikka Yuko Japanese garden and Henderson Lake park offer quiet solitude in lush surroundings.

Lethbridge also offers a range of cultural activities. There's the Bowman Arts Centre for visual and creative arts, the Yates Memorial Centre for performing arts, and the performing arts centre at the University of Lethbridge. Other cultural experiences are provided by two local theatre groups, a symphony orchestra, an art gallery, and an arts council. Lethbridge really does have everything under the sun, Mr. Speaker, and we are proud to offer these services and facilities to fellow Albertans and people from around the world.

As I mentioned before, Mr. Speaker, Lethbridge is an ideal base from which to explore the many attractions of Chinook Country in southern Alberta, but perhaps rather than considering it as a base, we might look at it as a hub of a giant wheel with all of the spokes directing themselves to various attractions within the region. Lethbridge is less than 100 kilometres from the Rocky Mountains and an easy drive to Waterton Glacier International Peace Park. Other attractions in the region are the Remington heritage coach and carriage collection, Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump, and the Frank Slide Interpretive Centre.

Located in Cardston, the Remington-Alberta Carriage Centre is the latest in a string of world-class heritage centres in the province. Officially opened on April 3 of this year, it has been hailed as the finest public collection of horse-drawn vehicles in the western half of North America. Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump is the largest and best preserved buffalo jump in North America, and it was declared a UNESCO world heritage site in 1981. Through guided walks and a stunning interpretive centre, the drama of the buffalo hunt and the way of life of our aboriginal brothers and sisters are recreated for people today. The Frank Slide Interpretive Centre orientates visitors to the history of the people who settled in the colourful coal mining area of southwestern Alberta. I believe one of the best ways to attract people to the Alberta Advantage is through tourism, Mr. Speaker, and these three tourist interpretive centres are important additions to the tourism industry in southern Alberta. The Alberta government has done some excellent work in helping to preserve these areas of Alberta heritage and in adding to the Alberta Advantage in tourism.

8:50

Another part of the strategy to build a strong Alberta economy, contained in the Speech from the Throne and restated in the Budget Address, is to create opportunities for businesses and industry to locate, build, and grow in Alberta, and to keep building the skills and competitiveness of Alberta businesses and our people. Alberta's developing economy cannot rely solely on domestic and local sources of investment. This is where another advantage of southern Alberta comes into play.

The geographical proximity as well as our shared approach to business and trade has helped Alberta to develop strong ties with the northwest states. Alberta has become an active participant in a number of regional organizations to raise awareness about Alberta, and it's important to the United States as a trading partner. There is the Montana/Alberta Boundary Advisory Committee, which is composed of legislators from Alberta and Montana, that was formed to discuss areas of common interest, to identify opportunities for co-operation, and to resolve small problems before they become major issues.

Another example is the Pacific Northwest Economic Region, or PNWR. Now, PNWR consists of the states of Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington and the provinces of Alberta and British Columbia. The purpose of PNWR is to develop and establish policies that promote greater regional collaboration and enhance competitiveness in international and domestic markets. PNWR pursues activities in areas such as telecommunications, tourism, exporting, and transportation. Working together, this group boasts sufficient population and economic clout to compete successfully in a global economy. The added advantage here to Alberta's participation is that our membership provides immediate opportunities to promote and therefore enhance Alberta's position as a tourism destination.

Alberta is also a member of the Rocky Mountain Trade Corridor, along with British Columbia, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Utah, and Colorado. This organization is a joint public- and private-sector initiative with the goal of facilitating trade and co-operative efforts between its members. The group focuses on transportation, trade, investment, tourism, and agriculture issues within the region. These alliances will allow Alberta to improve its competitive economic position and to increase its export markets, again adding to the Alberta Advantage.

Further advantage, however, Mr. Speaker, could be gained by our government recognizing the need for the completion of the export highway. Such completion would provide a twinned highway between Edmonton and San Diego. The trading opportunities that this presents are there for all Albertans. The export highway ties Alberta and California, with that huge marketplace, together with a band of asphalt that will be the envy of traders throughout the world. What this does for Lethbridge is to put us not only on the map but right in the middle of the road. When Canada is viewed from an east-west perspective, we Lethbridgites are isolated, but when our perspective switches to north-south, as it would with the completion of the export highway, Lethbridge can fully participate in the economic advantages of the Alberta Advantage.

