

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: Tuesday, April 15, 1997

3:00 p.m.

Date: 97/04/15

THE SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Order! Order! Mr. Speaker.

[Preceded by the Sergeant-at-Arms, the Speaker, accompanied by the officers of the Assembly, entered the Chamber and took the Chair]

head: **Prayers**

THE SPEAKER: Father, on this day of a new beginning, we ask for Your guidance in the responsibility we have undertaken and Your help in fulfilling our duties.

As Members of this Legislative Assembly may we faithfully serve all Albertans and, in serving them, serve You.

Amen.

Would you please take your chairs.

### Entrance of the Lieutenant Governor

[The Premier, the Clerk, and the Sergeant-at-Arms left the Chamber to attend the Lieutenant Governor]

[The Mace was draped]

[The Sergeant-at-Arms knocked on the main doors of the Chamber three times]

THE SPEAKER: Open the doors, please.

[The Associate Sergeant-at-Arms opened the doors, and the Sergeant-at-Arms entered]

THE SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Ladies and gentlemen, all rise, please.

Mr. Speaker, His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor awaits.

THE SPEAKER: Sergeant-at-Arms, admit His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor.

[A fanfare of trumpets sounded]

[Preceded by the Sergeant-at-Arms, Their Honours the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta, H.A. "Bud" Olson, and Mrs. Olson, their party, the Premier, and the Clerk entered the Chamber. His Honour took his place upon the throne]

HIS HONOUR: Please be seated.

THE SPEAKER: May it please Your Honour, the Legislative Assembly have elected me as their Speaker, though I am but little able to fulfill the important duties thus assigned to me. If in the performance of those duties I should at any time fall into error, I pray that the fault may be imputed to me and not the Assembly, whose servant I am and who through me, the better to enable them to discharge their duties to their Queen and province, hereby claim all their undoubted rights and privileges, especially that they may have freedom of speech in their debates, access to your person at all reasonable times, and that their proceedings may receive from you the most favourable construction.

MR. HAVELOCK (Provincial Secretary): Mr. Speaker, I am commanded by His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor to declare to you that he freely confides in the duty and attachment of this Assembly to Her Majesty's person and government, and not doubting that the proceedings will be conducted with wisdom, temperance, and prudence, he grants and upon all occasions will recognize and allow the Assembly's constitutional privileges.

I am commanded also to assure you that the Assembly shall have ready access to His Honour upon all suitable occasions and that all proceedings as well as your words and actions will constantly receive from him the most favourable construction.

head: **Speech from the Throne**

HIS HONOUR: Fellow Albertans, it is my privilege and my pleasure to welcome you to the First Session of the 24th Alberta Legislature, a Legislature which will see this province enter the 21st century. My government welcomes the 57 returning members and the 26 new members to the Legislative Assembly. This government represents every part of Alberta, and it is honoured to work with all Albertans to build an even better province for everyone.

From the outset Alberta was made for growth. Aboriginal people followed the bison herds for thousands of years and opened up a vast territory for commerce and settlement. At the dawn of the 20th century pioneers and sodbusters came from far and wide to a land of opportunity, a land that the statesman Sir Clifford Sifton called the last, best west.

Alberta's rich soil, fresh water, immense forests, and lavish mineral wealth were the raw material from which generations of Albertans built their homes, their communities, and their dreams. They created a tradition of fortitude and personal responsibility with small government, low taxation, and balanced budgets, a tradition of hard work, openness, and integrity. In a matter of decades that tradition laid the foundation for the youngest and the most highly skilled, educated, and productive workforce in the country. This is the tradition to which Albertans returned in putting our fiscal house in order over the last four years. Today our task is to build on that foundation, to plan carefully for the prosperity that Albertans' blessings and efforts will continue to create.

On March 11, 1997, the people of Alberta endorsed our government's agenda, an agenda for growth aimed squarely at ensuring that Albertans continue to benefit from growth, prosperity, and jobs and quality, responsive, and affordable public services. The business of this session will focus on fulfilling that agenda.

