

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

**Title: Monday, February 27, 2006**

**8:00 p.m.**

Date: 06/02/27

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Please be seated.

head: **Motions Other than Government Motions**

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

### High-speed Rail System

501. Mr. Backs moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to develop an electric high-speed rail system by 2012 with a route that would include Edmonton city centre, Edmonton International Airport, Calgary International Airport, and Calgary city centre.

**Mr. Backs:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Sometimes it is time to dream, and other times it is necessary to act, to do something to create new beginnings. If we do not act soon on high-speed rail, many of Alberta's options will begin to disappear and potential costs will increase dramatically. This will be especially true as the land for right-of-way along possible routes is developed for other uses. It costs much more to buy when it is built up.

If we are to even adequately plan for a better Alberta, we must move on high-speed rail soon. So often this Conservative government of our province fails to look ahead, fails to plan, and fails to act when opportunities arise. Timidity and lack of vision should not be the words that are used to describe the government of the province of our Alberta.

High-speed rail has been killed many times. Big interests have opposed high-speed rail in the past. It does not fit the auto, oil, and highway ethos that dominated the second half of the 20th century in Alberta, but it isn't the 20th century anymore. High-speed rail has been around for many years and has proven very successful in many parts of the world, but government in Alberta has thrown all the public dollars into highways and airports. There has been little to no support for the passenger rail service that actually dominated our province here a century ago.

If you go to much of Europe and Asia and even the United States, you see modern rail service. You see high-speed rail service that is a key part of healthy economies and integral to economic development. We have reached the population levels in Alberta that can justify such a population link. It is vital for the economic health of our Alberta that we take our responsibility here seriously. This is not an exercise in picking winners like Alberta endured when an earlier Tory regime bungled diversification attempts in the 1980s. Rail development is an investment in transportation infrastructure. It is an investment in growth, and it is clearly an investment in economic development and the future.

It should be obvious that high-speed rail cannot be viewed as a stand-alone business that will be developed aside and apart from the public interest. Why do we continue to subsidize highways if this is the case? Why do we consider LRT to be a public good? There will be a need for government commitment and investment in the future public interest of all Albertans. High-speed rail will need a commitment of public dollars, but these investments will save government expenditures in other areas.

Clean air and reduced emissions are now worth something. Certainly, an electric high-speed rail system will be much cleaner

environmentally than the hundreds of thousands of cars belching out pollutants as they head between and in our cities. Wouldn't it be nice to remove that choking brown haze that so often envelopes Calgary and sometimes Edmonton? The lack of air pollution is a clear public good created by electric rail transportation.

We'll pave less of our prime Alberta farmland. High-speed rail will save a hyperwidening of the QE II highway and other roads. If we can save a good portion of the costs of increasing capacity on that highway alone, we could save billions that would have had to have been spent by the public purse. We'll save in maintenance. Highway expansion and upkeep is not cheap in a cold climate. Remember that steel rails don't grow potholes.

With high-speed rail Alberta will save in health care costs. In 2004 there were 24,289 injured and 387 people killed in traffic accidents in Alberta. A lot of people get injured and killed on our highways, but it's big news around the world when there are people hurt or killed in a train accident that doesn't involve cars. These accidents occur rarely. Modern train systems are safe.

We will also save in simply having less lost travel time. Just think of it: a downtown to downtown trip in 83 minutes. That's less time than you need for security at the airports. Such short, convenient trips will increase economic activity, will better integrate the Alberta economy on its north-south axis, and will unite Alberta more as a single economic unit. This in the end would create more traffic for both airports in the cities. The Edmonton International should not fear and perhaps could become a stronger, alternative air hub as Arctic and cross-polar flights increase.

One of the best reasons to build high-speed rail is the labour market. We will further integrate the Alberta labour market by making it much easier to make weekly commutes to the burgeoning petrochemical upgrader developments near Edmonton, which will need southern Alberta labour. Indeed, that could be the first spur expansion before we look to expanding to Fort McMurray and Lethbridge, and to look forward to the construction phase, which won't happen for a few years, we must anticipate a likely downturn in the labour market. The conventional oil patch will cool down after it is saturated with wells everywhere in a couple of years. There are hundreds of thousands of workers dependent on that conventional oil patch. That is driving 80 per cent of the activity right now. Most of these workers will not be taken up in the less labour-intensive oil sands. Most long-term Albertans like me remember that booms don't last forever. When the construction will start looks to be a great time to build high-speed rail.

I know that the government will be undertaking a ridership study, and I hope that study will not be hijacked by vested interests preferring the status quo. There will be plenty of increased activity for airlines and buses if this rail link is completed. Any study must factor in all the increased traffic that will be created, not just the division of the existing pie. If you build it, they will ride.

Alberta is the best place in the world to live. We don't have tsunamis, we don't have hurricanes, we don't have earthquakes, and we hardly have winter anymore, yet we still have some of the best skiing anywhere and other outdoor opportunities from the badlands to the Rockies to the northern boreal forest to the Cypress Hills to the prairies. We are quickly growing world class in unique cultural opportunities. We have so much.

We must build on our new economies of scale. We must take advantage of this clear opportunity that presents itself to us. Alberta is worth it. We must create the proper transportation links between our twin cities. We must not only prove Alberta's greatness but even improve upon it. There is a great future for our Alberta, and we must look to building it now. We have just seen the success of our Canadian and Alberta athletes in Italy. A Summer Olympics bid

would not be far behind the completion of a high-speed rail link between Edmonton and Calgary.

I urge this Assembly and the government to move quickly on high-speed rail. Please make it so. Don't miss the opportunity. Please make sure it is built this time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Before I recognize the next speaker, I would just like to point out that if we could show some respect for people who have the floor and keep the side conversations down, the Speaker would really appreciate that tonight.

**Dr. Oberg:** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to rise to speak to Motion 501 about the institution of an electric train between Edmonton and Calgary. I'm in kind of the uncomfortable position of agreeing with some of what the member actually said. I think the member has made a very good point when it comes to the labour market, when it comes to allowing people in either Red Deer, which, by the way, is not mentioned in this particular motion – allowing people to live outside of the city and still have the ability to commute in. I think that's very laudable, and I think it's certainly a good thing.

8:10

Just to give a little bit of history, if I may, Mr. Speaker, on what has been done. There has been a prefeasibility study done on the high-speed rail, which was performed by the Van Horne Institute. It determined that at roughly \$57 a one-way ticket, approximately 22 per cent of the people who travel on highway 2 would actually transfer over onto the high-speed rail train. One of the things that they did not conclusively get into is the amount of time it would take. For example, we know that there are some people that would ride the train if it took 83 minutes, as the hon. member has stated; however, they would not ride the train if it took 140 or 150 minutes. So we do need to take a very serious look at that and determine what the time point is as well as what the price point is. For example, how much will people pay to ride this?

I disagree with the hon. member when it comes to: the government must be the one who runs this. Interestingly enough – and the hon. member may or may not know this – one of the groups that was a proponent of the high-speed rail came in and basically stated that they could make a profit on running the train, and they could pay back the money over 15 or 20 years if there was no interest that was there. I tended to look upon that as simply a request for an interest-free loan. However, Mr. Speaker, it does indicate that there may well be some cost benefit, that there may well be a profit that can be made by a different group doing it on their own dollar. I think that all of these things deserve to be looked at.

