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The 27th Legislature
First Session

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The Honourable Kenneth R. Kowalski, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 27th Legislature

First Session

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Sarich, Janice, Edmonton-Decore (PC),
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[Errata, if any, appear inside back cover]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

8:00 p.m.

Wednesday, April 16, 2008

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Please be seated.

Speaker's Ruling

Question and Comment Period

The Speaker: Hon. members, when we left at 5:30 o'clock this afternoon we had a little issue that I just want to have clarified, and it has to do with Standing Order 29(2)(a). When members do participate in debates, there is this 29(2)(a), which basically says that "a period not exceeding 5 minutes shall be made available, if required, to allow Members to ask questions" of the previous speaker. The clock ran out at 5:30, and it's not incumbent upon the chair to identify any member who may not be here, but I'm going to basically assume that nobody wants to raise any questions, and we're going to go forward. But I want to convey a message to the hon. Deputy Leader of the Official Opposition that having done this today, I sincerely hope that if it happens in the future with a government member ending at 5:30, no member in the House will raise a point of order or a point of privilege with respect to such a matter.

Okay. We've done a harmonious thing.

Mr. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, I'm sorry. I was at the Auditor General's news conference this afternoon, and I must confess that I don't know what you're talking about.

The Speaker: Okay. Well, that really opens up a lot of doors here for a comment backwards, but I'm going to stay above that, and you can have the discussion with your associates with respect to this matter at a later opportunity. We'll consider that this was nonprecedential in terms of not setting a precedent, but we'll go forward.

Consideration of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor's Speech

Mrs. Leskiw 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 Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.

[Debate adjourned April 16]

The Speaker: Now, it's my pleasure to introduce the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder, and as I do, I'd just like to remind the hon. member that his mother is a constituent of mine, and she speaks highly of me. She certainly will when you're concluded.

Mr. Elniski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with great humility and a tremendous sense of pride that I rise on my first occasion to speak to you as the newly elected representative for the Edmonton-Calder constituency. I would like to congratulate all of my colleagues and wish them my best as we look forward to the 27th Legislature. I anticipate it will be a time filled with exciting initiatives and important work. I would also like to thank the constituents of

Edmonton-Calder, who have given me the honour of representing their interests in this Assembly.

Edmonton-Calder, which is the transportation hub of the capital city, encompasses the Anthony Henday, the Yellowhead Trail, the CN Calder yards, and the City Centre Airport. We look forward to the LRT expansion and the completion of the ring road in the near future. Transportation and logistics are the roots of our community and have been for almost a hundred years.

You will observe when travelling through Calder neighbourhoods the wonderful old tree-lined streets. The reason these trees thrive in our constituency can be traced back to the agrarian practices of CN employees in the early 1900s. Railcar wheel grinding was a major activity in the old Calder yards, and the hard-working grinder folks used iron filings as soil amendments. The trees in the yards of the old Calder neighbourhood were liberally treated with iron filings and carborundum dust from the grinding shop, which has resulted in some of the best soils in Edmonton. I am told that five-pound potatoes were not uncommon. I share this bit of wisdom with you to highlight the literal grassroots wisdom of my constituents.

Edmonton-Calder, as you may recall, is quite hard on incumbent MLAs, having defeated them in each of the last three elections. This can only be attributed to the Calder curse of the bambino for the absence of MLAs with grandchildren. There has not been an MLA in Edmonton-Calder with grandchildren since Tom Chambers, who served the constituency from 1971 to 1986.

The original curse of the bambino, as you may recall, is an old Boston Red Sox story with regard to the sale of Babe Ruth to the New York Yankees, which prevented them from winning the World Series for over 60 years. So tonight, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to recognize my daughter Diana for her many hours of hard work who, as we speak, is providing the bambino to break the curse. So far this year, Mr. Speaker, I have become an MLA, a father-in-law, and maybe already a grandpa. I look forward to the next election, when my grandchild, Dominic William Douglas, will be old enough to do some door-knocking.

So why am I here? The opportunity to serve as the MLA for Edmonton-Calder arose last year when my friend and adviser former Edmonton-Calder MLA Brent Rathgeber won the federal Conservative nomination in the riding of Edmonton-St. Albert. I was acclaimed the PC candidate in October. I have always believed that the residents of Edmonton-Calder, including my wife, my three daughters, a brother, and a sister, are best served by a government member with deep community roots, someone local who understood the issues and challenges facing a constituency that has many inner-city concerns. I knew this party was headed in the right direction when, before Christmas, while door-knocking, I heard the same message: give the Premier a chance. His ability to unite the Progressive Conservative Party was the final confirmation of my decision to seek public office. As a human resources manager I know only too well that if you don't like the boss, you won't like the job.

My opponent, the former MLA Mr. David Eggen, was a very good MLA. He proved to be very hard working, dedicated to his task, and worthy of our respect. Our campaigns were friendly, fair, and ultimately 220 votes decided the thing in my favour. I take that margin as a sign that there were many constituents who need to see progress, need to feel the burdens in my constituency eased by this government. They gave me the chance to represent them, to sit in this place with all of you, and to govern in their best interests.

I am a fiscal conservative. I believe in the strength of the individual. I believe people can and should be encouraged to make their own way in this world and that our job as legislators is to tax minimally, regulate appropriately, and give people opportunity. The

plans described in the throne speech will go a long way towards helping people believe that government is for the people and that the individual is more important than the state. We are here to serve them; they do not serve us.

I am especially proud to be part of a government that recognizes the challenges of the working families in my constituency by increasing child care funding, improving infrastructure, and ensuring our seniors have a place to go when they can't stay at home. As we are a greying constituency, the initiatives on crime will greatly increase the feelings of security within our community.

I am equally pleased to see a balance between rural and urban issues and a recognition of the issues facing our forest products industry. As we must remember, not everybody in Alberta works in the oil patch.

This is a truly amazing time in Alberta, a time of bounty that requires caution and good management. It is easier to go broke in the good times than it is in the bad, and we must not allow today's bounty to become tomorrow's deficit.

I stand here today as my greatest accomplishment in a life of good accomplishments. I have done well, my children have done well, and I intend to dedicate my service to the goal of ensuring that all of our province's wonderful opportunities are available to Dominic William Douglas and the next generation of Albertans. Mr. Speaker, we are going to create a legacy that will make them proud.

I thank you for your indulgence and look forward to serving you with my fellow members in this honoured place. Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, we have under our rules Standing Order 29(2)(a), which is now available for any member of the Assembly to address the question to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder if they choose to do so.

There being none, then, I have on my Speaker's list the following members: the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, followed by the hon. Member for Strathcona, followed by the hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise on my first occasion in the House and express some of my views in response to the throne speech. It is indeed a great honour to be back among this illustrious group to talk about the future of Alberta as expressed in the throne speech, with many positive and even, one might say, inspiring words in the document.

The purpose of a throne speech is clearly to identify the key issues that face us as a province and where we intend to go as a province. Its intention is to connect with not only the Legislature but the citizens of Alberta and their interests, their concerns, to inspire involvement and commitment to the cause of local solutions, provincial solutions, and global responsibility. Its purpose is to build trust in our institutions and a commitment to what many call, in our modern parlance, triple bottom line governance: commitment to economic, social, and environmental values.

8:10

The speech included many positive messages and ideas, but it did fall short in some areas that I think need to be highlighted as a member of the opposition. Let's look at the context in which this is being delivered now, in April 2008. Decisions to pay off the debt in this past 15 years at a rate and in a fashion that seriously compromised social, environmental, and infrastructure needs in the province have to be seen in this context. What does it benefit a province, in the case of one's own personal financial management, to accelerate one's mortgage payments if you neglect your house and your children and their basic needs? Why the rush? How have we come

to this state in which there are tremendous declines in quality of life for many people, tremendous anxiety, increasing concerns about the future, our responsibility to address issues like postsecondary education deficits, environmental decline, increased problems over affordable housing?