Now, in order to remain competitive in a global economy, Alberta must continue to build on our strengths and continue to promote this Alberta Advantage. I am encouraged to hear the Lieutenant Governor speak of this commitment in his Speech from the Throne, but I'm even more encouraged to see evidence of this commitment in my constituency. This commitment to the Alberta Advantage shows in the work of this government in supporting the tourism industry in Lethbridge and southern Alberta. This commitment also shows in the participation of Alberta in so many regional economic organizations. This is the kind of commitment that will make a better Alberta and will ensure that Lethbridge continues to offer to Albertans and to all other visitors Everything under the Sun.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Leduc.

MR. KIRKLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to add my name to the long list of people who have congratulated you for

your success on your election. You're to be complimented. From my observations you've done a very fine job on a very difficult task in a short time, and I look forward to your further direction.

I'd also like to thank the Leduc constituents for supporting me and giving me the privilege to serve and carry their voice to this Legislature. I would be quite candid in indicating that the experience to date has been rewarding, it has been boring, it has been enriching, it's frustrating, and it's somewhat amusing, and I say particularly amusing when I listen to the hon. Member for Red Deer-North indicate that the Liberals have reported that they are such good managers, they finally believe it. In fact, that is the exact cancer that has permeated the side opposite, and I think when we look at the debt today, it's quite obvious that they're having difficulty getting out of that particular rut. I become really amused when he suggests that the NDP spirit of Alex McEachern has invaded our side, when obviously, clearly, the Johnston and the Getty spirit is still prevalent and has invaded the front benches on the side opposite.

I even become smug when the hon. Member for Red Deer-North suggests that this side here has a large employment problem to face in four or five years. I along with my colleagues were elected for our abilities, our integrity, and our commitment, not on the coattails of our leader. I would suggest that in fact my employment won't be so precariously tied to them either. I draw further comfort in my employment when in the first 10 days since the throne speech the hon. Premier and his government have already contradicted and broken several promises or intentions. To quote the throne speech, discontent "has fueled a cynicism about governments all over the world." I would suggest that the hon. Premier and his government continue to fuel that cynicism when they publicly claim they intend to extricate themselves from providing loans and loan guarantees and two days later they're right back into bed with a multinational corporation offering to buy their services again. This is the same business tactic that caused the Alberta taxpayer to lose some \$2.1 billion.

That cynicism will continue to be fueled when the first item under the heading of Our Promises is, and I quote:

And the heart of that plan is providing open, accessible, responsible, responsive and affordable government.

What is open about a government when we are approaching 30-some denials for basic information in the first 10 days of this Legislative Assembly? What is open about a government that gives 1,600 ALCB employees 20 minutes' notice that their jobs are on the line? What is open about political appointments such as when Marvin Moore is appointed chairman of the Alberta Cancer Board or Jim Horsman as chief negotiator to reduce interprovincial trade barriers or Sherrold Moore of the Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation or John Oldring to the \$50,000, six-month job that he recently was awarded here? I think it's particularly galling after the Premier on several occasions promised to eliminate such patronage. None of these actions are open, nor are they a demonstration of accessible, responsible government. Perhaps responsive, responsive if you're a former PC cabinet minister or hold a PC card, but to no one else in this province. Affordable? Not at all, just another waste of taxpayers' money. I think most alarming of all of it, though, is the fact that it shows this government intends to carry on doing business as it has for the last 22 years, clearly a disastrous approach when we look at the debt approaching \$30 billion.

This "continuing to look after my buddies" approach flies in the face of the recommendations that came forth from the NovAtel investigation.

9:00

AN HON. MEMBER: What was Bettie chairman of?

MR. KIRKLAND: I think if Bettie was chairman of the CN, she didn't lose those \$640 million to that company.

I think the second pillar of the Premier's plan, to balance the budget in four years, is laudable. It's actually laudable. Though he may have coined the term "brutal cuts," the hon. Premier and his government have in graphic and callous terms defined them in detail. We on this side of the House do not take lengthy issue with stated intent. What we do object to is achieving a large part of the objective on the backs of the poor and at the expense of the health care system. These areas can withstand a dose of efficiency – there's no question about it – but across-the-board cuts and the imposition of quotas indicate that the sitting government of 22 years, supposedly having had a handle on these programs, clearly never did. I think the management has to improve if we are to improve as a province. I would suggest that the methods being employed today are somewhat akin to slicing fresh bread with a chain saw.