The other issue – and this is probably where I take the greatest offence with this motion – is the whole idea of electric. I think there are a lot of other technologies that are out there. Potentially, if you can save \$2 billion by doing it with a very efficient diesel locomotive, I think that warrants a look at. If you can bring the speed up in a diesel locomotive, I think that warrants taking a look at. A maglev train is not precisely an electric train as we know it.

Although the motion is very well intentioned, from my point of view I think there are some basic flaws. However, I certainly do commend the hon. member for bringing this forward, and as we proceed with the market demand study, I look forward to the support of the opposition caucus as we tend to take the next step in taking a look as to whether or not the train will actually work.

As I mentioned, we just put out the RFQs for a market demand study. We received seven applications back, of which we have picked three that can subsequently go on to an RFP. Once the RFP is in, which we expect it to be by the end of March, we can start the

market demand study and actually determine realistically, scientifically if people are going to use it. Typically, what I see in talking to people between Edmonton and Calgary is that there's a huge amount of support for it in Calgary. There's a huge amount of support for it right up through to Edmonton. In Edmonton there is trepidation about support, and that trepidation has to do with the International Airport and the issues that will occur with the potential change in travel patterns from the International Airport.

I believe that we have to look exclusively as to whether or not people will use this, exclusively as to whether or not people will find the ability to do it. I agree with the hon. member that this has the potential to really put Alberta on the map. It really has the potential to change the labour dynamics. It has the potential to change the whole rural dynamics because all of a sudden, providing there is a stop in Red Deer, for someone living in Blackfalds, in Didsbury, in your particular constituency, Mr. Speaker, there is a potential for these people to work in either Edmonton or Calgary with just a short commute. I think that raises a huge amount of potential and possibilities. All of a sudden, you can have a manufacturing outlet in central Alberta where the people can commute from Edmonton or Calgary, and I think it just opens up a world of possibilities.

But the key element here – and I think this is where the hon. member is missing the discussion – is the cost. We're looking at a greenfield approach with a maglev train. You're probably looking at very close to \$5 billion. That's a lot of money, Mr. Speaker. It's a huge amount of money. As you back down in the amount of dollars that potentially could be spent, you are saying that the amount of time will go down. Instead of being 83 minutes, it might be 93 minutes. It might be 100 minutes, 120 minutes. So we do have to take a very serious look at what that price point is, at what the time point is, when will people use it, how long of a trip between Edmonton and Calgary.

The hon. member does choose a good time to bring this up because the other point that we have to consider very strongly is protecting the right-of-way into downtown Calgary and into downtown Edmonton before it gets bought up. Interestingly, we do have the right-of-way into downtown Edmonton. The tracks over the High Level Bridge are owned by the provincial government, and all of the right-of-way right into downtown Edmonton is owned by us. We do not own the right-of-way into Calgary; therefore, we have to make some important decisions within the next year or two as to whether or not we're going to move in that direction and whether or not we're actually going to purchase some right-of-way there.

It is a very timely discussion, Mr. Speaker, on a very important issue, but I just don't agree with the parameters that the hon. member has put on it in his motion. If he would have said that he urges the provincial government to investigate the feasibility of a high-speed train, then I believe that everyone on this side and everyone in the Legislature certainly could support this motion, but by limiting it to electricity, by putting an exact timeline when they would want us to spend a huge amount of dollars, by not allowing the private sector to step to the plate and to spend those dollars, I believe that the motion should fail.

Mr. Speaker, I will commend the hon. member for bringing this up at this time. It's a very, very important issue that does need to be discussed, and this is a very good forum in which to discuss it.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. R. Miller:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to have the opportunity to address Motion 501. In prepara-

tion for tonight's debate I went back and looked at my maiden speech from just about a year ago. I mentioned in there that if this government was looking for a legacy, if this Premier was looking for a legacy, a high-speed rail link between Edmonton and Calgary might be the perfect solution. I'm not so sure that I feel any differently a year later.

As well, in preparation for tonight's debate I thought I should do a little research. I figured that I'd find out how much it would cost me and how long it would take if I wanted to take a train from Edmonton to Calgary. Well, we all know that the Dayliner doesn't run anymore, so I thought I could go to Winnipeg or I could go to Vancouver and then hop a train to Calgary. I can do that, actually.

The first available train to Calgary would leave Edmonton with Via Rail this Thursday, March 2. I would arrive in Vancouver the next day, March 3. It would cost me \$223 plus applicable taxes. Now I have a problem: I'm in Vancouver, and the train to Calgary doesn't leave until April 17. I'm not kidding you. I did some research on the Internet, and the best I could find on average for a hotel in Vancouver is \$100 a night. Forty-five days times \$100 a night is \$4,500 not including taxes to put myself up in a hotel in Vancouver waiting for the train to go to Calgary. On April 17 the Rocky Mountaineer leaves Vancouver, travels to Calgary over two days: \$689 plus taxes. For a grand total of \$5,412 plus taxes I will find myself in Calgary 48 days after I leave Edmonton, meals not included.

I'm not in great shape, but I figure that I could walk 20 miles a day, and I could be in Calgary in 10 days. If I keep up my exercise program that I started a few months ago, I could probably ride my bike and be in Calgary in three days, or I could take my chances and hitchhike and maybe get there tomorrow or maybe not get there at all.

You know, it's funny, but I think it makes a point. I took a high-speed train in Europe this summer from the airport in Frankfurt to Cologne: 220 kilometers, 45 minutes, and it cost me 57 euros. I'm telling you, that is the only way to travel.

Everywhere I go I'm talking to Albertans who are strongly in favour of this initiative, including in Edmonton. I know the minister mentioned the fact that there doesn't seem to be as much buy-in in Edmonton as there is elsewhere, but even in Edmonton people in the business community are saying: what are we waiting for?

8:20

Now, I think it's important to look at the benefits of the greenfield option as opposed to the so-called brownfield option. For those who aren't familiar with it, greenfield means new tracks, new bed versus using the CPR right-of-way, which would be the brownfield option. If you go greenfield, obviously you get a straighter track because basically you can buy the land and go right to Calgary. In this case you don't have to go through Wetaskiwin, as an example. Not that there's anything wrong with Wetaskiwin, but it is a longer trip. It just doesn't make sense to me, and I'm sure most people will understand this: why would you build a 21st century train and put it on a 19th century railbed? That just doesn't make sense to me.

It's been mentioned and the minister agreed to do the land acquisition now. You know, given the current situation with the construction boom in this province, it might not be wise to build the train today. That's one of the reasons why the motion says the year 2012. I understand that it might not be prudent to do the construction today, but at the very least we should be doing the land acquisition today. Reserve that land now so that we don't have to stray. Right now the greenfield proposal calls for the track to run within a mile or two, generally, of the Queen Elizabeth II highway. If we do the land acquisition now, that will happen. If we don't do

the land acquisition now, we might find ourselves 20 or 30 miles west of the highway. Again, it's going to be a longer track, more turns, and slower. The Van Horne Institute says that it would cost \$47.8 million to do the land acquisition today. So we're not talking an awful lot of money to secure that land and make sure that it's there for when we are ready to build.

Now, there have been a number of benefits identified by using the greenfield route. Certainly, one of them is that for the most part it will bypass the smaller communities. A lot of the small communities that the CPR right-of-way runs through now have identified this as a major concern: having that train running right through or very near their communities. By going greenfield, you eliminate that problem. It gives you the option if you want to build a utility corridor as part of the land that's purchased. You could certainly do that.