Alberta's economy is thriving. More Albertans are working than ever before, and our unemployment rate is the lowest in Canada. Financial experts are calling for our province to lead the nation in economic growth and jobs. Scores of individuals and businesses continue to affirm that forecast by locating, investing, and creating jobs in Alberta.

It is an exciting time to be in our province, yet it is also a time for careful planning. Balanced budgets, diminishing debt, and the lowest overall taxes in Canada are a solid foundation for continued economic growth, prosperity, and jobs, but Albertans know that their province is a work in progress.

Increasing growth brings new pressures on physical infrastructure, educational institutions, and salaries in the public sector. In keeping with its practice of consulting Albertans on important issues, the government will canvass leaders from municipalities

and the health, education, labour, business, and general public sectors in an Alberta Growth Summit later this year. This forum will address how our province can respond to the pressures of growth and the rising demand for public services while continuing to live within its means.

As well, the government will explore ways to create opportunities for Albertans to work towards realizing their hopes and dreams. It will ask Albertans for their ideas on how government can make it easier for people to save money for their retirement and their children's education.

Fiscal responsibility remains a priority. Having reduced the net provincial debt by half, to \$3.5 billion, the government will keep paying down that debt. If current trends prevail, the net debt will be gone by the year 2005, some 16 years ahead of the originally legislated target.

Prudent fiscal management over the last four years has allowed our government to absorb substantial cuts in federal transfer payments and to hold the line on taxes, a notorious inhibitor of economic growth. This year the government will introduce for Albertans' consideration and discussion a law to cap its share of personal and corporate income taxes and other taxes at current levels unless and until Albertans expressly vote to increase such taxes in a referendum.

Low- and middle-income working families will see their taxes drop by up to \$500 in 1997 due to the new Alberta family employment tax credit. Taxes on aviation fuel and equipment will be scaled back to improve the province's competitive position.

The government's new economic development strategy, *Building on the Alberta Advantage*, provides a framework for further growth in key sectors of our economy.

Our government will continue to invest in research and development in Alberta's areas of strength such as energy, forestry, agriculture, and health and medical services and to apply the results to help firms develop and acquire new technologies. It will work with business and developers of technology on directories and databases in sectors like advanced materials and biotechnology. The government's planned uses of information technology should encourage Alberta firms to develop new products and services in that area for use and sale at home and abroad.

Our government will support our export-driven economy by reinvesting strategically in highway projects like the north/south trade corridor and our resource road programs. It will play a prominent role in Canada's Year of Asia Pacific by hosting energy ministers from the Far East and by following up on Team Canada's trade mission to that region. Its ongoing efforts to inform Alberta businesses about international trade and investment opportunities include refining the Alberta international export strategy.

Alberta is attracting record numbers of visitors from around the world, and the government will continue to work with the Alberta Tourism Partnership to promote our province as an outstanding destination for tourism.

In energy the government will consult with the industry on integrating the management of information among them, on streamlining business rules, and on maintaining Alberta's pre-eminence in energy-related research and technology without direct subsidies from government. It will increase certainty for developers of the oil sands by entrenching the major features of the new generic royalty regime in legislation. It will amend the rules governing the tenure of minerals to give industry more clarity and flexibility. Having led the way in North America in restructuring

its electricity industry, the government will work with interested parties to set the terms and the pace of deregulating the industry further.

Our government will promote the processing of agricultural products through efforts like the industry-led agri-food and -fibre value-added fund. This will encourage advances in areas such as agricultural products used in medicine and health science. As well, the government will restructure its crop insurance program to increase its share of support at lower levels of coverage while broadening the base of coverage and reducing both producers' premiums by an average of 25 percent and the demand for unbudgeted assistance.