I have no doubt when I look across the floor at the hon. Minister of Health that she is a fine, compassionate lady. I have no doubt that in fact she would never intentionally threaten a person's health. Or that the hon. Minister of Family and Social Services, who indicates publicly he's been there personally and knows that a large percentage of the Metis and the native people are recipients of the department's budget, would callously cause them further hardship by imposing across-the-board cuts, yet it seems to be happening. Certainly hon. ministers such as these and others recognize 22 years of mismanagement cannot be reversed in a mere four years, particularly on the backs of the health care system and the social service system. I have faith that their courage and intelligence will prevail and they will lead their bureaucrats to a fair and reasonable solution.

The second commitment or pillar, as the Premier stated it, is to create an environment that will allow the private sector to create 110,000 new jobs for Albertans. I'm sure the 1,500 ALCB employees or the 300 Alberta registry employees or the 500-plus nurses that have been laid off or the thousands of students returning to school because the job market is so dismal or the 146 unemployed are waiting for some concrete action in this particular aspect. I would suggest this pillar has as much credibility as the first and would become the fairy tale of that particular government in their term.

The third commitment, to reorganize, deregulate, and streamline government, again is laudable, and I hope you're successful. When I interview a prospective provincial government employee and they tell me they are supervising 37 employees, five of which are supervisors, the challenge becomes clear to me. When I have a constituent call me and indicate that his livelihood as a firework specialist is jeopardized because government regulation has become so cumbersome he can no longer continue to function, I think it becomes clear again.

The fourth commitment is to listen to the people. The hon. Minister of Health, the Member for Red Deer-South, and the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek waxed eloquent about the roundtables on health in Red Deer. I think if they were truly able to assume some objective shoes they would acknowledge this was not a listening exercise but, more correctly, an exercise of manipulation of those people that so willingly gave their time and thoughts to contribute in what they thought would be a meaningful way. If it truly was a listening exercise, as it was purported to be, the agenda would not have restricted discussion simply to health cuts. When eight out of 10 recommendations of the Seizing Opportunity roundtable in March are ignored, it becomes clearer that the roundtables are not a listening exercise and too often the advice forthcoming is disregarded. We could take it a little closer

to home, and the four standing committees are touted as public forums. This is a bit of a distortion of reality. I think if you attempt to lead or debate or input seriously at these committees, you will find that as a turtle retracts in its shell for protection, these committees will revert to an in camera status to avoid real public debate and real public input.

To quote the hon. Premier in the throne speech, "In 1905 the winds of change were sweeping across the prairie." The Premier claims that the winds of change are blowing again. I would suggest that 10 days after the throne speech, already laden with broken and hollow promises, unfortunately and sadly, for all the mistakes, patronage, inefficiency, and pathetic management of the last 22 years, the sitting government I see has learned very little. I would suggest Albertans again will be the losers unless the strength of the newly-elected in this Legislature come forth and challenge their ministers constantly and often.

Thank you.

MR. DOERKSEN: Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to speak today on behalf of the constituents of Red Deer-South. As we sit in this Assembly in the First Session of the 23rd Legislature, we are faced with the challenge of dramatically improving our province's fiscal position. Lest we inflate the value of our own importance and think this challenge is unlike that any previous government ever faced, let me give you the perspective of a cab driver with whom I was discussing these things. I was explaining to him how significant the challenge is and feeling quite important in the part I was going to play to help us solve our fiscal woes. I was, after all, a man who had a strong background in finance and understood these matters. Having assumed that I had thoroughly impressed this cab driver with this daunting task, I sat back and waited for his response. Well, my friend responded, "I have been in Canada for 23 years now, and there has not been a year yet that has not been a challenge." His perspective was quite right, because every year, every month in the past has had its challenges, and some have even seemed insurmountable.

Mr. Speaker, the challenge facing this government is indeed daunting, but like the challenges of the past, we, too, will rise to meet and conquer them. You can thump your desks now.

Mr. Speaker, I am one of the 40 new members of this House, unprecedented in the history of this Legislature. We all, or most, ran on the basis that it was time for a change in the way government conducted its business. The voters overwhelmingly sent the message that they expect change. The changes to the procedures introduced in this Assembly last week were a great step in the right direction. The move to a four-day session in the Assembly will allow us to spend more time with the people who elected us so we can better represent them. The move to free votes on private members' Bills is also very positive.

I would like to challenge the 49 new members to hold fast to the message of change and to insist within your caucus that this Assembly operate in a manner fitting responsible and accountable representatives. Debate with intensity and argue on principle, but give up the rhetoric and vain babblings, a disease which strikes quickly inside these Chambers. As new members, let's take the lead and do it right, the way Albertans would expect from this government.

