



Province of Alberta

The 31st Legislature
First Session

Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, October 30, 2023

Day 1

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 31st Legislature

First Session

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Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie-East (UC), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UC), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Ip, Nathan, Edmonton-South West (NDP)
Irwin, Janis, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP)
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(UC)
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Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UC)
Smith, Hon. Danielle, ECA, Brooks-Medicine Hat (UC),
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Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UC)
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP),
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Williams, Hon. Dan D.A., ECA, Peace River (UC),
Deputy Government House Leader
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., ECA, Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UC)
Wright, Justin, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UC)
Wright, Peggy K., Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UC),
Deputy Government Whip
Yaseen, Hon. Muhammad, ECA, Calgary-North (UC)

Party standings:

United Conservative: 48

New Democrat: 38

Independent: 1

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Martin Long	Parliamentary Secretary for Rural Health
Scott Sinclair	Parliamentary Secretary for Indigenous Policing
Tany Yao	Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business and Northern Development

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

3 p.m.

Monday, October 30, 2023

The Sergeant-at-Arms: Order! Order! Mr. Speaker.

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

Prayers

The Speaker: Lord, the God of righteousness and truth, grant to our King and to his government, to Members of the Legislative Assembly, and to all in positions of responsibility the guidance of Your spirit. May they never lead the province wrongly through love of power, desire to please, or unworthy ideas but, laying aside all private interest and prejudice, keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all. Amen.

Hon. members, please remain standing. Elder Leonard Saddleback of the Samson Cree First Nation, who is joined by his wife, Julie Gibson, will now offer a blessing.

Elder Saddleback: My prayer is going to be only four to five minutes.

Today I'm grateful to be here again. I gave a name to the Premier. Her name to us [Remarks in Cree] means: from the sun a woman rises and walks out from there. That's her Cree name. I'm grateful for that name because we connect in our tribal names, the names that we have passed on, so our children can work with you, so our great-grandchildren will work and understand the relationship that we have in Treaty 6 and also my relatives in the Métis societies.

I want to thank all for this prayer as a holistic prayer. In our sun dance ceremonies the middle pole, the totem pole, is the point of the central meetings for all different nations to understand each other, to live in peace, and create programs for our children to get together and the leaderships to work in this land and to enjoy all people that came from a different area, your ancestors.

Today, Creator, I'm asking you for a special blessing to give us the honour of human race, humanity. Everybody matters today, Creator. The things that we understand from school programs – mind over matter: my ancestors always told us, Creator. I hope they understand that everything matters for existence of tribal laws, for existence of respect of tribal laws and the laws of others. Creator, today I bless this group of people in your name [Remarks in Cree]. Lord, Saviour, I understand all of the things that we've done in our ceremonies. For 58 years I honoured you and fasted 44 days before we'd do a sun dance.

This is a gathering of that and a blessing, so I bless this gathering to work together in joy and happiness, right or wrong, to correct that, and all the stuff that you've given us, this land, everything: the gravel, the trees, the animals, the fish. Creator, give these people that special blessing to understand, to help us, to help all, not just a few people but all of the hospitals, all of the schools, every institution. Creator, I'm asking you to bless that.

Last night the prayers that I did with my pipe and the prayers I did in my mind, heart, and soul: I honour Rick Wilson today in that prayer, Eagle Man [Remarks in Cree] – give us that blessing today to understand – and also the woman Leila Houle, whose Cree name is [Remarks in Cree] Thunderbird Woman, for bringing this tobacco to me today. It's a great honour.

With that, I want to honour and bless the Lieutenant Governor and the throne speech to give us an understanding so that I can go

back to my reserve with that understanding and talk to my people in a good way.

With that, [Remarks in Cree].

The Speaker: Ladies and gentlemen, I would now like to invite Ariana Whitlow, accompanied by the Royal Canadian Artillery Band, to lead us in the singing of our national anthem. Please join them in the language of your choice.

Hon. Members and Guests:

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

The Speaker: Please be seated. Hon. members, I think we should have the RCA Band here every week for *O Canada*.