Our government will never lose sight of its duty to the people of Alberta, the duty to provide programs and services that help them to take responsibility for their own future and to enrich the quality of life in their communities. All Albertans should have the opportunity to benefit from the continued growth and prosperity of their province. Perhaps the most important tool to that end is learning. The government will strive to improve the quality of education and to prepare Albertans for the growing demand for skilled jobs in our province.

In primary and secondary education our government will build on the base which led Alberta students to score the highest in science in a national program and third highest in an international study on science and math. The government will continue to work to improve high school completion rates, students' achievement in math, and students' access to information through technology. Strategies to these ends include expanding distance learning programs, changing guidance counseling programs to raise students' awareness of career options, establishing curriculum standards in technology for students and technical standards and certification requirements for teachers, making career and technical studies a permanent part of the high school curriculum, and changing the curriculum in the earlier grades to emphasize problem-solving which helps students relate math to actual situations.

In adult education our government will build on the success of the access fund and work from its new human resource strategy, *People and Prosperity*, to help Albertans get the knowledge and skills they need to contribute to the marketplace. Efforts to do so include revising Alberta's apprenticeship and industrial training programs to ensure that they meet the challenges of globalization, technological change, and the rising demand for skilled labour; developing an intellectual infrastructure partnership between the public and private sectors to invest in research aimed at ensuring Alberta's competitive advantage; and launching a project which combines career information and consulting programs with job placement services for young people who have left high school without the skills and credentials that they need for sustained employment.

Health remains a vital priority for our government. It will keep working to ensure high-quality, accessible, and sustainable health care with stable and predictable funding. It will address current and future pressure points and proceed with reforms aimed at preventing illness and injury. These efforts include legislation to protect the privacy of information about Albertans' personal health; an accountability framework to set out expectations of our health system and to measure its performance; a health standards framework to ensure Albertans have access to and receive quality health services; improved systems of health-related information and technology for more informed decision-making; a model of Best Practices for and an administrative review of the regional

health authorities to promote the widespread use of practices which are working well; a new, simplified system of appeals and complaints to address patients' concerns about the delivery of health services; and a review of long-term care services for seniors.

The government remains committed to helping people who are unable to provide for themselves. Increased decision-making at the local level will continue with the children's service initiative, a community-planned, government-supported program to serve the needs of children and families involving more than 10,000 Albertans from diverse avenues, disciplines, and government departments. The early intervention program aims to keep children from requiring crisis services later on. Other efforts include developing a co-ordinated national strategy to help needy children, introducing legislation to co-ordinate the delivery of services at the community level to persons with developmental disabilities, and implementing legislation to protect against the physical, emotional, or financial abuse of seniors.

Recognizing the importance of keeping our communities safe, the government will focus on further reducing serious and violent crime. It will work towards implementing enhanced, consolidated legislation to help victims of crime, and it will encourage efforts such as the alternative measures program for sentencing less serious offenders and community-based youth justice committees to help young offenders become lawful and productive members of society.

As well, the government will give Albertans more access to less formal and less costly procedures to settle small claims suits by increasing the jurisdiction of the Provincial Court.

Reflecting Albertans' willingness to take more responsibility for themselves and their communities, the government will amend legislation to give community groups more authority to operate and manage provincially owned historical facilities. It will work to change technical rules governing the election of local authorities. The government will establish community lottery boards to set priorities and to determine how to spend lottery funds allocated to communities on a per capita basis, and it will propose amendments to reduce the bureaucratic burden on small charities and fund-raising businesses and to protect donors further.

Our government will phase in the application of freedom of information and protection of privacy legislation to local public bodies like municipal governments, school boards, and regional health authorities. It will keep providing Canada's first government-wide business plans and performance measures as well as financial reporting that is clear, timely, and comprehensive.

Our government will continue to listen to Albertans and to respond to their concerns. It will seek the advice of engineers, geophysicists, geologists, and architects on reforming their regulatory environments to ensure both competitiveness and public safety. It will work with aboriginal, scientific, recreational, and environmental groups, industry, and the public on defining a common vision and a conservation strategy for Alberta's forests.