Mr. Speaker, Red Deer-South elected me to ensure that this government balances the budget. The throne speech affirmed that goal, and I am committed to it. The financial heartbeat of this province is most important. They tell me that the main concern to the medical team when a person is in cardiac arrest is to get the heart beating. This is the first priority, and all effort is directed toward that cause. The financial heartbeat has to be our first

priority also. Do you know what happens when oxygen doesn't get from the heartbeat to the brain? You have a politician.

9:10

The number one challenge facing the government is to get spending down to the level of our revenue and so balance the books. By balancing the books, we also prevent the debt from continuing to accumulate, and we can then address the issue of repayment. The fundamental principle when entering into a debt obligation is the assumption that there will be revenue for the next 10 to 25 years to pay for that obligation. That is why debt, whether personal, corporate, or government, is risky. Our revenue is never assured, so in our budget process we must utilize the principle of conservatism in estimating our expenditures.

Accountability in financial reporting is extremely important. All books of the government must be open to public scrutiny and expenditures justified. The Auditor General must continue to have access to all records to be able to hold the government accountable for its financial management. The throne speech affirms that we will act on the specific recommendations of the Alberta Financial Review Commission. Following their recommendations will provide for that accountability.

Mr. Speaker, Red Deer-South elected me to be accountable to them, to represent their views, and to take a stand for what is right and honest. The throne speech called for a government that is open and accountable to the people. I am committed to those principles.

Mr. Speaker, Red Deer-South also elected me to uphold the values and principles necessary to preserve the basic building block of our society, our families. Accountability is high on my list of values and principles, and it is in the family unit that accountability is taught or mistaught. However, the requirement of individuals to be accountable to their families and neighbours has been displaced by the demand for individual rights and special privileges. We simply must shift the emphasis from individual rights to individual responsibility. Within our families we are accountable to each other, and as families we are accountable to our communities. If that value is taught and exemplified at home, you can be sure that that value will be translated into results in our schools, responsiveness in our communities, justice in the workplace, and trust in our governments. We must instill those values of honesty, commitment, and accountability through the leadership of the representatives in this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, the pioneers of Alberta, my grandfather being one of them, recognized the opportunities available to them here and were willing to accept the challenges and inconveniences along the way to reap rewards for us. We must not do less for our children.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

MR. VAN BINSBERGEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've been told that I'm allowed to digress widely and imaginatively from the subject at hand, which is the Speech from the Throne, and I intend to do just that.

After having been an educator for almost 30 years, I know when the attention of my audience is waning. I think we have reached that point, so I'm assuring the audience that there will be a minimum of partisan rhetoric in my speech. I intend to say a few things about my riding, and after that I'd like to share a few of my first impressions with the members of the House, some of the more puzzling items that have caught my attention. Perhaps it will sound familiar to some of you.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to represent the people of West Yellowhead. I know that new members customarily wax eloquent

about the beauty of their riding, but I'm sure I don't have to do that, because everybody will agree it is the most beautiful riding in the province. I'm sure that every member of this House has visited my riding on many an occasion and therefore knows that Edson is the gateway to the foothills, that Hinton and Grande Cache open the doors to the Rocky Mountains, and that Jasper is of course located right in these mountains.

What is perhaps not as well known is that there are several industries in my riding. Specifically in Edson, Hinton, and Grande Cache one will find the forestry and coal industries, and in Jasper of course, as well as in the rest of the riding, there's a great amount of tourism. These are important industries, Mr. Speaker, for the four centres concerned, and I intend to do the utmost to promote them.

We also have some lesser known jewels in the riding, specifically Robb, Marlboro, Cadomin, and Brûle, which are all worthy of a visit in their own right. I invite all the members to return to West Yellowhead as often as possible to enjoy its splendours and to spend as much of their money as they possibly can.

I do have some advice for the members opposite in their own interest. When they do visit West Yellowhead, I recommend that they downplay their party affiliation, because if they were foolish enough to mention the initials PC in, say, Hinton, somebody would undoubtedly ask them when the extended care facility will be built. After all, that facility has been promised during every election since 1982 and has been shelved immediately following each election.

Similarly, in Grande Cache the mere mention of the PC Party would lead to some heated questions about the hospital; such as, when will the new funding formula be announced, the one for small rural hospitals? I've written to the minister that Grande Cache, being 150 kilometres from Hinton, needs special consideration, and she was gracious enough to reply immediately. However, what she told me was that no decision has of yet been made. It certainly did not take long to make a decision in the case of Westlock, I think.