When one looks at other places on the planet for a comparison, given the same resources and the same opportunities, for example, Norway, a government that in 1991 imposed a carbon tax and which now, even though they're a strongly oil-dependent country, has moved to a very high level of independence from fossil fuels in the last 15 years, is moving towards a carbon neutral economy by 2030, has a savings account that approaches \$350 billion in many fewer years than we have in depending on the oil sector.

What are the key issues, then, given this context, which Albertans find themselves responding to this important 2008 Assembly and the throne speech? We're faced with significant challenges, challenges that my constituents call me on every day and many times during the week. Affordable housing and rent control in my constituency is a big one. Many, many days and many hours I've spent trying to negotiate with landlords and to assist people who are struggling, including people on fixed income, elderly, mentally ill, and marginalized, to stay in the places they're in or to apply through the system that has been set up by government to assist them in subsidies for their rent.

We have an overheated economy that has created a cost of living that is unsustainable for some and particularly has increased the stress and the quality of life changes that I hear about in my office. As many of us know, Alberta is increasingly recognized as having among the highest rates of family violence, of depression, and of addiction in the country. I hear from people with disabilities and the struggles they have meeting their basic needs and fundamentally getting the human supports they need to carry on with a reasonable quality of life and dignity, increasingly at the edge of collapse and breakdown.

Given the above demands as well as the environmental challenges, is it any wonder that our health care system is groaning under the demands, some of which have been created by policies and decisions in this government, quite apart from those for which individuals have to take responsibility and, in some cases, genetic predisposition? The health care system is facing an unprecedented stress in terms of access and quality.

The same context that I've talked about has to be mentioned in relation to policies in the '90s that decimated our institutions not only in the big cities but in rural areas as well, that alienated professionals and created a climate of insecurity in our health care institutions associated with decisions to restructure and restructure again and now a consideration to restructure it again without meaningful reform, without looking at scope of practice, focusing on primary health centres, looking more strongly at prevention, and addressing some of these underlying features that have created the context for increased demands on the system.

I was hoping for more in this speech particularly relating to the environment. There was a distinct lack of clear commitment to our environment, and by that I mean habitat, I mean threatened species, I mean surface and groundwater protection and a sincere interest in managing it more sustainably, with increased emphasis on conservation, especially in the south. I was looking for a stronger commitment to climate change beyond simple technology, carbon capture and storage, to a stronger emphasis on how we might share the burden of the planet in climate warming through not only personal responsibility, which has been emphasized and continues to be emphasized, but through public policy that gives real incentives for people to move toward conservation, energy efficiency, and clean, renewable energies.

The words in some cases are there in this speech, Mr. Speaker, but the last 15 years say something else about where our priorities are. It's difficult for people, in the context of so much awareness now in our culture, to have trust in politicians, in governments that continue to say one thing and do another and in this case finally admit that climate change is real. Where is the evidence that we're taking it seriously when the best experts on the planet are saying this is moving at a much faster pace than any of us ever expected? Not only are developing countries going to pay a huge price for this, but our children and our grandchildren are going to have to pay a massive price if we don't start spending significantly on mitigation and adaptation measures for climate change.

In the area of land-use planning and resource development again we see some hopeful indications in the speech about a framework. This represents an important step for Albertans, to see more regional planning, more commitment to a plan that addresses the multiple different needs for development and use of our land in the context of watersheds and, clearly, a welcome connection that's being made here, but after 15 years people can be forgiven for being somewhat dubious about how much longer it's going to take and whether it's going to have teeth and insist through legislation that the planning that people go through is actually going to be reflected in decisions and longer term thinking about the future.

Other issues that, clearly, citizens of Alberta are concerned with, though not necessarily my constituents in the heart of Calgary, have to do with the sell-off of public lands, the game ranching industry and the wasting disease that has emerged from the game ranching industry and how we continue to subsidize this as a government, and, of course, the misguided efforts to give landowners and farmers more income through money for hunting, the so-called open spaces initiative.

In the area of First Nations policy I was encouraged to see a new ministry and, as highlighted in the speech, concerns about First Nations employment, economic development, and living conditions. Again, after 15 years of this administration it's hard for many to feel confident that these are going to be taken seriously in terms of on-the-ground changes and authentic consultation, when I hear from bands like the Lubicon and the Mikisew Cree that developments are going ahead regardless of traditional land rights, treaty rights. Consultation is a sham in many cases, and the developments in some cases have taken place before they've even been approved. The preparation for developments, for example, on the Lubicon lands last year were taking place even before the approval from the Energy and Utilities Board. We have a lot to rebuild in terms of public trust and a sense that we as politicians stand by our words and make serious commitments to, again, the triple bottom line, that many of us are calling for and wanting to see more commitment to.

8:20

In closing, Mr. Speaker, my constituents are looking for hope. They're looking for public trust. They're looking for a way to re-engage with the real issues of their lives and their communities. I think there are many good words and ideas in this speech that give me hope, and I, for one, am committed to working constructively and actively with all the members of this Legislature to try to see them realized.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Member for Rocky Mountain House.

Mr. Lund: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was listening very attentively to the hon. member's remarks. He used open spaces and paid

hunting in the same sentence, in the same breath. I would really appreciate if he would describe to me, to the House, and to the thousands of people that are listening and watching on the Internet tonight his understanding of how the open spaces program works, please.

The Speaker: Hon. member, if you wish.

Dr. Swann: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my understanding that licences would be granted to landowners for hunting certain species and that for access to these lands, many of them leased, these individuals would be able to control access to these public lands, and on the basis of these licences they would be paid for access to their property.

The Speaker: Others?

There being none, then on the speakers list is the hon. Member for Strathcona, followed by the hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General, then the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, then Lethbridge-West, then Calgary-North Hill.

Is the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood interested in speaking tonight?

Okay, then. The hon. Member for Strathcona.

Mr. Quest: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour for me to rise in this Assembly today and deliver my maiden speech in reply to the Speech from the Throne. It's my first opportunity to address this Assembly on behalf of the people of the Strathcona constituency.

I'd like to begin, Mr. Speaker, by congratulating you on your election as Speaker for this 27th Legislature. I am certain that your experience and guidance will help me and all the newly elected members adapt to our roles in the Assembly.

I'd also like to sincerely congratulate all new and returning members of this Assembly on their recent election. I believe that to be elected to this Assembly is an honour and privilege, and I look forward to working with each of you as we endeavour to serve the people of this great province.

As the newly elected member of the Strathcona constituency I'd like to take a moment to recognize my predecessor, Rob Lougheed. Rob served the constituents of Strathcona tirelessly from 1997 to 2008. He also had a distinguished period serving as the chair of the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities. I believe I speak for all members when I wish Rob and his wife, Sharon, all the best in the years ahead.

In taking my seat in this Assembly, I must offer my heartfelt and enduring gratitude to my wife, Fiona, and my son, Jack. They stood by me and worked hard with me throughout the campaign and continue to provide unconditional love and support.

I'd also like to thank the people of Strathcona for putting their trust in me to act as their MLA. I'm truly overwhelmed and honoured at the positive response that I received over the last couple of months at the doors and in the campaign office. During the campaign over 170 volunteers worked very hard to see this day, and I wish to take this opportunity to publicly thank them in this House for their support.

Mr. Speaker, I've lived in the county of Strathcona for most of my life. I graduated from high school in Ardrossan and went to work and ran a successful business in the area. I've been involved in the Alberta political scene at the party level for a number years, but I was not motivated to run for office until our current Premier became the leader of the Progressive Conservative Association of Alberta and the Premier of this province. His strong and vibrant vision for the future made it clear to me that I should serve in public office.