The government will continue to provide quality, affordable, and responsive public services. It will maintain its focus on and carefully targeted reinvestment in Albertans' priorities such as education, health, jobs, seniors, and the needy. Shortly the Provincial Treasurer will present the government's detailed fiscal plan, Budget '97.

Despite all that has changed since the early days of our province, at least one thing has not. On the eve of the 21st century people are still coming to "the last, best west." They continue to bring their skills, their resources, and their dreams to this house we call Alberta.

My government has a plan for growth. Budget '97 and the

departmental business plans are the specifications for the next phase of this great work in progress: the Alberta Growth Summit will provide the blueprints, and the government's ongoing work with Albertans will be the actual construction.

Fellow Albertans, our tradition and our foundation are strong. Our builders, the people of Alberta, are prepared to take on the challenges of growth and leadership in the years to come, and our welcome mat is out for the world. As we look out our door to a new millennium, we see opportunities as limitless as the prairie sky.

Now I leave you to the business of this session confident that as elected representatives you will in every way fulfill your responsibilities to Albertans.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly, I pray that the blessing of God may rest on your deliberations.

God bless Alberta.

God bless Canada.

God save the Queen.

THE SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: All rise, please.

[Preceded by the Sergeant-at-Arms, Their Honours, their party, and the Premier left the Chamber as a fanfare of trumpets sounded]

[The Mace was uncovered]

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members and ladies and gentlemen, would you please be seated as we await the return of the Premier.

[The Premier returned to the Chamber]

head: **Introduction of Bills**

**Bill 1  
Freedom of Information and  
Protection of Privacy Amendment Act, 1997**

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce Bill 1, the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Amendment Act, 1997.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 1 demonstrates our continued commitment to extend open, accessible, and accountable government to the people of Alberta. When the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act was first introduced three years ago, we made the commitment to extend its scope to include schools, health authorities, postsecondary institutions, and municipalities. Bill 1 allows us to proceed with this commitment in a planned and orderly fashion.

Thank you.

[Leave granted; Bill 1 read a first time]

**Tablings**

THE SPEAKER: I have the honour to table a copy of the speech graciously given by His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor.

**Certificates of Election**

THE CLERK: Mr. Speaker, I have received from the Chief Electoral Officer of Alberta pursuant to the Election Act a report containing results of the general election conducted on the 11th

day of March 1997, which states that an election was conducted in the following electoral divisions, and the said report further shows that the following members were duly elected.

[The Clerk read the election returns]

head: **Government Motions**

1. Mr. Klein moved:  
Be it resolved that the speech of His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor to this Assembly be taken into consideration tomorrow.

[Motion carried]

2. Mrs. Black moved:  
Be it resolved that the Votes and Proceedings of this Assembly be printed after first having been perused by Mr. Speaker and that he do appoint the printing thereof and that no person but such as he shall appoint do presume to print the same.

[Motion carried]

3. Mr. Hancock moved:  
Be it resolved that the select standing committees for the present session of the Legislative Assembly be appointed for the following purposes:
  - (1) Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund,
  - (2) Law and Regulations,
  - (3) Legislative Offices,
  - (4) Private Bills,
  - (5) Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing,
  - (6) Public Accounts, and
  - (7) Public Affairs;
 and, in addition thereto, there be appointed for the duration of the present Legislature a Special Standing Committee on Members' Services.

[Motion carried]

MR. HAVELOCK: Mr. Speaker, I move that unanimous consent be granted to waive Standing Orders 49(1) and (3), providing for the establishment of a striking committee to prepare, recommend, and report a list of the members, chairmen, and deputy chairmen to comprise the Assembly's seven standing committees and one special standing committee.