With the greenfield option all of the track would be grade separated. There would be no level crossings, which, you know, when you have a train moving at 250 kilometres an hour or more, is probably a pretty darn important thing. As has already been pointed out, it does move Red Deer into a practical commuting distance between Edmonton and Calgary.

Another advantage for sure is the fact that there would be no freight service on the tracks. With the upgraded tracks on the CPR railbed we would be sharing a high-speed train with freight service, and the potential for disaster there is evident in everybody's mind, I'm sure.

The minister referred to the Edmonton International Airport as being one of the sort of holdups in terms of getting buy-in from Edmonton. Well, I've actually spoken to folks at the Airports Authority, and what they're telling me is that if this project were to go ahead, they would want to be included in those discussions. In fact, they would give serious consideration to having a station either near the terminal or as part of the terminal. So I'm not sure where the disconnect has come. Perhaps it was previous leadership with the Airports Authority. The current leadership has told me that this is a conversation they want to be part of, and they do not necessarily see it as a negative to the operation of their airport.

Electric versus diesel. The minister suggested that we should leave the door open for the discussion of diesel.

**An Hon. Member:** Clean burning coal.

**Mr. R. Miller:** I hear somebody on the other side mentioning clean burning coal. While I have to admit that I'm not enthralled at the idea of more coal, if in fact it can be shown that coal can be burned clean – and I don't just mean cleaner, but I mean clean – and we go with the electric alternative, there's going to be a need for more electricity, and that might be one possible solution. While I'm not a big proponent of going back to the idea of coal, it certainly would make more sense to use that coal to produce electricity than it would to burn the coal in the train, as some people on the other side might have been alluding to when they mentioned coal. Without any question, at the moment and I think well into the future an electric train would simply be cleaner and more energy efficient than the diesel alternative.

For the rolling stock itself there are lower maintenance costs associated with electric cars and electric engines. It's really not that much more. Every time I say something like this I shake my head, but it's only \$800 million more to go with the electric versus the diesel-electric alternative. I know that's an awful lot of money, but in today's economic reality, if there's a commitment and a willingness on the part of the government to do this, that really is not an awful lot of money. As an example, it's only two-thirds of the

money that was spent on the rebate cheques, or it's less than the Premier's commitment to cancer research, less than the money that was supposedly reinvested in the heritage savings trust fund, when in fact it was actually only not taken out of the heritage savings trust fund, but that's another story.

**An Hon. Member:** You don't understand the beauty of the concept.

**Mr. R. Miller:** The concept is questionable at best in terms of the heritage savings trust fund, and I hope to address that at a later point either this evening or in the next couple of days when I give my response to the Speech from the Throne.

Certainly, I believe that the time to start this project is now. As I've said, at least do the land acquisition. Light-rail transit in both Edmonton and Calgary has proven to be a huge success. Thirty years ago it was difficult to get people to buy in. We heard a lot of the same comments that we hear in the Assembly tonight, yet today you can't build either system fast enough. People are crying for it to be extended. I believe that there's a greater understanding in the public's mind as to the benefits of public transportation. Certainly, I believe now is the time to start. Access to the downtown cores and the Red Deer area is competing with other forms of development, as we've already talked about, and time is of the essence when it comes to doing this.

I can't believe my time is up, Mr. Speaker. I would certainly support this motion and urge all members to do the same.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again I'm very pleased to see that there is discussion on train travel specifically between Edmonton and Calgary. The New Democrat opposition has some difficulty with the motion as it appears on paper, but certainly the more general concept of reintroducing train service between Edmonton and Calgary and, indeed, to other centres around the province of Alberta I think is something that deserves more attention.

One of my big reservations or concerns about what sort of train we would put between Edmonton and Calgary is the tendency for large projects to move towards the grandiose. You know, the key to a successful high-speed train service is a very high population and also a very high willingness for people to actually use that train. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford mentioned the train between Cologne and Frankfurt in Germany. I, too, rode that train and looked at it with some interest as I am a train enthusiast. There is a real difficulty to get a critical mass of people to ride that train between Cologne and Frankfurt even though you're looking at between 8 million and 10 million people within that metropolitan corridor. There are trains that run quite fast between Frankfurt and Cologne and certainly lots of highways, and people make those choices as well.

My suggestion, and this is open to discussion, is to perhaps look at expanding the CPR right-of-way and putting a number of different alternatives forward onto the CPR right-of-way. Certainly, there's room for at least two more rail lines to run along that right-of-way.

If my memory serves me correctly, in the peak time there was a passenger train running between Edmonton and Calgary, and it was a steam locomotive. They could get it under two hours running that steam locomotive at a very high speed. Certainly, it is possible to use conventional trains to have quite an efficient connection between Edmonton and Calgary and points in between as well, so the train can in fact feasibly and economically stop in other centres along the way and not just pass them by at 320 kilometres an hour.

8:30

I would suggest that opening and expanding the CPR right-of-way also would provide us perhaps with a model by which we could extend to train service between other centres in Alberta and look for an economical alternative for people to travel, let's say, to Fort McMurray or to Grande Prairie or to points south, Lethbridge or Medicine Hat, and, you know, provide that sort of infrastructure for the future as well. Let's not forget that although the economic tiger, as some people like to describe it, is the corridor between Edmonton and Calgary, certainly there are lots of other areas that deserve this sort of consideration in Alberta as well.

Finally, I believe that we do have to look to the future. We see other countries, including the United States, realizing that an extended train system is going to be part of the transportation future for western countries and, in fact, for people all over the world. So I do like the idea of this motion looking ahead not just to the immediate future but the long-term future, when we will need alternative transportation systems. Certainly, it's incumbent upon this Legislature and the provincial government to be involved in that transportation future, and perhaps there is some interim subsidization that has to take place in order to put the trains on the rails and to have people sit in the cars and actually use the system.

You know, Amtrak certainly is an example of that sort of forward-looking perspective in the United States. The train passengers are subsidized. The tickets are subsidized in the United States. But look to the future, you know, so that when that system is, in fact, more necessary, the system is in place and the psychology of using the train is in place in the citizenry as well.

Of course, we are very much tied to our automobiles, our individual automobiles here in this province, and it takes a long time to break or to change those driving habits. I know, for example, that many, many people wouldn't consider taking a train between Edmonton and Calgary right now because, of course, when you get to either metropolitan centre, what are you going to do? People find the public transport system in either city wanting, especially to go to different parts of the city in either Edmonton or Calgary. People say: well, I need my car anyway, so I might as well drive. So we have to be thinking about intercity travel in concert with an expansion of public transport in the urban centres so that people can make that psychological leap to take the train to Calgary, let's say, and then be able to take trains and buses and conveniently do their business in that centre and then come home again with public transportation.

There are a number of hurdles that we have to overcome, but certainly the possibility of re-establishing the rail link between Edmonton and Calgary I think is part of an integrated approach to our transportation future that we do have to take a serious look at and start spending money on feasibility studies and keeping those rights-of-way open. It breaks my heart every time I see someone building over a right-of-way here in this city. As you know, my own constituency is part of the CN rail link in Calder. There are so many rights-of-way and passages where we can put train systems, public transport systems through. Really, I think that it's incumbent, again, upon this government to protect those rights-of-way and make those purchases for the future and not have them built over because we'll be stuck with cars in the future that are unaffordable for a large sector of the population.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to seeing this motion perhaps becoming an act or something like it in the future.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Mrs. Mather:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to speak in support of this motion by my colleague for an ecological, efficient, and people-friendly mode of travel between our two major urban centres. I've chosen to look at the historical perspective rather than the mechanical or technical because when this proposal finally comes about – and you will note that I do not say “if” – it will not be the first time that the Calgary-Edmonton corridor has been a focus of rail innovation.