Thus, after a hard-fought nomination and campaign, on March 3, 2008, I was elected as the Member for Strathcona, with the third highest PC vote count in the province. I received a huge endorsement from the people of Strathcona, but with this honour also comes substantial responsibility, which I will never take lightly.

As a private pilot for nearly 10 years I've had the opportunity to obtain a truly unique view of my constituency and have been continually amazed at how rapidly things have changed in the last few years. Residential construction and subdivision creation is rising exponentially, and in the northern part of the county numerous upgrader projects are under construction or being expanded. This includes projects such as the Shell Scotford upgrader and Total E & P Canada bitumen upgraders. The impact of this activity will be felt by everyone in our constituency and the larger region to some degree. This is truly the most interesting time in history for our constituency, and I'm very excited to be part of this transformation.

Mr. Speaker, during the campaign I had the opportunity to talk to thousands of constituents at their doors. In our discussions I was able to identify several central concerns. A major concern for both rural and urban areas is the environment. The county of Strathcona along with the city of Fort Saskatchewan, Sturgeon county, and Lamont county make up Alberta's Industrial Heartland, the largest petrochemical processing centre in Canada. While this concentrated growth has delivered significant economic benefits, including employment and investment in our constituency, it's also resulted in increased pressures on our environment. In particular my constituents are concerned about sustaining air quality in the region.

In October 2007 the Minister of Environment announced a new approach to environment management which will address the cumulative effects of development on the environment and deal effectively with pressures of growth. The first application of the new cumulative effects management framework will be in the Industrial Heartland. Alberta Environment will also work in consultation with stakeholders, including the community, to ensure a high-quality environment for the region. By setting clear emission targets in conjunction with an allocation system, Alberta's Industrial Heartland in co-operation with the government of Alberta is actively working to protect our air quality. I look forward to the full potential of this made-in-Alberta approach.

Constituents associated with the agricultural sector shared frank concerns about the future of their farming operations as they face growth pressures and rising prices for land. I'm encouraged by the success of past programs through the Agriculture Financial Services Corporation and those encompassed by the rural development fund. These programs reflect that the government of Alberta is committed to ensuring that rural stakeholders have the tools and positive business environment necessary to grow and prosper. Our commitment to continue to strengthen and diversify the agricultural sector was also highlighted in the throne speech, and I'm excited to learn more and work to develop new ideas to ensure Alberta's agricultural communities remain vital components of this province.

Mr. Speaker, child care is another issue of importance to my constituents, particularly those in the urban areas. I'm happy to see that ensuring families have access to affordable child care continues to be a priority for the government. This is reflected in our plan to create 14,000 new child care spaces by 2011, which I was pleased to see mentioned in the throne speech as well.

The impact of the capital region integrated growth management plan on my constituency is another issue important to rural and urban constituents alike. They recognize the necessity of planning for the exceptional growth that the capital region will experience in the decades to come, and they equally want to ensure that their locally elected municipal leaders can act upon their wishes and

desires. All municipalities in the region have exerted great effort in developing their communities' potential. It's a time to act collaboratively and fully recognize the unique attributes each municipality brings to the larger region. Our hon. Premier has been and remains committed to the success of this plan, and I'm confident that our government will address any outstanding issues for the benefit of all residents in the capital region, including Strathcona county.

Mr. Speaker, health care continues to be a concern among a majority of my constituents. The primary issue on this topic is the availability of health care staff – doctors, nurses, specialists – because they recognize that without professionals our new health facilities cannot operate to their fullest potential. The throne speech delivered by His Honour the Lieutenant Governor outlined the government's commitment to improving overall efficiency and effectiveness in our health care system. The government will ensure that Alberta has the health care professionals necessary to meet future health care workforce demands. They recognize that this is vital to improving access to services and increasing availability of quality health care. This is a plan and a message that resonates amongst all Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, the record of this government in serving the province speaks for itself. Over the past 15 months the clear and positive plan presented by our Premier has been embraced by Albertans, which is reflected in our resounding, renewed mandate. During the campaign I spoke to thousands of constituents, and many told me that in this election they'd be voting PC for the first time. They included teachers and health care workers and first-time Albertans drawn to support our party and our Premier because they believe in our vision for the future. As outlined in the Speech from the Throne, we've set forth a decisive plan to build a strong Alberta that will improve the lives of all Albertans.

I'm honoured to serve as a member of this Assembly and represent the voice of the constituents of Strathcona in this 27th Legislature. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

8:30

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

Okay. The following members have identified their desire to speak: the hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, then Lethbridge-West, then Calgary-North Hill.

Hon. members, at this time I'm going to invite the hon. Deputy Speaker to take the chair, and I sincerely hope that you'll afford him all the dignity required.

The hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Ms Redford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a new member it is an honour to rise this evening and address the Assembly in response to the Speech from the Throne which His Honour the Lieutenant Governor so graciously delivered yesterday. I would like to start off by congratulating all of my colleagues in the Assembly on achieving the opportunity to represent their constituencies across this province.

I would also like to congratulate the hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock for his election as Speaker of the House. The reason I would like to do that is that I first came to this Legislature in 1979, and ever since then I have known that the hon. member has been a very important member of this institution and has contributed to government and to the Legislature. I always feel when I come to this Chamber that the business of this House is in trusted hands, and I am grateful to be able to seek his guidance when necessary.

Since this is my first opportunity to formally address the Assem-

bly, in the tradition of maiden speeches I'm pleased to be able to talk about what my time here might mean and to talk about why I look forward to my relationship with this Chamber and with my colleagues in this Chamber. Here I use the words spoken early in this century by the distinguished English judge, Lord John Fletcher Moulton: the real greatness of a nation, its true civilization, is measured by the extent of this land of obedience to the unenforceable, the extent to which individuals composing that nation can be trusted to obey self-imposed law.

As I stand in this Legislature, these words present a very strong message, a message about society, the role of democratic institutions, and the role of members of this Legislature. It is a message that may seem a little ironic coming from the Minister of Justice and Attorney General. The Alberta that we live in was not just created by building laws and institutions. It is a result of leaders building communities, communities where families take care of each other, communities where members are proud to be members of those communities, where neighbours take care of each other and individuals are guided by morals that direct them to take care of one another. Laws alone do not create a community; we do.

Throughout the history of Alberta this Assembly has witnessed and been party to tremendous change. Today I am honoured to be a part of this government as we embrace the future of Alberta. As Albertans both now and in the past we are proud of the province that we have built, and we want to be proud as members of our communities and citizens in this province.

Mr. Speaker, 2008 holds a great deal of significance for my family. This year marks 60 years since my granny, Robina Barclay Cowan Anderson, and my grandpa came to Alberta from Glasgow with their three children and my mother to build a better life for their family. They came with very little, and in 60 years they brought up a family in this province: seven grandchildren, one great-grandchild. They gave us a better life. They didn't do it alone. They did it in Alberta, and they did it with Albertans. I feel very privileged that my grandparents chose to come to this province. They came to an Alberta that is not different from the Alberta that we live in today. Alberta was formed by a tremendous group of trailblazers. My abiding philosophy in life is that our greatest leaders in Alberta have always embraced our past with respect, our future with optimism and with the determination that we continue to live in the best place in the world.

It is only in the absence of sound leadership and meaningful democratic rights that one truly understands the preciousness of what we have in Canada and in this province. Throughout my professional career as a lawyer in Canada and work that I have done in South Africa, Afghanistan, the Balkans, and Vietnam, I have had the opportunity to work with people that have faced historic challenges. In the face of those challenges they've had to rebuild their societies, and they've embraced their own future.