Nevertheless, Mr. Speaker, another issue that would cause my constituents to confront members opposite is the cuts to social services. It saddens me that my constituency office has already seen an increase of some 300 percent in its caseload since these cuts went into effect. In all four centres there are desperate ALCB workers who would like some clarification from the minister, such as when they will get laid off and whether there will be a severance package and how large.

Mr. Speaker, I intend to vigorously pursue the interests of my beautiful constituency, and in so doing, I will undoubtedly cross swords with some of the members opposite. I will simply be motivated to help my constituents as best I can. There will be no malice intended.

So far it has been an interesting experience, and here I get to the point where I'd like to share some of the more puzzling moments. For instance, first of all, you, Mr. Speaker, were elected in a free vote, apparently a major departure from past practice, yet the result was a foregone conclusion, as predictable as it has always been, minus the secret ballot. I must say I'm very happy with the outcome; you've done a fine job.

Then we listened to the Speech from the Throne, in which the government promises more cuts without sacrificing quality, an amazing feat, and always after consultation with the people involved. Were the ALCB workers consulted before losing their jobs? No, they were not. Will the quality of their lives be sacrificed? You bet it will be.

9:20

Next, we were asked to debate the interim supply Bills to the tune of \$8 billion, \$9 billion, roughly two-thirds of the total budget, and we had less than two days to do this one week before dealing with that budget. Needless to say, we argued against the process, and I really wondered whether it made sense, but I was told it did.

Then the minister of agriculture presented us with the news that the sale of Gainers was at hand and that there were many interested buyers. Now, it seems to me that we've heard this for quite a few years, and considering the amount of money that the government has put into the plant over that time, it would be surprising if there were any serious buyers. That same minister, Mr. Speaker, had already piqued my interest earlier when he argued that a decrease in rebate on fuel costs to farmers is inherently different from an increase in tax. With all due apologies to William Shakespeare, a tax by any other name will smell as rank.

Yet another observation that puzzled me was when the minister without portfolio indicated in the House that she could not answer a question on the health conference in Red Deer. Her task, she said, was only to look after the tables. I know that she had lost her portfolio, but I think we're entitled to find out what exactly it is she does with these tables.

I will save the other puzzles for some other time, Mr. Speaker, because I would like to end on a positive note, although I must say that all these puzzles add up to one conclusion: that this government lurches like a ship without a rudder. It's my one and only political point here, I think, Mr. Speaker, but I would like to continue. I'm delighted with the parliamentary reform package that our leader set in motion and that the House leaders put together specifically. I found especially the free vote issue extremely important. I consider that item the most notable one in our Mandate for Change, which formed a major part of our election platform, and it was that part that convinced me to enter the political arena. I've never felt comfortable with the old idea that party discipline overrides all other considerations, even the wishes of our constituents.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to commend the Clerk of the Legislature. I've been impressed by his courtesy and that of his staff and their constant willingness to help us out, no matter how dumb our questions were. It must be of great comfort to you in your new capacity to have such a competent staff.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that I am confident that I will soon understand the workings of the Legislature. By the way, the Treasurer recommended that we take the interim supply Bills to bed. I tried. It proved to be too skimpy to provide any comfort, so I changed it for the more substantial *Beauchesne*, or, as the Treasurer calls it, 'Bowchesnew.' It'll help me understand the workings of the Legislature, I'm sure. Once I have accomplished that, I will be able to do what I set out to do, and that is to work for the benefit of this province in general and in the interests of the constituency of West Yellowhead in particular. I'm very grateful to my constituents for putting me here, and I'm looking forward to the rest of the session.

Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

MR. AMERY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today with a great deal of pride, excitement, and optimism to deliver my maiden speech: pride because I represent the great constituency of Calgary-East, excitement because I am looking forward to working

for the people of Calgary-East who have placed their trust in me, optimism because we are on the right track and the future belongs to us.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor for the Speech from the Throne and the guidance that he gave this House. The province and the House are very fortunate to have such a fine vice-regent.

I must also congratulate you, Mr. Speaker, on your recent election to the honourable position of Speaker of the House. Your reputation as a great parliamentarian ensures that you will carry out your duties with confidence, nonpartisanship, and knowledge.

I have the honour, Mr. Speaker, of being the first representative ever to be elected in the constituency of Calgary-East. Although the constituency is new, it is a combination of old and new communities. One of the older communities, Southview, will be celebrating its 35th birthday on September 25. My constituency has many diverse qualities and concerns that I feel must be addressed and that my constituents demand that I address. Calgary-East is nestled within the greatest city in Alberta if not all of Canada, the city of Calgary. The city is renowned for its cultural, recreational, and professional excellence. The people of Calgary-East are proud of their achievements in each of these areas, achievements obtained for the most part through volunteer contributions of time, effort, and money. These volunteers should be highly commended for their efforts. This point, Mr. Speaker, is one I feel must be stressed. The people of Calgary-East are some of the hardest working volunteers in our province. When groups of dedicated individuals put their hearts and souls into a project, as my constituents have on many occasions, there is little they cannot achieve.