THE SPEAKER: Having heard the motion by the hon. Government House Leader, those in favour of the motion, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE SPEAKER: Those members opposed to the motion, please say no. So ordered.

MR. HAVELOCK: Mr. Speaker, I move that unanimous consent be granted to waive Standing Order 38(1)(a) in order to move the motion appointing the chairmen, deputy chairmen, and members to comprise the Assembly's seven standing and one special standing committees.

THE SPEAKER: Having heard the motion by the hon. Government House Leader, those in favour of the motion, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE SPEAKER: Those members opposed to the motion, please say no. So ordered.

4. Mr. Havelock moved:  
Be it resolved that the following members be appointed to the Assembly's seven standing and one special standing committees.
  - (1) Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund Committee: Mr. Pham, chairman; Mr. Doerksen, deputy chairman; Ms Carlson; Mr. Clegg; Mr. Hierath; Mr. Loughheed; Mr. Shariff; Mr. Stevens; and Mr. Zwozdesky.
  - (2) Law and Regulations Committee: Mrs. Tarchuk, chairman; Mr. Doerksen, deputy chairman; Mr. Amery; Mr. Broda; Mr. Boutilier; Mrs. Burgener; Mr. Coutts; Mr. Dickson; Mr. Johnson; Ms Kryczka; Mrs. Laing; Ms Leibovici; Mr. MacDonald; Mr. Melchin; Ms Olsen; Mr. Renner, Mr. Severtson; Mrs. Sloan; Mr. Thurber; Mr. Trynchy; and Mr. Yankowsky.
  - (3) Legislative Offices Committee: Mr. Langevin, chairman; Mr. Friedel, deputy chairman; Ms Barrett; Mr. Dickson; Mrs. Fritz; Mr. Hierath; Mr. Jacques; Mrs. O'Neill; and Mr. Sapers.
  - (4) Members' Services: Mr. Kowalski, chairman; Mr. Renner, deputy chairman; Ms Barrett; Mr. Coutts; Mr. Doerksen; Mrs. Forsyth; Mr. Herard; Mr. Jacques; Ms Olsen; Mrs. Sloan; and Mr. Wickman.
  - (5) Private Bills Committee: Ms Graham, chairman; Mrs. Burgener, deputy chairman; Mr. Bonner; Mr. Cao; Mr. Cardinal; Mr. Coutts; Mrs. Fritz; Mr. Herard; Mr. Langevin; Mr. MacDonald; Mr. Magnus; Mr. Marz; Mr. McFarland; Mrs. Paul; Mr. Pham; Mrs. Sloan; Mrs. Soetaert; Mr. Strang; Mr. Tannas; Mrs. Tarchuk; and Mr. Thurber.
  - (6) Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing Committee: Mr. Stevens, chairman; Mr. Boutilier, deputy chairman; Mr. Cao; Mr. Clegg; Mr. Dickson; Mr. Fischer; Mrs. Forsyth; Mr. Gibbons; Mrs. Gordon; Mr. Hlady; Mr. Klapstein; Ms Kryczka; Ms Leibovici; Dr. Massey; Dr. Pannu; Mr. Renner; Mr. Sapers; Mr. Severtson; Mr. Strang; Mr. Tannas; and Mrs. Tarchuk.
  - (7) Public Accounts Committee: Mr. White, chairman; Mr. Shariff, deputy chairman; Mr. Amery; Ms Blakeman; Mr. Ducharme; Mr. Friedel; Mr. Hierath; Mr. Hlady; Mr. Johnson; Mr. Loughheed; Mr. Melchin; Dr. Nicol; Mrs. O'Neill; Dr. Pannu; Mr. Stevens; Mr. Yankowsky; and Mr. Zwozdesky.
  - (8) Public Affairs Committee: Mr. Strang, chairman; Mr. Cardinal, deputy chairman; and all Members of the Legislative Assembly.

[Motion carried]

[At 3:50 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Wednesday at 1:30 p.m.]