

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Tuesday, February 16, 1999** 3:00 p.m.

Date: 99/02/16

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

[The Clerk read the Royal Proclamation dated February 15, 1999, summoning the Members of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta to convene on this date]

THE CLERK: Members and guests, please be seated.

[The Sergeant-at-Arms left the Chamber]

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: Welcome.

O God, as we open this Third Session of the 24th Legislature, we thank You for Your generous blessings to our province.

Help us to be open to Your loving kindness throughout this year and to pass Your kindness on to one another and to those we have been elected to serve.

Amen.

Ladies and gentlemen and hon. members, to recognize the International Year of Older Persons, 1999, I would invite the Central Lions' Seniors' Choir to lead us in the singing of our national anthem. There are two groups of them, located in both the galleries at this end of the building. Please join us in the language of your choice.

O Canada, our home and native land!
 True patriot love in all thy sons command.
 With glowing hearts we see thee rise,
 The True North strong and free!
 From far and wide, O Canada,
 We stand on guard for thee.
 God keep our land glorious and free!
 O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.
 O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.
 Thank you. Please be seated.

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 SPEAKER: Hon. members and ladies and gentlemen, before the arrival of His Honour I'd like to tell you about some activities that take place in this Chamber outside of our sessions.

We are not the only parliamentary body that meets in this House. In fact, our Chamber is home to more model parliaments than any other parliamentary jurisdiction in Canada.

In the past year we've had the following organizations conduct model legislatures in this House: the Alberta Debate and Speech Association, the University of Alberta Model Parliament, Tuxis, Mount Royal College Debating Society, Parlement Jeunesse de l'Alberta, the Forum for Young Albertans, the Rt. Hon. Sir Winston Churchill Society, and Francophonie Jeunesse de l'Alberta.

As part of these outreach initiatives, the floor of the Chamber was

for the first time open to the public on Canada Day last July. This exercise was an unqualified success. Well over 4,000 people walked through the Chamber and the Confederation Room. In total in excess of 6,000 visitors spent part of that day at the Legislature Building and the grounds.

Let me also let you know that plans are well under way with our friends in the Alberta-Northwest Territories Command, Royal Canadian Legion for the first annual Mr. Speaker's Alberta Youth Model Parliament. Organized by the Legislative Assembly Office and in partnership with the Legion and with their generous financial support, this event will see 83 grade 10 students and 18 social studies teachers drawn from throughout the province meeting here on April 15 and 16. All participants will learn about the inner workings and the dynamics of our province's system of parliamentary government, and the students will assume the role that we fulfill here as legislators and as representatives of Alberta's constituencies.

This endeavour is the first of its kind in western Canada, and I and I'm sure all members look forward to working with some of Alberta's future leaders.

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

head: Speech from the Throne

HIS HONOUR: Please be seated.

Fellow Albertans, it is my privilege and my pleasure to welcome you to the Third Session of the 24th Alberta Legislature.

On the eve of the year 2000 Alberta is strong. In responding to the challenges of further economic growth and to the needs of the people it serves, my government strives to strike the right balance. It will remain fiscally responsible, and it will keep working with Albertans on steady, targeted action on their priorities, especially health, education, the economy, and the environment.

Our government must make careful choices within the constraints of its budget, declining revenues, and the uncertain global economy. It will continue to invest carefully in health, education, advanced education, social services, and infrastructure. While protecting these areas, the government will continue its leadership role in taxation. It will chart an innovative new course ensuring that Albertans' taxes remain the lowest in Canada. Our government will maintain a balanced budget, and having worked towards paying off the net provincial debt during the next year, it will introduce a new debt repayment plan to see us into the new century.

In the first and foremost priority area of health there will be a predictable funding base for the province's 17 regional health authorities to help meet the needs of a growing and aging

population. There will be more emphasis on preventing illness and injury and on promoting healthy lifestyles through efforts like a metabolic screening program for newborns. The government will review mental health services for children and improve the delivery of mental health services in our communities. Service will improve further in important areas like surgeries and diagnostics.

The government will complete its review of long-term care. This review will feed into a broad initiative to assess the impact of an aging population on all government programs for our seniors and will help Alberta prepare to meet the challenges and opportunities presented by an aging population over the next 15 to 20 years. These efforts will culminate in a forum on seniors in late 1999 and are most appropriate in this the International Year of Older Persons.