In 1936 the Canadian Pacific railway introduced the first light-weight, high-speed passenger train service in Canada. This innovation was intended not only to attract market and improve service and comfort; the downturn of the Depression made it imperative to save costs. Shortening travel time and reducing train wait were cost-saving measures. CPR's response to these needs was innovative, imaginative, and trend setting. Streamlined Jubilee locomotives, that still look classy on art deco posters, pulled smooth, curved-sided, air conditioned coaches with comfortable lounges and buffet service.

Four train sets were built by Canadian Car and Foundry, the company that built our first trolley coaches, and finished inside in CPR's own shops. Three of the sets were for the Windsor-Quebec corridor in eastern Canada. The fourth was for Calgary-Edmonton service. The Chinook Flyer left Edmonton every morning for Calgary and returned in the evening. It reached speeds of up to 105 miles per hour between stops at 19 communities along the way. This train is currently being restored at the Canadian Museum of Rail Travel in Cranbrook, B.C. When completed, it will be a display worth visiting.

After the Second World War the Chinook was downgraded to second-class status. The new corridor express trains were named after the cities' football teams, the Edmonton-bound train being called the Eskimo and the Calgary-bound one the Stampeder. These reduced the number of stops and shaved an hour off the Chinook's running time as a result. In addition to 200 regular coach seats, they offered swivel seats for business travelers in a buffet parlour car.

In the mid-1950s travel time was further reduced with the introduction of rail diesel cars, or Dayliners as the CPR called them, built by the Budd Corporation in the U.S. Unfortunately, the further time savings of the Dayliners was accompanied by a savings in passenger comforts. They did not have the number of washrooms, the passenger lounges, or the sit-down meal service provided by the earlier trains that CP designed for this route.

Because one or two Budd cars were shorter in length than a regular train, they were not as visible at crossings, and a number of accidents resulted. Rather than opt to reduce the number of level crossings, one every two miles between Edmonton and Calgary, the politicians added their voices to the call to phase out passenger train service between the cities, which happened 20 years ago this past November.

Now with congestion on our highways and waiting time increased in our airports with post 9/11 security measures, the rail mode offers us an opportunity again. I understand that some of the planners would like to see the rail route parallel the highway because being overtaken and passed by high-speed trains on winter roads would be its best way to persuade our car drivers to try the new service.

I am pleased to see that Canadian Pacific through the Van Horne Institute is contributing expertise to these studies regardless of whether its right-of-way is used or a brand new infrastructure is used.

I have two incidental suggestions to make, points which I hope have already been considered by the planners. Locating the maintenance shops midway between the two cities would have a number of advantages. It would bring new business to Red Deer,

and it would add Red Deer to the easy commute zone of both Calgary and Edmonton. People will generally start out earlier from a smaller city when visiting a larger one. Having the trains overnight and be serviced at Red Deer could also add traffic for an early 40-minute ride to the two larger centres before the travelers are ready to board for the longer intercity trek.

Second, space on a high-speed passenger train could be sold or consigned to courier and express operators, thus reducing the number of smaller vans on the road in exchange for a faster transfer.

Mr. Speaker, the Calgary-Edmonton rail corridor has an illustrious history and an exciting future. With the headquarters of Canada's first transcontinental railway now located in this province and the Calgary-Edmonton corridor leading the continent in economic growth, it is only a matter of time before we return to the rails.

Regardless of where the initiative comes from, let us give this the necessary thought and public discussion to make sure the new mode serves as well as its predecessors did with the CPR. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, before I recognize the next speaker, might we revert to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

head:

### Introduction of Guests

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

**Mr. R. Miller:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of my colleague from Edmonton-Centre it gives me a great deal of pleasure tonight to introduce a group of visitors in the public gallery that are with us from Toastmasters International. Toastmasters International is a nonprofit organization promoting communications and leadership skills within their numbers. They serve 250,000 toastmasters altogether in 10,500 clubs in 90 countries around the world. Edmonton apparently has the highest concentration of toastmasters on a per capita basis anywhere.

8:40

Tonight's visitors are from numerous clubs in the Edmonton area. They're led by their past district governor, Mr. Peter Kossowan. I'm thinking that I should perhaps join them, and then I would be able to figure out how to fit all that I have to say about high-speed rail into my 10-minute time slot. Would they please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

head: **Motions Other than Government Motions**

### High-speed Rail System

(continued)

**Mr. Dunford:** Mr. Speaker, I'm going to have to change the opening of my speech. As a toastmaster previously, I know that one of the important aspects of learning to speak publicly is to remove the hesitations, the ahs and the ums, from your speech. Of course, as a member of one of the Lethbridge clubs I used to get fined fairly regularly on the numbers of ums. I don't know what their particular club uses by way of penalty for ums, but I hope it's within 10 cents. Otherwise, I'm going to owe a fair amount of dollars. [interjections] But who's counting, eh?

I want to count minutes, though, and my dream is 52 minutes. That is the magnetic levitation presentation that was made in my office by a German company with the idea of a high-speed – you can't really call it a train – vehicle that would connect, of course, downtown Calgary and downtown Edmonton with stops at the two

airports that are mentioned in the motion but also would recognize Red Deer. So 52 minutes. In the amount of time that we've been discussing this this evening, had we left on that vehicle at 8 o'clock, we'd be at the Calgary airport, I think, and perhaps almost into downtown. Now, that would be a meaningful amount of time. I think that if people had the choice between the number 2 highway – and a great highway it is – and 52 minutes, there you would have some transference, I guess, from one individual in a car over to the train.

By the way, I might add that in my experience in 12 years of driving from Lethbridge to Edmonton and most of that, of course, on the number 2 and all of it from the portion at least from Balzac to Edmonton, it's just unbelievable how many single occupants we have in the vehicles not only in the cities that we talk about but on our major highways. It's not for me to say whether it's a crime or not, but we should at some time figure out just how much all of this money that we put into infrastructure is actually costing us to continue to rely so heavily in terms of automobiles on our highways. Now, the market, of course is trying to make adjustments for that by the increase in the price of gasoline, but as far as I can tell, we've got even more vehicles on the road at 82.9 cents per litre than what we might have had at 39, so I'm not sure that the market is working very well for us in that particular area.

The minister of infrastructure gave a \$5 billion price tag, though, for that kind of a mode of transport. I want to say that the presentation that I was given had a \$7 billion tag on it at that point, so if somehow we've been able to knock off \$2 billion, then we're certainly heading in the right way.

That brings me to the question: where is the private sector in all of this? Certainly, the manufacturer of this vehicle wasn't pretending that they would in any way pay for this mode of transport or the kind of infrastructure that would be required to be used and, of course, to be paid for, expected the state or in this case the province to pick up, you know, the full cost. Typical of maybe a European mode of thinking. I'm not sure. I'm not European. I'm just, perhaps, giving an impression here. That might be fine, but when you think that we're looking at Calgary and we're looking at Edmonton with only 1 million people in each area, it seems to me, then, that probably we're asking a lot of taxpayers in this province to pony up whether it be \$5 billion or \$7 billion for a mag lev.