Some particularly vivid memories that I have include talking to a man in a remote part of Mpumalanga province in South Africa in 1993 who walked 10 miles to the nearest voting station three days in a row until the ballots finally arrived so that he could vote for the first time in his life, and he was 81 years old. I also remember clear as day the image of a disabled woman who was carried in a blanket by her elderly parents to a voting station and then lined up for eight hours in the hot sun to cast her ballot. I've sat with women in Kandahar province in southern Afghanistan, women of all ages, women who you can't actually tell how old they are because their lives have been so hard. But to talk to those women sitting with their young daughters, who may be five or six years old, which is the same age as my daughter – we didn't talk about why to vote. First, we had to talk about what a vote was and then why it mattered.

In these environments these people succeeded because they understood that government can matter, and they had faith and respect in the institutions and the processes. These experiences have formed my view of what government can do and what direction government should take in the leadership of our province and in building our communities.

Mr. Speaker, considering the Alberta that has evolved since my granny and grandpa arrived and having been witness to the sacrifices that go into building democracy, I am once again reminded that being part of this hallowed institution is about more than just creating structures. It is about more than just maintaining the physical form of government in our society. It is about changing the way that we as citizens feel about our country, our rights and our privileges, our government, and about each other as part of our community. And that is why I wanted to be here as a member of this Assembly.

On March 3, 2008, the people of Calgary-Elbow entrusted me with a great responsibility by asking me to come to Edmonton to represent their interests. Mr. Speaker, being given the opportunity to represent the constituency of Calgary-Elbow and help shape the policies that guide our society is a distinct honour and a rare privilege. I intend to ensure that as their representative I can help to lay a path for conversations about the future direction of our communities. But, indeed, we have more work to do.

As I met with constituents in Calgary-Elbow during the campaign, it became clear to me that there was an underlying uneasiness with our sense of community in the city and in the province. People feel that the immense growth that has taken place across this province, including in my hometown, Calgary, has meant that our communities have changed. Growth has resulted in a disconnection and a deterioration from the feeling of community throughout our province, but this isn't to say that we need to lament what is happening, Mr. Speaker. I think we have an opportunity.

I was empowered and I was energized by the number of young, energetic, and thoughtful people who worked on my campaign, dedicated to making this province a better place and prepared to work for it just as generations before have done. It is through these young people that I am compelled to realize just how important the actions we take in fostering the development of our young leaders and citizens truly are.

I am proud to be a part of this government. We must help create the communities that they are proud to be part of, and this is truly more important than creating laws. The success of this government will be achieved through seeking out and developing a collaborative approach to bringing together different parts of our communities.

8:40

Calgary is a beautiful city that I am proud to have grown up in, and that is where my husband, Glen, and I have chosen to raise our daughter, Sarah. However, it is now a city of over 1 million people, and being true Calgarians, we have always aspired to exceed that population benchmark because we know that with a large population there are new opportunities to enhance the quality of life in our city. Whether they are related to sport, culture, or just to enhancing our diversity, we also need to recognize that as a big city there are challenges as well that we must face and that we need to be thoughtful about the solutions to those problems.

Government needs to continue to show leadership and has to find ways to work with communities at all levels of government to address the issues that impact people's lives. As His Honour the Lieutenant Governor pointed out yesterday, we must ensure that strong and safe communities remain at the heart of our quality of life as our province grows. I want to thank our Premier today for

showing the leadership that demonstrates his acknowledgement of the governance needs of a changing Alberta. Throughout the throne speech we heard reference to child care, to supporting seniors, to protecting the environment, and to strengthening our economy, and that's what this government needs to do. This Premier understands that we need to ensure that we are living in safe, secure, and caring communities. By introducing policies that are stronger and more deeply rooted than laws simply can on their own, we are going to achieve that for this province.

I am honoured to have been appointed Minister of Justice and Attorney General, and as such my ministry will play a significant role in implementing the mandate of a safe communities task force. But we intend to do more than that. We will work with our colleagues to implement this strategy and to begin a wider conversation with Albertans around safe and caring communities. We will bring together different parts of the community to build a foundation with the Solicitor General, the ministries of Public Security, Health and Wellness, Education, and Children and Youth Services.

During yesterday's throne speech my experiences abroad resonated a great deal for me. As we enter this Assembly to enact the laws that govern the province, it is a wonderful honour to be here. It is our job, Mr. Speaker, as members of the Assembly to help build the Alberta that we want to live in and the Alberta that we want our children to live in, the Alberta of the future.

I thank the hon. members for their attention and encourage the spirit of democracy to be a guiding force as we move forward. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Well, hon. members, according to Standing Order 29(2)(a) we have five minutes after the member's speech if any member wants to use the five minutes for questions.

Ms Evans: Such a passionate and warm address from a member who remembers her grandparents with respect and affection and after her experiences with international organizations, talking with other women and giving them some coaching. Even though it might not be a political lesson, what one lesson most sticks in your mind, hon. member, that those women would have mentioned to you as being of utmost importance? You talked about them with a lot of caring, and I'm sure they learned a lot from you about voting. But if there was one thing that most impressed you, either with your grandmother or with the women that you met along the path, what one thing sticks in your mind the most?

Ms Redford: Well, I think as a theme, whether it was my grandmother or whether it was talking with women around the world, it was the strength of women. When I think about the people that I've met working in places where life is much more difficult than it is here, what has driven so many women – they're the heart of their families – is keeping their families together and keeping lives intact and having respect for themselves and being able to raise their children. I think that that is probably a theme that resonates with most of my colleagues in this Chamber. It is an important part of why we build community. I think it's a real tribute to women that they have been able in many places around the world to have the strength that they have to maintain community.

The Deputy Speaker: Does any other hon. member want to join in the questions? We still have some time.

Seeing none, I would like to recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Mr. Benito: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Hon. members, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to begin by extending a warm hand of

friendship and best wishes to all of the hon. members of this Assembly. Today is the beginning of a new day for all of us, a day when we can start to set aside all our differences if we want to and work together to continue building a vibrant, stronger province for all Albertans.

As a new member it is my pride and pleasure to represent the diverse constituency of Edmonton-Mill Woods, where a Progressive Conservative candidate hasn't been elected since 1982. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate all my colleagues on being elected to this Assembly, and I look forward to working collaboratively with you on matters affecting Albertans.

Congratulations are also due to the hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock and the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort, who respectively are our new elected Speaker and Deputy Speaker.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank our hon. Premier for all of the help he has extended to me during the last few months and for making our campaign office the last stop on his campaign trail. That evening of the visit of the Premier was unbelievable. He electrified our team and boosted the morale of the people in our campaign headquarters. That day became an unforgettable day for all of us.

Mr. Speaker, I have a short story to tell, and I am sharing this with you as it is a very good example of the great opportunities our province offers to its residents, newcomers in particular. My political aspirations began in 1972, when martial law was declared in the Philippines. Against the wishes of my parents I became actively involved in school campus politics, specifically on the issues affecting students' rights and freedoms. My one big justification was that I wanted to make a difference. Thus, the seeds of active participation in community service were sown into my life.

I emigrated to Canada with my wife on March 17, 1982. We came to Canada with only \$100 in our pockets, which was borrowed from a relative, but we carried loads of hope, enthusiasm, and optimism that we were going to make it in this land of great opportunities. I will never forget the many people and friends who helped us in our struggle to survive. I went back to school to further my education so I could reach my potential to succeed and achieve my goals. Like most of our students I availed myself of the student loans and grants offered by this government. I was grateful for the generous and forgiving repayment program in spite of the then-struggling Alberta economy. Since that time, Mr. Speaker, I have secured a comfortable life for my family and made many lifelong friends.