To improve patient care, our government will continue to develop a provinciewide system of health-related information. It will introduce new legislation to protect information related to Albertans' personal health. As well, there will be legislation to give government further authority to protect our publicly funded health system. This will ensure the province's ability to comply with the Canada Health Act.

A provincial health summit to be held later this month will give recommendations on how to ensure that Albertans continue to have access to a high-quality, affordable, and publicly sustainable health care system.

Children are our future and a key priority for our government. It will complete a new system of delivering more integrated and preventive services for children and families through 18 regional authorities as part of the children's initiative. Several government departments will co-ordinate their efforts through the children's secretariat. The government will place more emphasis on early intervention to prevent problems from occurring. It will promote the healthy development of young Albertans by monitoring key indicators of their health such as the rate of babies with low birth weights and by enabling students with special needs like occupational therapy to get the health care that they need in their own school.

Our government will provide further support for children in low-income families through the national child benefit. It will boost efforts to find adoptive families for children in its permanent care, and it will host a forum on children's issues this fall to explore further ways to improve the well-being of our children.

The government will reshape programs to help persons with disabilities participate more fully in society. It will act on the recommendations from the summit on lotteries and gaming, including increasing problem gambling treatment and prevention and establishing a gaming research institute to examine issues related to gaming, which will provide the basis for future policies. In a national context it will continue to improve and clarify the relationship between governments on social policy, to reform the Canada pension plan, and to work to improve the federal system as a whole.

Ensuring that our young people receive a quality education is another priority for Albertans. Our students are doing well, but the government will focus further on literacy and computer literacy. Math teachers in junior and senior high schools will receive training to help students with the new math curriculum. Aboriginal children will get more access to curriculum and resources to meet their learning needs. Students who are in short-term institutional placements like custody for young offenders and who have complex special needs will have better access to services. An audit of the province's school buildings will lead to safer and healthier learning environments.

In advanced education our government aims to double the number of postsecondary students in the fields of computing,

communications technology, physics, and computer-related engineering over the next two years. To that end, there will be 23,000 more spaces for postsecondary students through the access fund. There will be a new, provinciewide network of adult learning called Campus Alberta to make programs more accessible and to create seamless pathways from diplomas through degrees and between formal and informal continuing education.

Albertans' next priority is the economy. We can expect continued growth but not at the robust levels of the last two years. In 1998 employment in our province grew by 57,000 jobs, or nearly 4 percent, the highest rate in Canada, our average unemployment rate was tied at a national low of 5.7 percent, and there were 600 major capital projects valued at \$46 billion under construction.

Our government will build on these successes by continuing to diversify our economy, especially in the development of new technologies. It will strive to increase the number of Albertans working in the information and communications technology sector from 40,000 today to 75,000 by the year 2005. It will promote the Alberta advantage through efforts like the recently completed trade mission to the American Pacific Northwest and Mexico and expanded training at the CNPC/Alberta Petroleum Centre in Beijing, which celebrates its 10th anniversary this year.

Our government will work towards ensuring that all Alberta schools, businesses, and homes have high-speed access to information, government services, lifelong learning, and electronic commerce through the Internet by early in the next century. It will link municipalities, interested groups, and government electronically and upgrade aging computer systems.

Recognizing the importance of maintaining Alberta's infrastructure, our government will begin to review the management of transportation facilities in the province with a view to using funds most efficiently. It will continue work on the north/south trade corridor, including harmonized regulations for the movement of trucks from Canada to Mexico. It will encourage action on the recommendations in the Estey report to improve the transportation of grain and to save money for producers. It will reintroduce revised legislation consolidating all of its traffic safety laws following further consultation with Albertans.

In the area of energy, customers will be able to choose their retailer of electricity starting with major commercial enterprises on April 1, 1999. The government will streamline the administration of oil sands tenure and mining approvals. It will improve geological information on minerals to attract increased investment. It will work with the federal and other provincial governments to settle the issue of jurisdiction over pipelines. In consultation with industry it will implement recommendations from its joint review of business rules for natural gas royalties, and it will create a policy on developing nonenergy minerals.

The agri-industry remains a significant contributor to Alberta's economy. Our government continues to encourage the growth of agricultural value-added production. In agriculture we will see a long-term strategy to monitor water quality developed by government, industry, and other interested parties. There will be new provincial standards for the construction and operation of livestock feeding operations to complement municipal decisions on land use.