The RCA Band will now play a brief musical interlude. The piece to be performed is entitled *Grand Valley Fanfare*. The RCA Band, Canada's oldest regular army band, was formed in Quebec City in 1879 and reconstituted in Edmonton in 1997. It was subsequently stationed in Montreal and Halifax, and it has been in service for both world wars and in Korea and has travelled across Canada and beyond our borders.

Please enjoy this performance of *Grand Valley Fanfare* by the Royal Canadian Artillery Band.

Entrance of the Lieutenant Governor

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

[The Mace was draped]

[The Sergeant-at-Arms knocked on the main doors of the Chamber three times. The Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms opened the doors, and the Sergeant-at-Arms entered]

The Sergeant-at-Arms: Ladies and gentlemen, all rise, please.

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

The Speaker: Sergeant-at-Arms, admit Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor.

[A fanfare of trumpets sounded]

[Preceded by the Sergeant-at-Arms, Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta, Salma Lakhani, AOE, BSc, LLD, and His Honour Dr. Zaheer Lakhani, their party, the Premier, and the Clerk entered the Chamber. Her Honour took her place upon the throne]

Her Honour: Please be seated.

The Speaker: May it please Your Honour, the Legislative Assembly has elected me their Speaker though I am but little able to fulfill the important duties thus assigned to me. If in the performance of those duties I should at any time fall into error, I pray that the fault may be imputed to me and not to the Assembly, whose servant I am and who, through me the better to enable them to discharge their duty to their King, province, and people, humbly claim all their undoubted rights and privileges, especially that they may have freedom of speech in their debates, access to Your

Honour's person at all sensible times, and that their proceedings may receive from Your Honour the highest favourable construction.

Your Honour, the Provincial Secretary, Minister of Justice, and keeper of the Great Seal of Alberta.

Mr. Amery (Provincial Secretary): Mr. Speaker, I am commanded by Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor to declare to you that she freely confides in the duty and attachment of this Assembly to His Majesty's person and government, and not doubting that their proceedings will be conducted with wisdom, temper, and prudence, she grants and upon all occasions will recognize and allow their constitutional privileges. I am commanded also to assure you that the Assembly shall have ready access to Her Honour upon all reasonable occasions and that their proceedings as well as your words and actions will constantly receive from her the most favourable construction.

Her Honour: Well, good afternoon, everyone. Before I read the Speech from the Throne, I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to all members of the Assembly for your dedicated service to our province. The role that each of you plays is important to our system of government, and the work that you collectively do in this Chamber is essential to the quality of life of Albertans. I wish each and every one of you a most productive and constructive session, and I hope that you will share my thanks with the leaders and volunteers in your constituencies, who work so hard to keep our communities and province moving forward. Please also convey my gratitude to your families and loved ones, who make daily sacrifices to support you.

With that, I will begin the Speech from the Throne.

Speech from the Throne

Introduction

Her Honour: Mr. Speaker, hon. Members of the Legislative Assembly, and fellow Albertans:

I open this First Session of the 31st Legislature as His Majesty the King's representative.

Today we gather on Treaty 6 territory, and I invite all hon. members to reflect upon and acknowledge the traditional territories of the First Peoples of this land and their invaluable contributions to our province and country. I also recognize Métis people in Alberta, who share a deep connection with this land.

Hon. members, since this Assembly last convened, the people of Alberta voted in a free and competitive provincial election. During that period there was robust discussion and healthy public debate on a variety of critically important issues facing our province. These many discussions and debates took place on doorsteps, in coffee shops, at dinner tables, during local candidate forums, and, of course, live on television. And after those vigorous debates and discussions were concluded, almost 1.8 million Albertans exercised their constitutionally protected right to vote for the candidate of their choice.

The results of that free and fair vote are reflected by the presence of each and every elected member in this Assembly, the membership of the provincial cabinet, and, of course, the Premier of Alberta. And today's Speech from the Throne will outline the commitments of this newly elected government to the people and province of Alberta.

Alberta's Provincial Rights

Hon. members, our province finds itself at a critical juncture in our history, and choices must be made in the coming months and years that will have generational impacts. There are powerful forces in our country, including in the federal government, that believe our

province must fundamentally alter our provincial economy and way of life and that we must do so without delay or concern of cost.