The recreational facilities afforded to people of Calgary-East are among the best in all of Calgary, as it should be when volunteers work this hard for the betterment of their community. The Canoe Club is, in my opinion, the best recreational centre in all of Calgary. This centre is staffed by volunteers who maintain a high-quality recreational facility for children and adults alike in Calgary-East.

In Canada, Mr. Speaker, the sport fast becoming the most popular amongst our youth is soccer. There are more children playing soccer now than ever before, and Calgary-East is no exception. In fact the constituency is now home to a first-rate indoor soccer facility. The demand on this facility is so great that the fields are hardly ever idle, running full-time all year round. The community has been involved since its inception in ensuring that their youth have the proper facilities and programs that we hope will keep our youth off the streets.

The people of Calgary-East would like to extend their thanks to the hon. Deputy Premier. Through the community facility enhancement project grants, for which my colleague is responsible, and volunteer effort, the people of Calgary-East now have the twin arenas complex. All seven communities within the constituency utilize this facility for many programs including hockey and skating. The facility not only benefits the entire community but is now, Mr. Speaker, in a profit-making enterprise for the community. This government should be proud of their record in aiding communities in developing top-notch facilities. The community facility enhancement program is a phenomenal reward for community involvement.

As I mentioned at the outset, Mr. Speaker, volunteerism is essential to community development. Through the CFEP the people of Calgary-East receive the tools with which we can enhance our community and promote an already thriving community spirit. Volunteerism in our community is not only directed at our youth. Our seniors, the people who helped create the great

country and community within which we are proud members, are also provided for. A drop-in centre for seniors was initiated and is for the most part funded and staffed on a volunteer basis. The people of Calgary-East saw an area of need and acted. Now the seniors have programs that rival many other areas of the province.

Mr. Speaker, we are lucky in Calgary-East in that we have a world-class facility at our doorstep. I had the honour of attending the zoo gala this last August 28 at the Calgary zoo. The gala was organized to help raise funds for the new lion exhibit which will be opening this fall. The exhibit is a major addition to an already excellent attraction. Although not as dangerous as *Jurassic Park*, the prehistoric park within the Calgary zoo has long been a popular and educational attraction. The zoo is currently working on a five-phase, 10-year expansion project which will create all five of the Canadian ecosystems within the park. The first phase, aspen woodlands, opened in July of 1992 and is a great success.

Through this project the zoo wants to continue to encourage and promote the concept of conservation in your own backyard by exhibiting the diverse and wonderful habitats that make up our country, areas that must be preserved. The zoo is another example of enterprise that has the support of the community. Only 40 percent of the funding comes from the city. Much of the rest is raised at the gates or through public and corporate fund raising.

9:30

With respect to our seniors, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to congratulate the Hon. Gary Mar, Minister of Community Development, for the implementation of a budget consultation process for seniors. Within our communities we have several excellent care centres for seniors, amongst them the Valleyview Lodge, Wilkinson House, Kanerva House, the Hamilton Manor, and many, many more. We have a responsibility to our seniors in our province, and their views on affordable housing must be considered.

Mr. Speaker, I would like also to draw your attention to the cultural diversity within the constituency of Calgary-East. We are a thriving community that understands the benefits of Canada's multicultural heritage. Calgary-East includes a high number of new Canadians, a fact that I consider a great investment in the future not only of our community but of our society as a whole. This past weekend I had the honour of participating in the Greater Forest Lawn festival, another step towards working together as an effective, supportive community. The festival included groups from the ethnic, cultural, spiritual, and geographic communities in an effort to forge strong ties between the neighbourhoods and the businesses. Sponsored by the Greater Forest Lawn Initiative Council and the International Avenue business revitalization zone, the group hopes to firmly re-establish the business community along 17th Avenue. This is yet another example of the initiative of the people and businesses of our community looking forward to help create a better future.

Mr. Speaker, the government has always labeled education as a high priority, especially in low- to middle-income areas like that of Calgary-East. It is imperative that education remains a priority, as our children are obviously our biggest investment in the future. I would like to take this time to urge the government to encourage family participation throughout their children's education. It's not the sole responsibility of schools or government to educate our youth but that of every parent in our province. A child's education does not begin and end on the school steps but must be fostered and allowed to blossom within the home. We are all responsible for our children's education, and this responsibility must be promoted by our government.