Now, I'm not current with the numbers in terms of electrification of a rail system or the diesel system except, you know, the numbers that have been used here tonight. Again, it would make me wonder whether or not we are being realistic as we look at the kind of population base that we're really trying to serve. If we now start talking about electric, we're talking about – what is it? – 83 minutes, or maybe it's 93 minutes. I forget. Perhaps with diesel we're now over 100 minutes. I think that minute by minute by minute we lose, then, that transference from the individual automobile over onto that highway. Again, I support the study that is going to take place. In fact, I'm not sure, but maybe we'll be asked to get involved with funding. If we do, we'll certainly look at it. In any case, while I support the funding, not to try to prophesize too much, I'd be very, very surprised that with the current population we would find a cost-effective way of being able to do that project.

I do agree with the minister and others that have spoken in terms of making sure that we have the rights-of-way protected. In some cases we'll have to go out and gain ownership of those rights-of-way, and I think that we should of course do that.

I will be voting against this motion because of it simply doing two things, really, confining it to electricity and also to the particular year, but I want to commend the member for bringing it forward. Again, to talk about the timeliness of it: now is the time to be having

the discussion. Now is the time to have all members' support in this Chamber when the minister of infrastructure goes and, you know, has the study done. I wouldn't want to hear now, from the support that this motion has been given, whether it passes or not, people then to quibble over the fact that we're going to spend some money on the studies. It would seem to me that everybody is supportive of that. I, like the rest of them, will look forward to the results of that particular study.

I think, though, where the timeliness is important also comes within the whole aspect of an integrated transportation policy, really, for this whole province. There is no question about the importance of northeast Alberta in terms of the economic future of this province. It would seem to me that we have to start recognizing where the golden eggs are laying and make sure, then, that we have provided a system in order to take full advantage of that tremendous resource that we find ourselves in ownership of.

8:50

I think I could stand and make the argument. Although I'm not going to do it tonight, at some point in time I might argue for a high-speed rail system between Edmonton and Fort McMurray ahead of Edmonton to Calgary because the situation there is that I think that you have to take a reasonable look at where your future lies and then make sure that the infrastructure is in place in order to do that. I know there's been some resistance to the rail situation from Edmonton to Fort McMurray because people were afraid that if they put a dollar into rail, it meant a dollar coming out of the road system. Well, our minister of infrastructure, I think, is already making it plain about what might and could happen to highway 63. Something has to be done with highway 63, with highway 881, and to me that is in combination with, not in opposition to, what we should do with a rail system.

I believe that it's unreasonable to expect that given the terrain, the territory of Fort McMurray, Alberta, we're going to be able to achieve 5 million barrels by the year 2030 as is now being predicted by some folks and expect that we will have all of the people that are required to reach that living in that particular area. I think it's just like bitumen, where there are upgraders that are going to be at Fort McMurray upgrading the bitumen, but there's also a huge opportunity, of course, in the industrial heartland for the bitumen to come to that particular area. It's quite simple. If you can't take the people to where the resource is, then you have to bring the resource to where the people are. That, I think, deserves some discussion as well.

In any event, I will be voting against this particular motion.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's actually my honour to follow up on everything but the last few seconds of the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West's comments. It's particularly important that he brought up the example of Fort McMurray. When asked this summer what I thought of the idea of the high-speed rail, my comment was that it would be nice for a change to be ahead of the game or at least when the game began, to be fully operational within that game.

Fort McMurray is the best example of potential opportunities that are at this point being held back and to some extent being missed. Fort McMurray in the 1980s used to build their sewers and their roadways ahead of time, and then they would build the housing developments to follow. Right now Fort McMurray is having a great deal of difficulty with its waste treatment plant because of the increased population. I'm not opposed to what the hon. Member for

Lethbridge-West said about eventually increasing the rapid rail to Fort McMurray. As he mentioned before – and I will not go into great repetition here – the whole point of this rapid rail system, a large part of it besides the economic driver, is to eliminate the carnage that's currently happening on the road.

I wish the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation had been here last year when I introduced the notion of banning cellphones. I could have used the support that he's provided for rapid rail at that time, and I'm sure that discussion will come up later. The reason we put forward the electric was that it was kind of the middle-of-the-road – I hate to use the word – the more conservative approach to the rapid rail system. We don't want to go back in time. Back in time is the diesel. Even with the new developments diesels tend to have a noise factor associated with them, and it would be very hard to get rid of the sort of exhaust that is traditionally associated with diesels. The electric option is middle-of-the-road in terms of the expense. It's also the clean option, and if we can get to the point where coal is sufficiently clean, that the electricity can be produced without emissions, then this would certainly add to the value of an electric rail.

In terms of the electric style that I would like to see, I'm more in favour of the CPR's existing right-of-way. One of the main reasons I'm in favour of that is because the route has already established. The right-of-way is already there. The savings in expense would be greatly magnified because of the fact that the right-of-way currently exists. Yes, there would have to be developments bringing things up to grade and so on, and there's no thought that we'd be using the existing rail, but we would be using the existing right-of-way. By so doing, we would save a considerable amount of money. One of the sort of requirements, at least at this point, with that CPR right-of-way is that the CPR would expect a great deal of government financing as opposed to the completely private alternative. They've indicated that that is the methodology that they prefer.

Two weeks ago at the Glenbow Museum, when the CPR was donating a number of its records, including the first draft with John A. Macdonald, of the cross-Canada rail, I had a chance to talk to the CEO of CPR and also at the same time Peter Wallis, who was part of the authorship of this Van Horne Institute, who's associated out of the University of Calgary. I said I would be a rapid rail pompom, give me an R, give me an R, kind of person because I believe that this is a tremendous economic opportunity.

It has already been recognized that given our population the Edmonton-Calgary corridor is the hottest market in North America for its population and size. This rail would provide the options that many people have already indicated: taking people off the roads, putting them onto the rail, giving them a quality service, bringing Alberta sort of up to the level that is currently being experienced in eastern Canada between Toronto and Montreal and throughout the States via the Amtrak.

The one improvement that I would like to see Alberta making is that this rail would be passenger only and, of course, that this right-of-way would be divided. I wouldn't want to see the crossovers that currently are being proposed within the CPR model because that's where the accidents have occurred in the States, when freight and passenger trains shared the same rail. Obviously, it wasn't intentionally, but that's what occurred.

I like the idea of two parallel lines and particularly, as I say, going with the electric way of doing things. Peter Wallis came to my constituency office and explained the three alternatives. With regard to the magnetic rail I don't see us needing that rapidity at this point. I don't see us requiring that kind of cost. Some of the most frequent passengers, I think, on this particular system would be ourselves.

You heard my concerns about what I recalled as Ralph Air or Con Air, however you wish to look at it, Con being for Conservative, just

the short form. If we're looking for some financing for this project, I would be very glad to see at least two of our three planes done away with because most of the flights are between Calgary and Edmonton. If we could get people riding on this train doing the work as they go, not having to take that long taxi ride from the International Airport, to me this would be a step in the right direction showing responsibility.

With regard to this rail it's interesting that Peter Wallis is also associated with the Calgary International Airport. He's one of the directors. He does not see any concern about the competition putting various air commuters or, for that matter, bus commuters out of business. This would not create an unfair travelling advantage. He believes that connecting the two airports would be a great service to both in-Alberta travelling for Albertans but also for world travellers. It would offer them the type of opportunities, as I've noted, they experience on a regular basis whether they're coming from Japan, whether they're coming from Europe, or what they're used to in eastern Canada and in the States.