Then more than six years ago I thought I should think about ways of how I could give back to the people and to the community who have helped me get where I am today. Thus started my career in politics. I ran for the elected office of MLA once in 2001 and was not successful. To me it was not a defeat on my part. I considered this as an excellent learning experience, a very good training ground that prepared me for the March 3, 2008, election.

8:50

Mr. Speaker, I could have settled into a very prosperous life in real estate, where I excelled and I've been nationally recognized, but I couldn't. Despite some concerns from my family and friends, in the fall of 2007 I was acclaimed as PC MLA candidate in Edmonton-Mill Woods. The cold winter of February 2008 saw me relentlessly campaigning: visiting Mill Woods residents and going house to house, building friendships and trust, talking about our platform, being proactive and positive, and staying away from negative messaging. I persevered in my campaign. The momentum grew through the hard work and dedication of my very supportive family and friends.

I learned so much in the past six months about the people of Mill Woods. Diversity does not accurately describe the demographics of the constituency. Many are immigrants like me, coming from all corners of the world, with the majority of them having come to live here since 1991. Edmonton-Mill Woods is a very young community which supports a large proportion of families with growing children, 70 per cent in fact. This is a community full of potential, and it is growing every day. Mr. Speaker, this is my inspiration, my motivation, to be the voice of people striving to achieve their full potential in a place where differences in race, colour, or culture are respected.

Mr. Speaker, there is a bright future that awaits all of us, especially our young people. I remain as dedicated today as I was during my campaign to the creation of a new scholarship fund for our deserving young students of Edmonton-Mill Woods. I look forward to pursuing all possible avenues to deliver on this priority during my time as a member of this Assembly. It is a commitment that I believe in and one that I will continue to work towards for my constituents no matter how long it takes. I see this scholarship fund as a way to assist young families in Edmonton-Mill Woods through financial grants to help their children in their studies. This will benefit students who have excelled in school and have proven their leadership in the community. I am hoping that one day they will also learn to give back as I plan to do every day while I am in this office.

As a member of the governing party I would also like to acknowledge the previous Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, Mrs. Weslyn Mather, for the inspiration she provides to keep alive our mutual passion for our children, their education, and their future.

Mr. Speaker, I believe it is only through education and providing the opportunity to be educated that Alberta will excel in its second century. Through education our province can provide all our citizens health care and empower them to live and raise a family in a safe and prosperous environment. I also believe we have a very big challenge ahead of us, serving the best interests of Alberta while ensuring that the needs of our diverse constituents are met. It is, indeed, a huge task; however, with our collaborative efforts and cooperation there is no obstacle we can't overcome.

Mr. Speaker, I am home now. I love Canada, and Alberta is now home to me and my family. Together let us make a difference and continue to work towards making this province the best place to live, work, and play in Canada. I would like to end with a quote from a great speaker, Sir Winston Churchill. He borrowed this line from Lincoln's second inaugural address, and he delivered this speech in 1943 at Harvard University, urging harmony between the United States and Britain: "Let us go forward in malice to none and good will to all."

The Deputy Speaker: Well, again, following Standing Order 29(2)(a) we have five minutes after the hon. member's speech for questions and comments. Any other hon. members want to join this five minutes?

Seeing none, then I would like to recognize the next member, the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

Mr. Weadick: Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to rise in this Chamber and respond to the Speech from the Throne. I'm truly honoured and humbled to stand before all of you today as the MLA for Lethbridge-West.

Clint Dunford served the people of Lethbridge-West and all of Alberta for 14 years as a member of this House and as a member of cabinet. I know that many people, not just in Lethbridge-West but across southern Alberta, expressed their admiration and respect for Clint and his many accomplishments for the area during his time in

the Legislature. I've known Clint for many years both privately and politically during my years on city council, and I know I can rely on my friend for advice and counsel in the years to come.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud to say that I'm the fourth generation of my family to call Lethbridge home. When my great-grandparents first arrived in Alberta, many people were living in crude houses they built for themselves from the sod beneath their feet. Those pioneers took a challenging landscape and through sheer force of will and determination turned it into the farms that grew the bread and later the beef that fed the rest of the nation. Later the dust bowl of the '30s pushed many southern Albertans to the brink of ruin, but their determination saw them through. Those hardy folks not only recovered but thrived and went on to build the strong foundation on which we are now privileged to stand.

I believe the Alberta attitude that is displayed by both the people and the government of this province, a fundamental belief in the values of hard work, sacrifice, and innovation, was forged in those early days long before the discovery of oil changed the economy of this province forever. Mr. Speaker, that philosophy has guided me through the more than three decades as a small businessman in Lethbridge, and this government and our Premier's commitment to those same values is what has inspired me to become a part of this team.

Our economy and low taxes are the envy of Canada and, indeed, much of the world. Our future is incredibly bright, filled with opportunities for Albertans to realize their dreams and build a quality of life for themselves and their families that our parents and grandparents could only have imagined.

But history has shown us that we can't take good fortune for granted. Alberta won the geological lottery with its oil and gas resources, but we still face many challenges, not the least of which is an increasingly competitive global economy. We owe it to our children and grandchildren to make sure our fortune is managed and invested properly so that it will come to pay dividends in the decades to come.

Since taking office 15 months ago Premier Stelmach has shown that he is a man of action with a positive, realistic plan to guide Alberta into the future. Albertans overwhelmingly endorsed that plan when they gave this government its mandate on March 3. I believe I speak for everyone in this room when I say that the Premier has made it clear that now is the time to get to work and deliver on the promises we made to Albertans. I know we're all up to the task.

Mr. Speaker, I was truly humbled when the Premier called and asked me to chair the Cabinet Policy Committee on the Economy, and it will be a pleasure to work with the members of this House in any way I can to ensure that we get the work done that we need to do.

The Speech from the Throne given by His Honour the Lieutenant Governor outlines the course the province must take in order to sustain and even improve Alberta's economy. I was particularly glad to see an emphasis on new ideas in technology and the creation of the Premier's Council for Economic Strategy. By maintaining and improving on an environment that is attractive to skilled workers, entrepreneurs, and investors, we can ensure our province's long-term prosperity.

Everything we do in this Chamber boils down to one thing: quality of life. That's what Albertans want, and that's what we are expected to deliver. As a lifelong Lethbridge resident I understand that because quality of life is what Lethbridge is all about.

Mr. Speaker, the Lethbridge-West constituency is a unique combination of the old and the new. It encompasses the historic downtown core, which has been the heart of the city for nearly a century, with many neighbourhoods filled with historic homes and

landmarks. In the past few years business initiatives and condominium developments have injected new vitality into this downtown area, making it a destination spot for the entire city.

Lethbridge-West is also a thriving residential community west of the Oldman River. The area is relatively new, having grown and developed around the University of Lethbridge over the past 37 years.

9:00

Mr. Speaker, I believe that Lethbridge is truly unique among Alberta cities. It's a thriving city of more than 80,000 people, yet it still has that small-town feel. You can take in an exhibit of brand new farm equipment in the afternoon and then an exhibit of fine artwork at night. You can still get across town in 15 minutes.

The University of Lethbridge and Lethbridge College attract more than 15,000 students each year to the city. The U of L consistently ranks amongst the best undergraduate schools in the country, according to *Maclean's* magazine. It's also home to the Canadian Centre for Behavioural Neuroscience, a world leader in brain research. The government continues to recognize the importance of the university and has invested more than \$79 million in recent capital projects. Lethbridge College is currently celebrating its 50th anniversary with a new name and a brand new attitude. At the same time, the college is working on a new focus towards liberal arts and transfer programs to Alberta's universities.