After two and a half years of public consultation the government will introduce a new framework for the governance of irrigation districts. It will continue to support farmers with effective risk management tools such as the farm income disaster program, which is being emulated in other provinces. Our government will bring together producers from Alberta and Montana to alleviate concerns over the movement of commodities across the international border.

There will be a new, more accountable framework for Alberta's

tourism industry overseen by the new Strategic Tourism Marketing Council. Reflecting the shared responsibility for marketing tourism, the government will contract out marketing programs while focusing on areas such as research and image control and leading a joint effort with the private sector to raise Alberta's profile internationally. Our government will take part in the 1999 International Travel Exposition in Kangwon, Korea, celebrating the 25th anniversary of Kangwon's twinning with our province.

In advanced technology the government will work with its partners in the postsecondary and industrial sectors to increase the research and development of new technologies in Alberta. There will be further partnerships to foster investment in key areas like biotechnology and information and communications technology through the science and research fund.

Further reforms to the governance, registration, continuing competence, and conduct of professionals in the fields of health, accounting, and forestry will make those procedures more transparent while continuing to protect the public. Our government will help to safeguard entitlements earned by members of employee pensions and to ensure that employers and plan members are treated equitably. It will modernize its insurance laws to benefit consumers through measures such as safeguarding the solvency of insurance companies and removing barriers to competition in marketing.

Another priority for our government is caring for Alberta's precious natural environment. To that end, it is reviewing the province's environmental regulations to ensure that it maintains the most stringent standards in North America. The government will strengthen further the protection of our natural heritage by consolidating legislation and by revising its system of classes of protected areas and recreation areas to clarify the purpose and the management of sites within each class. It will convene a roundtable on climate change with interested Albertans to develop a plan to cut the emission of greenhouse gases and to recommend a strategy for climate research and technology emphasizing Alberta's environmental and energy advantage.

The government will ensure that the high quality of water in Alberta is protected through the new Water Act, which took effect last month. It will investigate the feasibility of a program to help flood-prone communities protect themselves. It will complete four new subagreements harmonizing environmental legislation on a national basis.

In other important initiatives our government will present a new housing policy to address short-term pressures on and the longer term requirements of Albertans with needs.

In this centennial year of the signing of Treaty 8 the government will work with Ottawa to resolve outstanding claims under that treaty. Recognizing that aboriginal Albertans should have access to the same opportunities and quality of life as others, it will prepare a framework for aboriginal policy clarifying Albertans' relationship with aboriginal people in the province and encouraging capacity-building and self-reliance.

The government will act on recommendations from the Justice Summit held last month. It will make it easier and more effective for separated and divorced parents to enforce court-ordered maintenance of and access to their children. It will target organized crime, together with police chiefs and the RCMP, through a provincial strategy starting this April 1.

Our government will continue to support Alberta's thriving arts, libraries, and cultural sectors, which contribute up to \$2 billion in economic activity each year and are essential to its commitment to lifelong learning and a high quality of life for Albertans. Beginning this April 1, the new film development grant program will provide \$5 million in grants to support Alberta-based filmmakers.

Having worked to combat the so-called millennium bug on a governmentwide basis since 1996, the government will ensure that its computer systems are year 2000 ready on schedule, by next month.

Our government will continue to listen to Albertans and give them further links to government such as a permanent, toll-free telephone number, a new site on the Internet, and quarterly reporting incorporating information in addition to its finances.

Fellow Albertans, we are blessed to live in a province which is the pride of a country repeatedly declared by the United Nations to have the highest quality of life in the world. Our government thanks our municipalities, our teachers and school boards, our health care professionals, our police services, our volunteers, our community organizations, and everyone else who has worked so hard to serve the people of this magnificent province.

My government will keep working with Albertans to strike the best balance, to provide quality programs and services at a sustainable cost, and to build an even better Alberta as we approach a new century and a new millennium.

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 SPEAKER: Please be seated.

[The Mace was uncovered]

[The Premier returned to the Chamber]

head: Introduction of Bills

THE SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

Bill 1

Fiscal Responsibility Act

MR. KLEIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg leave to introduce Bill 1, the Fiscal Responsibility Act.