9:00

I'm pleased that the members opposite are not necessarily opposed to the idea. I am extremely pleased that the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation is pursuing the study to validate the economic feasibility of this particular proposal. It's very important that within our motion we've indicated 2012. We want the study to occur. We believe that based on the Van Horne Institute study, it is economically viable at this time, but we welcome that confirmation that the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation will provide.

I would urge everyone to support Motion 501. This rapid rail I believe is going to happen sooner than later. The faster we get on board the better.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity, but under Standing Order 8(4), which provides for up to five minutes for the sponsor of a motion other than a government motion to close debate, I would now invite the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning to close debate on Motion 501.

**Mr. Backs:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to see the general acceptance of this motion by the previous speakers here tonight. Just a few clarifications perhaps. In the motion it does not preclude stops in Red Deer, or it does not preclude stops that may prove to be working stops for a system.

I've been on a few of these high-speed links in other parts of the world. One, for example, is Seville to Madrid. You didn't even notice the stops, and I think it had four or five. It was just incredibly fast, much of it over almost empty olive groves. There are other examples where, in looking at types of ridership and potential ridership like we have in our type of economy here in Alberta, we would look very good. It's quick, clean, efficient transportation. It's starting with the Edmonton-Calgary route. The need to move with something, to start with, is the need to act. We have tremendous possibilities.

I don't know if I really agree with my colleague for Calgary-Varsity or the Member for Edmonton-Calder on the need for the CPR route. There are problems with that, and sometimes it can get more expensive to refurbish a roadbed than to naturally build a new one. It's an old freight route, and there are some great costs with that. The greenfield route, I think, has some tremendous arguments for it.

There's the possibility of great technological offsets to private companies in Alberta. As the Minister for Economic Development mentioned, there's quite a number of private companies that will be involved in the construction and the building of the actual units and

the various technologies that are involved. The route to Fort McMurray would be nice, but some of that would be very expensive for the first leg. Indeed, the maglev option, if that's to be put forward, is very expensive, and it's not really been proven over many long routes.

So we should narrow down our choices, and that's what we did. You have to be somewhat pragmatic and look at what would be the best option for Alberta. The motion deals with that. It looks to electric. It included the Calgary airport and the Edmonton airport because in some of the proposals that have been put forward by the consortiums or whatever you want to call those that are proposing them, the airports were not included, and we wanted to make sure that that was included in our motion. Please do not think that it does not include Red Deer or some other stops. This type of transportation backbone would be fed by buses and other types of transportation from other parts of Alberta.

There is tremendous opportunity with this. It is something that will drive economic development. It will save government expenditures in other areas, as I said: health care, the costs of paving half of Alberta for the Queen E II because that will see a tremendous amount of traffic reduction because of this alternative in transportation, and the sheer economic benefit from time saved and the effect on uniting our labour market and other markets in Alberta.

It has to be and should be, I believe, an independent route that is not used with freight. I'm very impressed by the greenfield options. But what is necessary in the near future is to tie down those rights-of-way, to decide on a route, and that needs some decision on the type of system we have to use. I submit that the electric system as put forward in this motion has been researched extensively. There are some major advantages to it for our province, and I think it would be the quickest.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[The voice vote indicated that Motion Other than Government Motion 501 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 9:07 p.m.]

[Ten minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Agnihotri	Eggen	Pastoor
Backs	Mather	Swann
Chase	Miller, R.	

Against the motion:

Abbott	Groeneveld	Ouellette
Amery	Hinman	Renner
Brown	Johnson	Rodney
Calahasen	Johnston	Rogers
Cenaiko	Knight	Stelmach
Danyluk	Liepert	Stevens
Doerksen	Lukaszuk	Strang
Dunford	Lund	VanderBurg
Fritz	Magnus	Webber
Goudreau	Oberg	Zwozdesky
Griffiths		

Totals:	For – 8	Against – 31
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[Motion Other than Government Motion 501 lost]

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

Mr. Johnson moved that an humble address be presented to His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor as follows.

To His Honour the Honourable Norman L. Kwong, CM, AOE, 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 you, Your Honour, for the gracious speech Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.

[Debate adjourned February 24: Mr. Stelmach speaking]

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, just before adjourning on Thursday, we talked about the need of expediting the accreditation of professionals that have moved to Canada to help us with our labour situation. Another area that we're keen to work on is aboriginal employment programs. We want to take advantage of Alberta's hot economy to make real progress for our aboriginal people, and the newly minted Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Minister Prentice, is keen to work with us on this particular task.

Another important area, Mr. Speaker, is gaining control of the tools to manage immigration policy. It could be as fundamental to Alberta's future prosperity as the affirmation in 1929 of constitutional jurisdiction over natural resources has been to our present prosperity.

9:20

Mr. Speaker, this government believes in fairness. This includes regional balance between rural and urban Albertans. It also means intergenerational fairness, and using proceeds from nonrenewable resources to retire debt is an example of sharing the benefits of our natural resources with the next generation. Building infrastructure that has a long lifespan using innovative P3 financing is another way of sharing costs and benefits over time.

Investing and saving for the future are fiscally responsible actions that Albertans and their government know are right, and that is why I believe that setting aside a portion of the surplus in the heritage savings trust fund is the responsible thing to do.

I also know that you would agree, Mr. Speaker, that fairness also means balancing. It means balancing government investments across regions of the total province of Alberta. Our northern communities are the source of so much of the current wealth that benefits all Albertans, and we need to ensure that they have the tools to achieve their dreams and potential as the hub of the north. I look to participating in the northern development strategy announced in the throne speech, and this will ensure that there are appropriate resources allocated to ensure the continued sustainable economic development of this region.

Now, along with energy and agriculture, forestry is the major industry in the north. It's the third largest sector, contributing about \$13 billion to our economy. We understand the challenges that this sector is facing. We'll work closely with the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development, our office in Washington, my colleagues in the provinces in Canada, and the federal government on the softwood lumber file. I was encouraged that Congress is finally respecting international law and has repealed the Byrd amendment, paving the way for a return of duties paid by Alberta companies to the U.S. government.

Mr. Speaker, this government will continue to focus its efforts on rural development to help rural communities become more prosperous and vibrant, and I am so pleased that the speech has referred to the promise of the biofields industry, which offers the potential of sustainable growth and a new market for canola.



Managing natural resources wisely to create value-added products while minimizing the environmental impacts of resource development is a job this government takes seriously. This principle is the heart of the land-use framework this government is developing. It recognizes that the land supports many uses: resource development, recreation, tourism, agriculture, forestry, and residential.

To address broader, long-term environmental issues, the government will hold an environmental youth summit. It is critical, Mr. Speaker, to involve youth in an environmental policy development. After all of the oil and gas is gone, our future generations could still have a very valuable resource that is in short supply, and that resource is clean air, water, and land. A healthy environment could become more of an economic development attraction than even lower taxes in their lifetime, so we've got to give them that chance.

Mr. Speaker, I know that the constituents of Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville and, indeed, all Albertans can be proud of the vision and agenda of this government that has been presented in the throne speech. This government's vision respects and reflects Albertans' values of self-reliance, fiscal responsibility, and community spirit.