At the other end of the spectrum Lethbridge has long been known as a senior-friendly community with two top-notch senior centres serving a population of more than 20,000 folks over the age of 65. In recent years, thanks to the innovative efforts of Chinook health region, seniors are now able to live more independently and with more dignity than ever before. The designated assisted living model of housing and care has allowed hundreds of seniors to eat, sleep, bathe, and do all the other ordinary things in life that they want to rather than when someone tells them that they should. This has been an important thing for the quality of life of our seniors in Lethbridge. I believe it's this kind of innovative thinking focused on what patients need and other common-sense solutions rather than throwing money at a problem that will allow this government to rein in spending on health care and create a sustainable system that works for all Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, many people have recognized that Lethbridge has much to offer and have moved there to take advantage of the quality of life that we're famous for. Like many cities in Alberta we've felt the pressure of growth, especially in the area of affordable housing. Lethbridge council has been working hard to develop a plan to deal with low vacancy rates and has had a great deal of success, but they still need the province's help. A growing population is also putting stress on transportation, schools, and many other parts of our infrastructure in the city. That's why I was pleased to hear from His Honour in the Speech from the Throne that we're prepared to meet the challenges that have come as a result of Alberta's phenomenal prosperity. Investment in infrastructure – particularly roads, schools, and hospitals – will meet the needs of our growing province, giving Albertans an even more important tool for building the quality of life that they deserve.

Mr. Speaker, I've been truly moved today as I have listened to the maiden speeches of my colleagues as they spoke with passion, vision, and a visible love for this province. Alberta's future is filled with unlimited potential and opportunities. The people of Alberta have trusted us to be stewards of that future to make sure that everyone has access to the Alberta advantage now and in the generations to come. I firmly believe that good people in this Chamber understand their enormous responsibility and will rise to

the challenge. I look forward to working with the people of Lethbridge-West and my colleagues in the Legislature towards this goal.

I'd like to finish with a statement I repeated often during the election campaign because it's the best way I know to sum up the Alberta attitude, past, present, and future. When the people of Alberta all work together towards a common goal, there is nothing we can't accomplish.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Well, hon. members, again, following Standing Order 29(2)(a), we have five minutes available for other hon. members to ask questions or comment.

Seeing none, then I'll recognize the Member for Calgary-North Hill.

Mr. Fawcett: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour to rise today in the Assembly as the new Member for Calgary-North Hill and deliver my official maiden speech. My journey to sitting here today in this storied institution seems like a long one but, as many would say, not a surprising one.

Public service has been a passion of mine; one could even say a calling. I believe it to be an honour and a privilege to serve the great people of Alberta, whether it was serving as a captain of my school patrols in my early years or coaching youth athletics, participating in youth mentoring programs, or serving as a public school trustee in the city of Calgary. My presence here today and over the next several years just seems like a natural and logical extension of my purpose in life.

On a personal note I was truly humbled and honoured to listen to some of the stories of the other members on their journeys to this Chamber. I do want to share a couple of personal stories. One is an extension, as I said, of where I've been. I remember that when I was in grade 3 or 4, like many young boys I was not interested in school. I was interested in playing sports, whether it be hockey, baseball, football, anything where I could be outside. My mother, obviously, was a little bit concerned, knowing that she wanted a future for me and needed to get me interested in reading, so she bought a book about baseball.

I find it ironic because this book shaped my life and the direction that I took. This book was a children's biography about Jackie Robinson. The ironic part is that as I sat here in my inaugural throne speech yesterday, it was the 61st anniversary of Jackie Robinson crossing the colour barrier in major league baseball. As a 3rd grader or a 4th grader I was struck by this man's courage to progress our society and take a risk that no man had taken before. As I did some further research, I became more and more impressed with this individual and the way he handled his life. Inscribed on the stone on his gravesite is a quote by himself that I try to live every day of my life by. That quote is, "A life is not important except in the impact it has on other lives." I see that inscription as the true reason why all of us stand and sit here today.

The other story is that this whole process has reconnected me with my family lineage. My great-grandfather Norman Fawcett, the namesake of my middle name, also dedicated a significant portion of his life to serving Albertans and the Crown, first as a soldier in the Boer War, then later holding public office on local school boards and serving the former municipal district of Progress as a town councillor from 1930 to 1943. This personal link to past public service here in Alberta has cultivated a real sense of pride as to why I am here before you today.

Additionally, I am truly humbled to be in the presence of some other people from my past: my old high school classmate and friend

the hon. Member for Calgary-Montrose, who is sitting across from me now; the hon. Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs, with whom I had the exceptional pleasure of working and who taught me the level of dedication needed to be a leader in the community; not to forget the hon. Minister of Sustainable Resource Development, who six years ago inspired me as a political science instructor at the University of Calgary. Again, it fills me with pride just standing here amongst such respected and passionate people, not only among those three individuals but among the members of this House, both past and present, including well-respected Premiers Klein and Lougheed and another former boss and mentor of mine, the hon. Elaine McCoy.

I want to take this time to acknowledge past MLAs from Calgary North-Hill as well: Richard Magnus, Frederick Stewart, Edwin Oman, and Roy Farran, who for years have worked on delivering results for Calgary North-Hill and have over the years ensured that my constituents have had a voice in the Legislature. Now, this might seem like a lot of name-dropping for one speech; however, it symbolizes why I stand here today. I'm here because of the great people of Alberta. I'm here today because of the past, current, and future people of this great province. For me it is about the people and always will be about the people.

9:10

As a lifelong resident of Calgary, spending close to a quarter of a century residing in north Calgary, I can say with conviction that there are no greater people than those residing in Calgary-North Hill. I've become very familiar with the intricacies of Calgary-North Hill and its diverse opportunities and challenges. Calgary-North Hill is an established and mature inner-city urban riding in north-central Calgary and, unlike many inner-city urban ridings in Alberta and across Canada, has been a Progressive Conservative stronghold since its inception.

From an economic and community development standpoint I want to see Calgary-North Hill grow strong and increase its standard of living for the benefit of all of my constituents and the province as a whole. Currently, in Calgary-North Hill the average household is making just over \$56,000 annually, slightly below Alberta's average, and its demographic makeup is dominated by individuals 25 to 45 years of age, who comprise 30 per cent of my constituency. Many Calgarians see the abundance of opportunities in Calgary-North Hill and are choosing to buy real estate and reside in the communities encompassed by my riding. Several of the communities are referred to as the infill capital of Alberta. The allure of having tree-lined streets with a mixture of small, charming wartime houses mixed with the sleek new architecture of modern homes is a source of pride among residents of these communities.

However, with the conveniences of urban living come the challenges associated with growth and change. As the Hon. Norman Kwong stated in the throne speech, our urban centres have a unique set of needs in this era of dramatic growth in our province. Infrastructure and social needs such as crime and diversity and environmental needs are many. The rapid and exciting growth in Alberta has put a tremendous strain on the city of Calgary and its inner core – and this is the part of the city that Calgary-North Hill is a part of – and this goes beyond just the need for affordable housing.

Mr. Speaker, I stand here before you today to state that over the course of my tenure in this House I will highlight these issues for the Assembly and work with my fellow members to find innovative and progressive solutions to these issues. I intend to work hard for all of my constituents and communities as they work hard to create a better Alberta for future generations.

Being one of the youngest members here in the Legislative

Assembly, I feel I am in a unique position to connect with younger generations of Albertans, our future. As I go about my daily business, I want to inspire youth to be able to see the true value that comes from honest and strong political involvement and see opportunities emerging from young minds, who can be assured that they will have their voices heard.