Another area of grave concern to the people of Calgary-East, Mr. Speaker, is that of law and order. As in all cities there is

considerable reason for concern over the level of crime involving our youth. While the community has acted to try and improve social programs for their youth, they need our help. I think it behooves the members of this government and the Chamber as a whole to consider exerting pressure on the federal government to amend the Young Offenders Act. The violence in our communities has got to stop.

A second major concern in Calgary-East, Mr. Speaker, is the problem of prostitution. Like Edmonton, there are some communities in Calgary that have been plagued by this age-old problem. In another act of community effort and perseverance, the communities of Inglewood and Ramsay were able to get the prostitutes out of their neighbourhoods. These people once again showed what a determined group of citizens can do for their community. However, the problem has not disappeared, only moved. Now other communities are faced with the same dilemma. There must be a better solution, and this House must work with other levels of government to eradicate this problem.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I must congratulate our leader on the direction that he is taking this province. After receiving a decisive mandate from the people of this province in his first election as leader of the Progressive Conservative Party, the Hon. Ralph Klein has shown that we are indeed here to make changes. The government has shown through its policy of openness, public consultation, and responsiveness to the public that we are indeed the servants of the people. This government is in the business of dialogue and co-operation, not confrontation. It is the role of this Assembly to debate and develop beneficial and responsible policies for the people of Alberta.

Too often we find ourselves just out to score political points. We are not here for the benefit of the media but for the benefit of the province. When fiscal responsibility demands that cuts be made, let us work together to ensure that all options are considered. Scoring cheap political points does nothing to help the people of this province; only constructive criticism and original ideas truly help the people each of us represents. I know, Mr. Speaker, that the people of this province want to lay the foundation for a strong economic future. With the leadership of Mr. Klein and his insistence on fiscal responsibility in every area of government, I am confident that we will attain the goals this government has set for the province.

Mr. Speaker, the constituency of Calgary-East is a diverse and thriving community. I am proud to be the member of the Legislature for Calgary-East, as I am proud to be an Albertan. I am committed to serving both Calgary-East and all of Alberta.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

MR. ZARIWNY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Along with the others I would like to congratulate you on your election, and I look forward to working with you over the next few years.

My reply to the throne speech is an important occasion to me. I am going to break, though, with what I consider tradition and do what one of my constituents has asked me to do. He's asked me to broadcast, to tell about him and his problem, to establish a public record of his problem and his treatment by this government, to record in *Hansard*, to help him. So with your indulgence, Mr. Speaker, I've devoted my reply to the throne speech to Robert Leiski. He's asked me to be his eyes and he's asked me to be his ears.

Robert Leiski is one of my constituents. Robert Leiski, on September 30, 1993, will be cut off AISH benefits by this government.

One belief in the philosophy of the Alberta Liberal Party is freedom. We in the Liberal Party believe individual freedom and equality are foundations of our philosophy. We believe each of us should be free to pursue the many opportunities that a healthy society provides. We believe in the importance of the individual, and the individual should have the opportunity to pursue freedom.

Robert Leiski doesn't have the opportunity to pursue any freedom. Readers of the *Hansard* will see Robert Leiski in this way. Robert experienced optic nerve damage as a result of being exposed to too much oxygen after birth, in the incubator. He was a premature baby, born at three and a half months in his mother's pregnancy, weighing two and a half pounds. His twin died at birth. Now, what happened to Mr. Leiski is that he was given oxygen therapy, and what happens during oxygen therapy is that the premature infant's eyes are still developing. Arteries and veins in the retina enlarge and become convoluted. The retina becomes grayish and elevated in the outer regions. This grayish mass then detaches and sometimes flakes off. In the final stages the entire retina becomes gray and detached. The pupils then appear to be white. Surgery was performed on his lens last year and cataracts were removed, but surgical removal of cataracts does not end blindness, and the severe damage to his nerve endings continues.

Now, the thing about Robert is that the communication between his eyes and his brain is limited. Robert has tunnel vision, no peripheral vision at all. The sad part of his problem is that the tunnel vision is also blurred. He sees blobs. Nothing can be discerned distinctly. He is legally blind, and at 10 to 15 feet everything is a blob to him. To read, he uses a magnifying glass placed one inch away from his eyes, and he wears glasses.