Albertans have confidence in our Premier; they have confidence in the government. They have confidence in the Premier because he has faith that Albertans can always find solutions to new challenges. The only way to look back is to honour our predecessors.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Mrs. Mather:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise at an important point in our session and in our tradition. The way of opening a new session of the House is a long-standing parliamentary practice that we have given a distinctly Canadian twist. In Britain today it's called the Queen's Speech because it's usually the Queen who reads it. In Canada we don't name it after the reader, the Lieutenant Governor or the Governor General, but after a more generic symbol. The throne is an enduring symbol of authority in the same way as the crown is far more than the individual who wears it.

When I speak of the authority the throne symbolizes, I'm speaking of more than power. Power can be naked force or coercion. Authority implies authorship. The throne is not only the seat of the head of state or, in his or her absence, of the Speaker but a symbol of what is most enduring in our system and what is most dear to us personally. It is a symbol of our shared values, and to the extent that we share them, we the people are the authors of that authority.

Our changing the name from the Queen's Speech to the Speech from the Throne is one way Canadians have taken a vintage system and built on it. Canadians have adopted these innovations largely by peaceful means. The Speaker's Mace was once a studded club that stunned or disabled while enforcing order. The aisle in our Legislature was designed to keep factions two swords' lengths from each other, and we who have opposed a party in power sit here as Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition whereas earlier generations of those who opposed the rulers did so at the risk of their lives.

In England these rights were established after 20 years of civil war and dictatorship in which a king and many able ministers and other parliamentary leaders went to the block. An even more bloody price was paid in the French Revolution a century later. In Canada and in Alberta these benefits were given to us sometimes after struggles such as the uprising of 1837-38, that led to the granting of responsible government. Alberta and Saskatchewan struggled to win control of their natural resources. When we got it, our form of responsible government was a step more evolved than Britain's. Until a century

ago British governments were still being led from the hereditary House of Lords. Canadian governments from 1846 were responsible solely to the elected Assembly.

Canada was the first modern state to emerge without revolution or civil war. This is one of the gifts that we bring to the world. Our orderly transition of power was celebrated by Prime Minister Stephen Harper in his victory speech five weeks ago tonight. Every government to come to office in Canada since 1759 has been without bloodshed. If we regard 1759 as a battle in an international conflict, which it was, and recall the civil way in which the French and English dealt with each other in the transition, we have 400 years of essentially peaceful evolution.

This is our first and greatest shared value. It includes our freedoms – personal, economic, and political – because they were achieved through this tradition of peace, order, and good governance. It includes our other social values as well because the means of our achieving these had made for a potentially human society. Other states have achieved the democratic and social goals we have, but the more violent means by which they achieved them have been at a cost to the fabric of their societies.

A Speech from the Throne recapitulates these long-standing values by the simple fact and way it takes place. By its contents it shows us the values that are most important to a government's interpretation of its mandate at a specific moment. What does this speech then tell us about this government's values at this moment? First, I note that of the five headings in the speech the first three – A Learning Society, A Prosperous Society, and A Clean Environment – are all couched in economic terms. Education is justified because "people with advanced skills, creativity, and education will keep Alberta's economy strong." Prosperity is by its nature economic. The environment section, less than a fifth the length of the prosperity one, is justified because the land "must continue to be the source of life and prosperity for future generations."

It is not until we reach the fourth and fifth priority areas – A Healthy Society, with its focus on cancer research, which I applaud, and A Safe and Caring Society, which I also endorse – that we come to human values that stand independent of economic ones. The prosperity emphasis dominates the speech. Economic issues take up more than half the body of the speech, and the prosperity section is more than twice as long as any other. Some people see this as inevitable. They point out that income from resources and industry pays the cost of our programs, and to mention programs first will put the cart before the horse. I believe this outlook confuses ends with means, the how with the why of public service.

9:30

Mr. Speaker, I can't help but contrast this Speech from the Throne with the statement from our sister province of British Columbia the day before. The B.C. budget focused on spending on children, with an extra \$421 million to boost child protection services. With an emphasis on children this year and on seniors last B.C.'s government has shown a more human set of priorities than our own. It is almost 35 years that we have had a government in power with a primarily economic agenda, yet it is not fair to lay this imbalance at the feet of any one party or leader.

A good friend of mine had a walk in the snow with Ernest C. Manning after Christmas in 1967. Mr. Manning was already Canada's longest serving first minister, a record that has not been surpassed. He had recently won a sixth election by a landslide, yet he told my friend, "I can't be Premier of this province anymore. The new oil money doesn't care about the things we stand for." A year later he retired. Three years later Social Credit was replaced by the Progressive Conservatives. Our new leaders had fewer misgivings about the new money than Premier Manning did. In getting along

with it so well and living through unparalleled prosperity, they and many Albertans have confused our priorities. We have forgotten that the citizen does not live to serve the economy and that the state is accountable to the whole electorate and not simply taxpayers and economic leaders. It is time to revisit these values.

In my first speech to this Assembly a year ago I said that children should not simply be one aspect of public policy but a central focus. We should be looking at every aspect of our collective life – environment, education, health, justice, culture, finance – in terms of how it impacts on children. I believe that even more today. I propose a sixth emphasis alongside the five in the Speech from the Throne, that of a child-friendly society. I believe children's well-being is a value we all share. Whatever our party or our economic point of view we agree that children deserve a high place on our scale of values.

Why do we love children? Biologists point out features such as their large eyes and other facial characteristics and parent/child bonding. They say that we are programmed to be attracted to children for their and our own collective survival. Psychologists talk about regression or projection, how children take us back to a time when we felt more loved or forward to an imagined future where our children live the hopes and dreams we did not achieve. Anthropologists tell us that children represent our biological immortality, the ongoing of life.

These may all be true, but I believe there is something more. I believe that children bring us close to the Divine, by whatever name we call it. Wordsworth says this powerfully in his *Recollections of Early Childhood*: streaming clouds of glory do we come from God who is our home; Heaven lies about us in our infancy. I experience this with my grandson, when looking into his eyes calls out the best in me. I find it significant that the only time it is ever recorded that Jesus of Nazareth advocated capital punishment was for those who damaged children. I believe that's because in damaging that which is most undamaged among us, we transgress the Divine. So for me respect for children, nurturing children, building a child-friendly society is not only good policy; it is fundamentally a matter of faith.

What, then, does it mean to translate this into present reality? It means to work and build a child-friendly society. A child-friendly society is a more human and humane society. Let us begin by recognizing some things it is not. A society that tolerates cruelty to animals in homes, on farms, in zoos, laboratories, slaughterhouses, or in the wilds is not child friendly for children identify with the suffering of animals. A society built on the principle of survival of the fittest or user-pay for basic services such as health and education is not child friendly. Children deserve our support and are not able to pay their way economically.

A society that permits blood and violence on our streets and on our television and computer screens is not child friendly. This is an assault on their senses and a violation of their innocence. A society that permits poverty and homelessness by people of any age or condition is not child friendly. A society that is run solely by the bottom line, that is materially rich and spiritually poor is not child friendly. It is in their spirituality that children must enrich us. A society devoid of this is like air deprived of oxygen.

A society that is time starved and always has a functional purpose for everything is not child friendly. It is in the spaces in the solid walls that the light comes through. It is in the gaps in business plans and behavioural objectives where new adventures, scientific, and artistic discoveries take place. A society without these, no matter how high tech, is like the dark mills and factories of Dickens time.