Even though I am one of the youngest members, I know that my past work experience serving as a trustee for the Calgary board of education as well as my education experience have prepared me to garner the understanding of ongoing competing issues and interests, like those present in my constituency. I believe it is this challenging part of our role that is the most fundamental to this institution and one that we must all rise up to meet. We must collectively and individually balance, weigh, debate, and consider all issues and interests, providing an outlet for Albertans to have a voice even if we do not agree with their sentiment.

Even though I am driven to increase political involvement among youth and have young Albertans' voices heard in the Legislature, I would like to acknowledge the wisdom that so often comes with age. Not only is it my goal to have young Albertans become engaged in shaping the future direction of this province but also to bridge new and future generations of Albertans to past generations, who over Alberta's 100 years of history helped build the foundation of this province. With the growing population of seniors in Calgary-North Hill I know that there are many such pioneers who have made paramount contributions to Alberta as a province and have helped define Alberta's strong character.

As I alluded to earlier, I believe being a good listener is key to being a powerful and servant leader, thus allowing for fruitful and lifelong friendships to develop as well. As elected representatives entrusted in this great province we must strive to leave Alberta in better shape economically, environmentally, and socially than it is today. This will take real leadership, which means creating vision and acting on it with conviction and courage. Real leadership embraces the challenge of doing what is right, not just what is easy.

Mr. Speaker, the residents of Calgary-North Hill and all across Alberta should know that I am committed to ensuring that results of our government's five priorities are evident in their daily lives and that they, too, are benefiting from Alberta's future opportunities. It is my hope that at the end of the day together we will have created more cornerstones and positive change for all Albertans which will transcend generations.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Well, again, Standing Order 29(2)(a): we have five minutes for comments or questions for the last speaker. Any hon. member? Hon. Member for Calgary-Montrose? All right. You take the floor.

Mr. Bhullar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question to my former high school classmate and football teammate: why, sir, do you believe you were not able to clear the way for the running back when we lined up against one another in football?

Mr. Fawcett: Well, you know, as the hon. Member for Calgary-Montrose has alluded to, we did play high school football together. We had a very successful team 10 years, 11 years ago that lost the city final game by a touchdown. We had, I think, three opportunities to get the ball in from the one-yard line and couldn't do so.

An Hon. Member: You fumbled it.

Mr. Fawcett: I didn't fumble it. I was just blocking. The hole was there.

The Deputy Speaker: All right. We still have some time. Does any other hon. member want to join with a comment or question? All right. Last call.

According to my list we have the last speaker of tonight. I would like to recognize the hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

Mr. Campbell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a great honour and privilege to respond to the Speech from the Throne given by His Honour the Lieutenant Governor as the member for the constituency of West Yellowhead. Before I begin, though, I'd like to thank the hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock for the input he provided me early in my political career. I had the opportunity of serving alongside the then minister of science and technology, who now sits as the Speaker of this Assembly, on the Premier's Council on Science and Technology in 1992. The Speaker was the co-chair of the committee and along with another great Albertan, Dr. Robert Church, provided me with valuable experience, and I sincerely thank the Speaker for that today.

I'd also like to take the time today to thank Senator Elaine McCoy, who in 1990 saw qualities in me back then that, I must confess, even today I do not see in myself. She provided me great guidance and support in my campaign to become the MLA for West Yellowhead.

I'd also like to thank Ivan Strang, who was first elected in 1997 and retired this year. Ivan was a strong and tireless worker for the constituents of West Yellowhead, a strong advocate for the coal industry, and worked closely with me in the late 1990s to make sure the Cheviot mine project went ahead, which today employs more than 300 miners and provides a strong economic base for the town of Hinton.

9:20

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to pay respect to former member the hon. Bob Dowling, who represented our constituency in the early 1970s. He first sat as a member of the Official Opposition and then formed the government with Peter Lougheed. As my neighbour Mr. Dowling has over the years given me great counsel and even at the age of 84 was a strong supporter in my last campaign and worked diligently with the seniors to get the vote out.

Mr. Speaker, representing my constituency in the Legislature is a great privilege for me. The area of West Yellowhead is one of true beauty and one I've called home for 29 years. Actually, to the objection of many of the hon. members here today, I'm sure, I would argue that West Yellowhead is one of if not the most beautiful constituencies in all of Alberta. It is a constituency of vast forests, picturesque mountain ranges, sprawling prairie, and landscapes fit for the canvas of the great Michelangelo. Also, the majority of Jasper national park resides within West Yellowhead. It is a vital contributor to our economy, another testament to the beauty of the area I call home.

One of the great areas of Jasper national park is Maligne Lake. A lot of people in this Assembly might not know that Spirit Island is one of the most photographed areas in the world and brings us great joy. I worked as a fishing guide for 23 years in Jasper national park, and as a fishing guide I've had the opportunity to meet people from all over the world. In particular, one couple I met was from Denver, Colorado. This gentleman and his wife – he was a retired colonel in the U.S. air force – had in their living room a mural of Spirit Island. When they first put the mural in, on the package it said that it was San Moritz, Switzerland. These people thought for a long time that they had a picture of Switzerland in their living room and then found out that it was actually Jasper national park.

I took these people out fishing. As we were going down the lake,

I asked them their ages, just out of curiosity. I knew they were a little older than I. The colonel said that he was 76 years old. His wife had just turned 75, and as a present to her they were going to see Spirit Island, and they were going to catch a rainbow trout out of Maligne Lake. Well, anybody who lives in the Rocky Mountains knows about the weather. You can get all four seasons in one day: snow, rain, sleet, and hail. We started off on a nice, sunny day down Maligne Lake. It was about a nine-mile canoe ride to get to Spirit Island. It started to snow, and the winds came up. This gentleman said to me: "Son, I flew aircraft in Vietnam. This is nothing. We'll finish this trip." It took us two hours to get down to Spirit Island. His wife caught a rainbow trout on her 75th birthday. It was an experience that today I still remember. I was proud to be the guide that took them fishing.

Our close proximity to the mountains is also a main determinant of the major industries in my constituency. The coal-mining and forest industries, for example, play a pivotal role in the economic foundation of the West Yellowhead area. Also, the oil and gas sector is becoming more and more prevalent in my area and is a key reason why we are experiencing such a population explosion and job creation.

With that said, though, the main contributors to our economy are still coal, forestry, and our service sector. In fact, coal has been the foundation of West Yellowhead for many years. In the 1930s, when the railroad provided access into the area, the West Yellowhead area was praised for its vast deposits of coal. In the 1960s petroleum and its related industries added to the prosperity of my constituency, but coal remained at the heart of the community. Today I have miners living in Grande Cache, Hinton, Edson, Jasper, Robb, Cadomin, and Marlboro. We now have towns like Mercoal, Nordegg, Mountain Park, and Luscar, which have a rich history of coal mining in Alberta. Even today in the town of Cadomin thousands of families come each year to celebrate the heritage of coal mining in Mountain Park and in the Luscar area.

Mr. Speaker, Canada holds close to 10 billion tonnes of coal reserves, more energy than all of our oil and natural gas and oil sands combined. Every year Canada's coal industry contributes an estimated \$5 billion to the economy, enough to sustain over 73,000 average Canadian families each year. We continue to keep coal as a strong contributor to our economy.

Agriculture also continues to represent an important mainstay in the surrounding regions.

More recently, though, the forest industry has become a major employer in our area. Mr. Speaker, Alberta's forest sector generates annual revenues of almost \$8.4 billion and provides nearly 54,000 jobs for Albertans. Once again this is an industry which we must ensure remains a healthy contributor to our economy. But today we face many challenges that have to be addressed: the mountain pine beetle, a slow U.S. economy, and the softwood lumber agreement, that puts undue hardship on our exports.