9:40

You probably have all seen the picture of Robert Leiski – and you yourself, Mr. Speaker – on the front page of the *Edmonton Journal*. He still cannot see normally as we do. A yearly assessment is completed on him. The doctor has indicated that no miracle has happened; he is still legally blind. His doctor has reported that he is not able to work. Now, if the doctor has made that decision, how can this government make the decision that he is able to work?

He received from AISH \$810 per month. This amount was reduced to \$512 per month, which he will receive until the end of September. Of the \$550, \$120 will go towards his rent. That will leave \$430 per month which he must spend on basic needs: food, clothes, laundry. Robert was advised that he would be cut off completely from AISH benefits on the day he would receive his last cheque. He received a cheque in July and was told that this was his last cheque. No other cheque was given. Robert was in a panic; so were some of his handicapped friends. Because of his efforts in August and with the help of the media the Department of Family and Social Services extended his AISH benefits one more month to the end of September. The finance officer from the Department of Family and Social Services told him he should have received this one-month extension as a matter of course. This officer then went on to tell him, and I quote: we have an employee in exactly the same circumstances as you, and he runs a switchboard in one of our biggest offices. He was told he has three months to appeal his decision and that his success of appeal would not necessarily guarantee AISH. Surely the government and this particular information officer know that the characteristics of blindness and epileptic seizures of any two individuals are never the same.

I have seen his apartment. He doesn't live lavishly. He does not misuse his money. He does not drink; he doesn't smoke. In fact, he has only once vice, if you can call it that: he plays a music synthesizer, which his mother taught him how to play.

Robert has worked at jobs, but his on-the-job attempts have not been successful. In 1991 he got a job working in a pet shop. He spent most of his time scraping the floors and cages of pets. He had to wear a surgical mask so that the dust from droppings wouldn't enter his lungs. Unfortunately, he was treated poorly. Birds would escape from the cages because he couldn't see them when he opened the cages. The question employers would ask, and I can understand some of these questions: why should an employer hire Robert when there are reams of unemployed people out that don't have disabilities lining up for jobs? There are very few if any jobs an employer would be prepared to give Robert Leiski. Very few if any employers would be prepared to give him the training and display the patience he requires to be successful in his job. There is, unfortunately, too much prejudice in the world, and too few people would be willing to give Robert that respect that he needs. Also, sadly, work situations produce stress, and stress for Robert means epileptic seizures. Most employers would not want to risk having an employee have a seizure at work. They don't know how to react. They are fearful, and they are embarrassed, according to Robert. Due to the stress that Robert is experiencing lately with the potential for actual cutoff of his AISH payments, he has had at least one seizure of which I'm aware.

Just to continue on with Robert, his medical condition has interfered with his social life. People are afraid of him. He is an intelligent person with an excellent mind, but people usually think he is mentally handicapped because of his facial appearance. He does not normally look at your eyes. He can't see your eyes, so he can't look at them. In his words: people call me retarded when they look at me. He has a few friends, and these tend to be individuals who share with him the same physical handicaps that he has or people who have known him for a long time, since he was a child. He has observed that most people are not willing to make themselves vulnerable to developing a relationship with him. They find it awkward. He said: they call me weird. He leads an extremely lonely life, and he definitely needs help. That's the life of Robert. That's his problem.

You talk politics with the person on the street, and you're invariably going to get the response that people don't trust

politicians. Why don't they trust politicians? Because they say one thing in public, and they do something else in private. They have breached their contract with people like Robert. The concept of the political trustee has changed drastically to the point that sometimes politicians aren't trusted any more. The real issue, Mr. Speaker, is that democracy is not private. Making promises to people and then holding business as usual is not open government. Government that rules in a ruthless manner without any kind of consideration for the little guy on the street – or just the guy on the street – is not government of the people. Most people do not want to cut the legs out from underneath their fellow Albertans. This government should never forget that it is a public government. This big government needs to be compassionate and respectful of people, of individuals who like Robert have so very little.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. EVANS: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This is indeed an historic day in Alberta's Legislature as we have introduced the new rules of procedure in this House, a day that recognizes the efforts that have been put into this process by the Government House Leader, the Leader of the Opposition, the House leader on the other side, and especially our Premier. We've had a longer day than has been the norm in the past, and given that, and given that I'm sure all hon. members would like to take the opportunity to reflect on these new rules, I would move that we adjourn debate.

MR. SPEAKER: Having heard the motion of the hon. Deputy Government House Leader that debate be adjourned on this matter, all those in favour, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no. Carried.

[At 9:50 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Tuesday at 1:30 p.m.]