These individuals believe that developing Alberta's natural resources is inconsistent with reducing global emissions. They intend to enforce this belief by effectively capping emissions, and therefore production, of our oil and natural gas sector, which will cost Alberta hundreds of thousands of jobs and hundreds of billions of dollars in economic investment and provincial revenues. These same individuals believe that our province must also fundamentally transform our power grid to be net zero within approximately a decade, with risk to the reliability of Alberta's power grid and at a cost of hundreds of billions of dollars to Alberta ratepayers. And they seek to impose these policies on our province knowing full well the Canadian Constitution grants our province exclusive jurisdiction over the development of our natural resources and operation of our provincial electrical grid.

Hon. members, Alberta's government will not permit the federal government to inflict these destructive policies on the people of Alberta. If the federal government continues down its current path, Alberta's government will, over the coming months, introduce several motions under the Sovereignty Within a United Canada Act detailing provincial initiatives and legislation necessary to protect Albertans from these unconstitutional and harmful policies.

It is the Alberta government's position that every Albertan must have access to affordable and reliable electricity no matter the weather or time of day, and this government will not permit misguided federal policies to risk the safety and prosperity of Albertans. Further, it is the Alberta government's position that our world will have little hope of meaningfully reducing carbon emissions without Alberta multiplying its natural gas and other energy exports to Asia and other jurisdictions to replace the world's use of coal, wood, and other high-emitting sources for energy. The world needs more Alberta energy, not less, and Alberta's government intends to empower Albertans to deliver it.

Growth Pressures

Hon. members, Alberta's government does not believe Alberta has in any way reached the peak of our provincial journey. Just the opposite. In fact, the government believes our province is still in the midst of Alberta's century. Our province is growing faster than at any other time in our history. Hundreds of thousands of new and wonderful people are intentionally choosing to call this province home each year. As we surpass 5 million people in the coming 24 months, Alberta's government must set priorities and guide its work through the lens of understanding that by 2050 our province is projected to be the second-largest in the country, with a population approaching 10 million people.

This growth presents both incredible opportunities and massive challenges. It means our economy will be one of the strongest in the world for many decades. It means that all the technology and growth required to build flourishing new industries and transform and grow established ones will occur right in our front yard. It means massive infrastructure improvements and new recreational and entertainment opportunities that will build our quality of life and culture for decades. It means the best and brightest from all over the world will continue treating this province as a land of promise, a shining city on a hill, where those willing to work hard and contribute can realize their and their families' greatest dreams.

But it also means our province will face significant challenges, challenges born out of high growth and economic activity. Our province has experienced these challenges in the past, but Alberta's government intends to learn from both the

successes and mistakes of past governments in dealing with these challenges as we move forward.

Affordability

A primary concern in times of growth is affordability. We have seen cities, provinces, states, and countries across the world fail to address this issue effectively for decades. Alberta needs to be the exception to those failed examples and forge our own successful path to prosperity.

Albertans new and old need to be able to rent apartments and homes for their families without compromising their food budget. When they have good credit, they need to be able to purchase a home at an attainable price. The cost of fuel for their vehicles needs to be reasonable and stable. Electricity prices and insurance premiums need to reflect the reality of people's paycheques.

Although it is certainly a bold undertaking, Alberta's government intends to tackle all these affordability challenges head-on.

Lower Taxes

The biggest expense for almost every Albertan and Canadian is the taxes we pay. The burden has simply become too great for most to bear: income taxes, sales taxes, fuel taxes, and, of course, the inflation-inducing federal carbon tax. Albertans are taxed too much, and it's making everything Albertans need to live more expensive.

For obvious reasons Alberta's government can do little about the federal carbon tax or federal sales tax. But it can and will do its part to lower the tax burden for Albertans. That is why Alberta's government will introduce Bill 1, the Taxpayer Protection Amendment Act, to guarantee there will be no new taxes or increases in personal or business taxes in this province without approval by Albertans in a referendum.