Mr. Speaker, I talked a lot about coal, and people would wonder why. I guess the best way to say it is: I'm a fourth generation coal miner and have mined for 34 years. Much to my mother's disappointment, after putting myself through university working in the mines, I returned to the mines full-time, I guess mainly because I come from a humble background. But I understand the needs of my community and the need to voice those needs here in the Alberta Legislature. Being involved with the coal miner's union over the years has taught me the true importance of both the coal and forest industries in my community and an understanding of the work ethic that makes Alberta the province it is today.

One of my proudest moments was when my father was sitting in the members' gallery when I was sworn in. My father was a coal

miner who spent 35 years in the industry. My grandfather started working in the mines at Glace Bay, Nova Scotia, when he was eight years old as a breaker boy, and he continued in the mines until he retired at the age of 65, 57 years of service. Over the years my father has taught me many things, but among the most important are standing up for what I believe in and remembering where I come from. This, Mr. Speaker, is what I hope to do as a member of this Assembly.

I hope that by listening to my constituents and relying on my experience and knowledge of my community, I can provide a strong voice and express the issues that affect the residents of West Yellowhead most. I hope that I continue to ensure that the industries in my area continue to flourish, battling issues like mountain pine beetle and providing my constituents with the means to sustain our economic successes and enjoy a high quality of life. I also hope that my constituency's infrastructure continues to meet the needs of our ever-expanding area, including a new hospital in Edson, improvements to highway 40, and a community-type college in Hinton, so that our economy can continue to move forward, our communities can continue to grow, and our quality of life can remain among the highest in Canada if not the world.

This is indeed an exciting time. Reviewing the speech delivered by His Honour the Lieutenant Governor, I am truly happy to see such strong commitments, commitments which will greatly benefit my constituency. We have committed to strengthening the competitiveness of the forest sector, doubling the provincial investment in highway repaving and bridge repair over the next three years, and ensuring that our parks remain protected and accessible to all Albertans, and having committed to work with the agriculture industry to strengthen and diversify our agricultural sector, we are definitely on the right track.

Mr. Speaker, we have a plan, we have good leadership, we have the determination, and we have the means to build a sustainable and prosperous Alberta for many generations to come. What better time to be part of this team and this Assembly? I would like to thank the hon. Premier for assembling and leading this team. I am honoured to be a part of it. I also want to thank all of my constituents, my family, my friends, and especially my father for providing me the support to make it here today. I am truly thankful.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Well, that's the end of my list. Are there any others who wish to speak responding to the throne speech?

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, I move we adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

The Deputy Speaker: All right. Since you've adjourned the debate, I would just want to comment, a very short comment here, on listening to the speeches tonight. I want to thank all the members speaking tonight. I'm very impressed by the eloquence and the rich content of your speeches. I'm very, very confident that our 27th Alberta Legislature will be enriched by all of us.

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 1 Trade, Investment and Labour Mobility Agreement Implementation Statutes Amendment Act, 2008

The Deputy Speaker: I would like now to recognize the Deputy Premier.

Mr. Stevens: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and move for second reading Bill 1, the TILMA Implementation Statutes Amendment Act, 2008.

Before I make comments with respect to that legislation, I would echo your comments regarding the impressive maiden speeches that have been made here in the Assembly today. Both of us have now been here for – this is the beginning of our fourth terms, and in my memory the speeches that we are hearing this time, including, I must say, the speeches that we heard in our first term, would be the best that I have ever heard. I think we have incredible new MLAs, and I would congratulate all of those who have spoken so far for the eloquence and passion and dedication that they have shown in the very few words that they have spoken in terms of what they ultimately will speak in this Assembly.

9:30

The legislation is significant, but before I comment on the legislation itself, I'd like to talk about the TILMA, which is the trade, investment, and labour mobility agreement itself. It is a bilateral free trade agreement between Alberta and British Columbia. Its goal is very straightforward. It is to make life easier and better for Albertans and for the people of B.C. by removing barriers to trade, investment, and labour mobility.

The agreement was signed in April 2006 by the two provinces and came into effect for certain sectors in April 2007. It means seamless access for businesses and workers in both provinces to a large range of opportunities across all sectors, including energy, transportation, and agriculture. For example, a business incorporated in one province will be deemed registered in the other if it wants: no residency required, no added administration, reporting, or fees.

Alberta and B.C. companies have increased opportunities to bid on government contracts in both provinces, particularly engineering and accounting services. All skilled tradespersons, like plumbers or welders, or highly trained professionals, like teachers or nurses, certified in Alberta or B.C. will be able to move between provinces and keep working without having to go through extensive recertification or retraining.

Extensive consultations on the TILMA have taken place, and we will continue those discussions with affected groups. For example, the government received input from a wide variety of industry and occupational groups before the agreement was signed in April 2006. We met with more than 200 representatives from municipalities, academic institutions, school jurisdictions, health authorities across the province between May and August 2007, and we continue to consult with them. We have consulted with more than 60 regulatory agencies and occupational associations responsible for more than 100 professions and trade workers. Alberta and British Columbia are working together to fully implement the TILMA by April 2009. Later this spring B.C. will also introduce legislation similar to Bill 1 to implement the agreement.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 1, the TILMA Implementation Statutes Amendment Act, is critical to keeping us on target to usher in this groundbreaking agreement. It is an agreement that is unprecedented in Canada. It is one that many people are watching, both within this country and without. It is already a catalyst for how Canada and all provinces look at internal trade and labour mobility. Bill 1 amends current statutes and lays the groundwork to allow for full implementation of the TILMA by April 1, 2009. It is the nuts and bolts that will ensure longevity and success of the TILMA.

The bill itself focuses on three main areas. First, it reconciles corporate registration, which will help businesses, especially small businesses, by eliminating the need to register in both provinces. For example, if Maggie's Flower Shop in Grande Prairie wants to

open a store in Dawson Creek, her life just got a whole lot easier because information from her Alberta registration will be provided to the registrar in British Columbia, and Maggie won't face a variety of fees to reregister her information separately in each province or prepare a separate annual return for regulators in each province.

The second focus is to provide authority for Alberta to waive certain corporate presence requirements when energy regulators in both provinces agree to equivalent high standards.

The third component of Bill 1 is amendments to the Government Organization Act. This is the technical piece of the legislation. It consolidates provisions of the TILMA in one place to allow the agreement to operate smoothly.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, once fully implemented, the TILMA will mean seamless access for businesses and workers in both provinces to a large range of opportunities within a single economic region. It will create Canada's second-largest market, with more than 7.7 million people and a combined GDP of more than \$400 billion. Overall, the TILMA is a comprehensive and far-reaching agreement between the two provinces that requires some legislative changes. Bill 1 incorporates these changes and moves us closer to full implementation.

Mr. Speaker, the government of Alberta has committed to continue to work with municipalities and other stakeholders, giving them a say in how they will be affected by the TILMA when it comes into effect. We will also continue to work with more than 60 professional and trades regulatory bodies that cover more than 100 different occupations in Alberta to eliminate the barriers to the

movement of workers between the two provinces. These requirements are being negotiated directly between the regulators for the professions and the professional organizations in each province, so there is no need to include this aspect in the legislation before this House.

The legislative changes outlined in Bill 1 help us achieve our goal of removing barriers to trade, investment, and labour mobility and making life easier and better for Albertans. Mr. Speaker, I encourage all hon. members to support Bill 1. It is a good piece of legislation.

At this time, Mr. Speaker, I would adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, would like to add my comments to the comments made earlier about what a great afternoon and evening we've had listening to the so-called maiden speeches of new members to this Legislature and hearing with interest the diversity of backgrounds and perspectives but also the passions that they bring to the Chamber. It's been a wonderful first full day of session. I would move that we go home and reflect upon that and come back tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

[Motion carried; at 9:39 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Thursday at 1:30 p.m.]

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