This bill will continue to make budget deficits illegal. Mr. Speaker, it will set up a schedule to repay our accumulated debt once the net debt is gone, and it will provide a larger revenue cushion to protect against the danger of future deficits. This bill will also provide that at least 75 percent of excess revenues be allocated to debt repayment with up to 25 percent available for in-year spending increases.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans have told us that they want to be debt free, and this bill shows that we have listened.

Thank you.

[Leave granted; Bill 1 read a first time]

head: **Tabling**

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, I have the honour to table a copy

of the speech graciously given by His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor.

head: **Government Motions**

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I move that the speech of His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor to this Assembly be taken into consideration Wednesday.

[Motion carried]

MR. HAVELOCK: Mr. Speaker, I move 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]

MR. HANCOCK: Mr. Speaker, I move 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.

[Motion carried]

MR. HANCOCK: Mr. Speaker, I seek the Assembly's unanimous consent to waive Standing Order 49(1), 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.

THE SPEAKER: Having heard the request from the hon. Government House Leader, all those in favour of granting unanimous consent, please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

MR. HANCOCK: Mr. Speaker, I seek the Assembly's unanimous consent 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 committees.

THE SPEAKER: Having heard the motion as put forward by the hon. Government House Leader, would all those members in favour of granting unanimous consent please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

MR. HANCOCK: Mr. Speaker, I move that the following members be appointed to the Assembly's seven standing committees:

- (1) Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund: Mr. Pham, chairman; Mr. Doerksen, deputy chairman; Mr. Bonner; Ms Carlson; Mr. Clegg; Mr. Hierath; Mr. Lougheed; Mr. Shariff; and Mr. Stevens.
- (2) Law and Regulations: Mrs. Tarchuk, chairman; Mr. Doerksen, deputy chairman; Mr. Amery; Mr. Broda; Mr. Boutilier; Mrs. Burgener; Mr. Coutts; Mr. Dickson; Mrs. Fritz; Mr. Johnson; 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: Mr. Langevin, chairman; Mr. Friedel, deputy chairman; Ms Barrett; Mr. Dickson; Mrs. Fritz; Mr. Hierath; Mr. Jacques; Ms Olsen; and Mrs. O'Neill.
- (4) Private Bills: Ms Graham, chairman; Mrs. Burgener, deputy chairman; Mr. Bonner; Mr. Cao; Mr. Cardinal; Mr. Coutts; Ms Kryczka; Mr. Langevin; Mr. MacDonald; Mr. Magnus; Mr. Marz; Mr. McFarland; Ms Paul; Mr. Pham; Mrs. Sloan; Mrs. Soetaert; Mr. Strang; Mr. Tannas; Mrs. Tarchuk; Mr. Thurber; and Mr. Zwozdesky.
- (5) Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing: Mr. Stevens, chairman; Mr. Boutilier, deputy chairman; Ms Barrett; Mr. Cao; Mr. Clegg; Mr. Dickson; Mr. Fischer; Mrs. Forsyth; Mr. Gibbons; Mrs. Gordon; Mr. Hlady; Mr. Klapstein; Ms Kryczka; Ms Leibovici; Dr. Massey; Mr. Renner; Mr. Sapers; Mr. Severtson; Mr. Strang; Mr. Tannas; and Mrs. Tarchuk.
- (6) Public Accounts: Mr. White, chairman; Mr. Shariff, deputy chairman; Mr. Amery; Ms Blakeman; Mr. Ducharme; Mr. Hierath; Mr. Hlady; Mr. Johnson; Mr. Klapstein; Mr. Lougheed; Mr. Melchin; Ms Olsen; Mrs. O'Neill; Dr. Pannu; Mr. Sapers; Mr. Stevens; and Mr. Yankowsky.
- (7) Public Affairs: Mr. Strang, chairman; Mr. Cardinal, deputy chairman; and all members of the Assembly.

[Motion carried]

MR. HANCOCK: Mr. Speaker, I again seek the Assembly's unanimous consent to waive Standing Order 38(1)(a) in order to move a motion which provides for a change in membership to the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services.

THE SPEAKER: Having heard the request put forward by the hon. Government House Leader, would all those members in favour of granting unanimous consent please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no. So ordered.

MR. HANCOCK: Mr. Speaker, I move that the following changes to the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services be approved by the Assembly: that Dr. Pannu replace Ms Barrett and that Ms Haley replace Mrs. Forsyth.

[Motion carried]

[At 3:49 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Wednesday at 1:30 p.m.]