In addition, Alberta's government will lower the tax burden for Albertans by creating a new 8 per cent tax bracket on income under \$60,000, saving Alberta taxpayers up to \$750 annually. The government will also legislatively extend the fuel tax pause until December 31, 2023, and has made the fuel tax relief program permanent to protect Albertans during times of high oil prices.

Albertans will reap the benefits of these tax cuts and consumer protections. They will keep more of their hard-earned money for the things that are important to them, whether that's nutritious food, hockey fees, dance lessons, further education, family vacations, or retirement savings.

Attainable Housing Strategy

Hon. members, housing and the price of housing has become one of the greatest concerns across the country. Albertans feel these pressures, and Alberta's government is here to support them. The government is expanding the use of rent supplements to better use existing rental market capacity and help more Albertans get into suitable, affordable housing.

Alberta's government is also working to develop partnerships and build capacity within the housing system to support an additional 12,000 low-income households through rent assistance.

With its partners, Alberta is now supporting \$9 billion in housing investments to build 25,000 new units by 2031 and will be working with municipalities to drastically increase private construction to ensure Albertans can find homes to rent and buy that fit within their budgets.

Electricity Costs

Albertans' electricity costs are too high, hon. members. There are many reasons for this. A rushed provincial transition from coal to natural gas and federal policies that are scaring away new investment in electricity generation from natural gas are the primary culprits, but there are certainly additional factors. Regardless, electricity in Alberta has gone from being among the most affordable in the country to among the most expensive. Alberta's government will not allow that to continue.

Over the coming months Alberta's government will work collaboratively with industry and consumers on a package of substantive reforms to ensure Albertans have an electricity grid that gives them access to affordable and reliable power and supports the expansion of a power grid that will need to more than double its baseload capacity in the coming decades. These reforms will ensure ample natural gas generated electricity is brought onto the electricity grid to ensure prices are pushed down and the lights always stay on. It will ensure that our electricity market is free from market manipulation and that ratepayers are not left with unaffordable electricity rates under what is now inappropriately termed the "regulated rate option."

Alberta's government will incentivize investments in carbon capture, utilization, and storage, nuclear, geothermal, and other reliable sources of baseload power. It will modernize the grid and incentivize consumers to install solar panels and other energy-efficient technologies in their homes and businesses to decrease demand stress on the grid. And Alberta's government will conclude work on a regulatory regime that continues to see Alberta lead the country in renewable energy growth in a manner that is financially sustainable, protects our pristine landscapes and prime agricultural lands, guarantees end-of-life site reclamation, and does not risk the integrity of our power grid.

Simply put, Albertans will have affordable and reliable electricity when and where they need it, and the province will accomplish all of this while moving towards a carbon-neutral electrical grid by 2050.

Insurance Costs

Insurance premiums are another cost-of-living pressure that this government must act on. Albertans can't just choose not to have insurance. They need it for their vehicles and property. And although Alberta's government supports the consumer choices and other advantages that our free-market insurance system provides, our insurance industry must understand that when it provides a product that effectively all Albertans are required to have, consumers must be protected from undeserved spikes in the costs of those products.

That is why Alberta's government froze auto insurance rates before the end of last year, and it is why, when the government lifts that freeze in the new year, it will also implement a series of reforms to limit increases to premiums for drivers who have safe driving records and introduce other changes to assist insurers to keep premiums more reasonable and competitive with the rest of the country on a go-forward basis. Life in Alberta must be affordable for those who choose to live here.

Public Safety and Addiction Crisis

Life in Alberta must also be safe. Albertans are done with allowing further deterioration of public safety on our streets, especially in Edmonton and Calgary. They are done with open-air

drug use and unsafe tent cities and criminals being repeatedly released on bail to reoffend. Albertans are tired of the excuses and tolerance for criminal behaviour by those who seem to think that what we see on our streets is acceptable in any way. That is why Alberta's government will provide funding to support the hiring of hundreds of new police officers and introduce multiple justice system reforms to do all that is possible as a province to arrest and put criminals behind bars.