I have an educator friend who lived in London for a year and used to spend time in the National Portrait Gallery. He told me that the childlike, in-love-with-life faces he saw there belonged to the

scientists and artists. The kings and the bishops had hard faces. This tells me that building a child-friendly society must include a change in our politics and how we handle power. A society based on the adversarial principle in our politics is not child friendly. We've come a ways from the politics of bloody battles where the winners got the crown and the losers went to the block, but we still play battlefield politics in winner take all, bringing down or embarrassing the government, squeezing the losers out.

Building a child-friendly society means a new, more consensual approach to government, one where our common interests and values, such as children, do not become political footballs between parties or the objects of turf wars between levels of government. Such an approach can be a model to the children and youth who visit us here in this Assembly. Ninety years ago nurse Edith Cavell was executed in Belgium for helping prisoners to escape. She died for a patriotic offence, yet on the eve of her execution she said that patriotism is not enough.

Mr. Speaker, I appeal to my fellow members to recognize that many of the good things we have in this province and many of the values we uphold need to give way for something better. As patriotism is not enough where humanity is at stake, democracy is not enough where democratic decisions separate people into winners and losers and exclude some from the benefits of our society. Capitalism and the free market or social democracy are not enough when they rob people of opportunities and put them into pigeon-holes, and our God-given prosperity, with all the doors it can open, is not enough if it blinds us to other values, including the gifts our children bring and the time and energy we need to spend with them for our mutual benefit.

Mr. Speaker, I do not have an economic or political model for how this can come about, but I do have a dream for the outcome we must share if we are going to bring it about. I see an Alberta where children grow in a wholesome environment, free from fear and protected in their vulnerability. I see an Alberta that unconditionally invests in children, meeting their needs while young and providing opportunities to learn self-support as they mature. I see an Alberta committed to children's health where their daily lives are life affirming and where medication and therapy are universal rights. I invite my colleagues in this House to join me in this vision.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, I would take this opportunity to remind all of you that after each 15 minute speech there is a five-minute time period for questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a) if anyone wants to avail themselves of that.

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Calgary-West.

9:40

**Mr. Liepert:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure tonight to rise to reply to the speech from His Honour the Lieutenant Governor on this our 100th anniversary of the Alberta Legislature. My congratulations to the Lieutenant Governor, who I'm proud to say is a constituent of Calgary-West; that is, on the rare occasions when he isn't on official duty elsewhere in the province.

One can't help but listen to this speech and feel a great sense of pride in the fact that we are living in what I believe is the best place in the world. Where else do citizens have a government that is debt free and still able to put a billion dollars away for future generations? I'll return to that in a moment. Where else would a government be able to embark on 60 new or modernization projects in its educational system? Where else would a government be able to undertake 47 major postsecondary capital projects or 21 major health capital projects?

What other jurisdiction with a population of 3 million people will pave a thousand kilometres of highway this year and commit millions more to ring roads in Edmonton and Calgary? Where else would you find a government that had the foresight to set aside half a billion dollars for a cancer prevention endowment fund with a goal of reducing the incidence of cancer by half in the next 20 years? Of course, the answer to all those questions is: right here in Alberta.

Soon we will be introducing a budget, one that is likely to increase spending to an all-time high. While that itself gives me some concern, commitments like those that I just mentioned don't come without some cost. But as government we must be careful not to overincrease expectations. There is an old saying: underpromise and overdeliver. Unfortunately, in Alberta today the expectation by many is: ask for it, and it shall be delivered.

I want to return for a moment to the heritage fund. One way of dampening those requests is to return to an automatic percentage contribution of nonrenewable resource revenue to the fund. In my view, one of the weaknesses of our current accounting method is that we keep announcing these huge surpluses. The public comes to a conclusion that we keep telling them how much money we have, and they just, in many cases, want to spend it. So if we change the law so that revenue from the fund stayed in the fund and a percentage of nonrenewable resource revenue was automatically dedicated to the fund, clearly our surpluses would be smaller, and hopefully the expectations would be less.

His Honour also spoke of a health system that was flexible and provided citizens with greater choice. I'm afraid this is not an option. It is a change which Albertans and Canadians must endure, or we won't have any kind of an affordable system left for us as we grow old and certainly not for our children and grandchildren. We must be prepared to be bold. We must not listen to the 20 per cent who make 80 per cent of the noise without taking into consideration what those other 80 per cent want. My constituents are telling me that when it comes to health care, please get on with it.

I do want to talk a little bit tonight about Calgary-West. My constituents are not a demanding bunch. For the most part they are busy earning a good living, driving their children to school and to recreation. Calgary-West is a constituency where 95 per cent of the residences did not exist 25 years ago. As a result, we are still trying to catch up on infrastructure needs like schools and roads. My constituency has a higher percentage of private school spaces per residence than anywhere in the province.

While I'm not opposed to private schools, in fact quite the opposite – the emergence of private schools in this province has forced our public education system to be better – the concern I have is that of choice. My constituents are choosing the private system over the public one because private schools are closer to home than public schools. School boards must re-examine priorities when it comes to keeping open underutilized facilities in older areas of the city at the expense of actually having schools constructed where the majority of the students live. I would encourage the Minister of Education to work with his counterparts in infrastructure and Municipal Affairs to help get this issue rectified.

Another issue I'd like to address tonight is that of seniors, who are

all getting older, living longer, and eventually will require more care. In many cases families are looking more and more to government for this care and its added expense. Government needs to examine immediately a system whereby working people are contributing to their end-of-life care during their working years. Like health care our children and grandchildren will not be able to afford the tax base that will be required to financially support us as we all live to be close to a hundred.

Finally, I'd like to congratulate all of the medal winners at the recent Winter Olympics in Torino. Several of those in Torino are constituents, and the world-class training facility, Canada Olympic Park, or COP, hovers over the north end of my constituency. In 1988, when the Olympics were held in Calgary, Canada won exactly zero gold, two silver, and three bronze. However, that total was the best ever achieved at a Winter Olympics. In the following Olympics in Lake Placid and Albertville Canada won seven medals at each. In 1994 in Lillehammer Canada's medal total soared to 13, then to 15 in Nagano, and to 17 in Salt Lake City. It's my contention that this didn't just happen. It occurred because as a legacy of the 1988 Winter Olympics Canadian athletes finally were on as level a playing field for training as the rest of the world.

During the lead-up to the '88 Olympics there was much made of cost overruns and environmental concerns. However, at the end of the day our government and a certain former mayor of Calgary were responsible for the '88 Winter Olympics. The results of staging those Olympics and the training legacy that was left are directly responsible for Canada's continued improvement showing at these games.

Much will be said over the next four years about the Winter Olympics in Vancouver/Whistler. There will be environmental protesters and media stories about cost overruns. In fact, I think it's already started. However, let's please keep our eye on the ball and remember what the games are all about, and that's the athletes. Remember what our athletes did in 2006 mostly as a result of having those facilities because we hosted the games in 1988.

For decades Americans have shown their pride in country by what was achieved on the international sports stage. Let's hope that this year's performance by Canadian athletes in Torino begins to build some of that same pride in our province and our country.

So I would conclude, as I began, by stating that we simply live in the best place I can think of. We need to keep working harder to make it better. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With that, I would move that we adjourn and resume sitting tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

[Motion carried; at 9:48 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Tuesday at 1:30 p.m.]