While Albertans are looking for consequences for criminals, our hearts also break as we see so many falling into the deadly and destructive trap of addiction and untreated mental health issues. In many instances these Albertans have become a danger to themselves and others in the community. That is one of the reasons why Alberta's government will introduce legislation to create a compassionate intervention program for those who have lost the capacity to make life-saving decisions and are a danger to themselves or others. And it's why Alberta's government is establishing 11 recovery communities and adding to the more than 10,000 new publicly funded addiction treatment spaces across the province. We owe it to these Albertans, their families, and the community to find a better way to get them the help they need.

Our streets and communities must be safe, and Alberta's government calls on the federal government, municipal councils, and police commissions to work together to aggressively address this critically urgent challenge.

Health Care

As our province doubles in size over the coming decades, we will also need to significantly improve and grow the capacity of our health care system for all Albertans. Despite the excellent work of doctors, nurses, and other front-line staff, more work is needed so Albertans can access world-class health care when and where they need it. Alberta's government began down this road last fall with its health care action plan. While we have seen some success with reducing wait times in emergency rooms and for surgeries and improving ambulance response times, the government believes more needs to be done.

Earlier this month Alberta's government took action to help Albertans get more access to family doctors and other local health professionals, which is the foundation of a healthier province. The government will have more to say in the coming weeks on additional action to decentralize decision-making and move additional health resources and professionals to the front lines. This, in turn, will increase health care capacity and improve health care delivery in the province and lead to better outcomes for patients.

Education

Hon. members, with the substantial growth our province is set to experience in the years ahead, Alberta's government must significantly expand the number of spaces in our kindergarten through grade 12 and postsecondary education systems. Not only does our province need many more classrooms, teachers, assistants, and support staff; we also need more quality educational choices for parents by growing capacity in and improving the quality of our public, separate, charter, independent, and home-schooling systems.

Government will further integrate mental health supports within schools and continue to implement additional educational assistants into classrooms to address the unique and specialized needs of many of our students.

Alberta's government will also ensure our kindergarten through grade 12 and postsecondary school systems outline clear paths for

students and parents to help direct students into the jobs and careers our province needs most.

The government will work to strengthen career education by funding new and enhanced dual credit programs, bringing more collegiate schools online across the province to create pathways for students and exploring new ways to attract and bridge qualified tradespeople, health care professionals, information technologists, and other experts into the teaching profession. And Alberta's government will champion skilled trades and professions to ensure young Albertans know that apprenticeship education has as much merit and value as any other form of postsecondary study.

Our children deserve a world-class education system geared towards obtaining jobs and success in the economy of today and tomorrow. Alberta's government will ensure they have it.

Economic Diversification

Hon. members, if Alberta wishes to maintain and further grow one of the world's most successful economies, the government believes we must build on our core strengths while incentivizing the creation and growth of new industries and opportunities. Our province is the fourth-largest producer of oil and gas in the entire world and is far and away its most environmentally responsible one. Alberta will not be content with fourth place, not when our province's energy reserves and environmental technologies are second to none and when increasing our exports can guarantee energy security for the free world while replacing thousands of megatonnes of carbon dioxide from coal and other high-emission fuels with clean Alberta LNG and responsibly developed oil products.

That is why Alberta's government is forming a crossministry working group to review and reform how it regulates natural resource development in this province. Not only will Alberta be the greenest energy producer in the world; the government will ensure we create one of the most efficient, timely, and red-tape-free jurisdictions on the planet to invest in energy, whether that be conventional, nonconventional, renewable, or otherwise. Alberta's government will ensure the entire world understands that the words "Alberta" and "energy" are inextricably linked for generations.

Further, with food security becoming an emerging world challenge, Alberta is perfectly placed to help feed the world with our world-class agricultural entrepreneurs, farmers, and ranchers. That is why Alberta launched the agriprocessing investment tax credit to attract large-scale investment in value-added agricultural manufacturing. This tax credit builds on the province's other competitive advantages and maximizes opportunities to create more jobs for Albertans.

And although energy and agriculture will be the bread and butter of our economy for the foreseeable future, the government will not wait to build the industries of tomorrow. Alberta's government will incentivize the development of new and emerging industries such as hydrogen, rare-earth minerals, technology, new forestry products, tourism, and culture. And as it does so, the government will remove barriers for new Albertans to qualify to work in the jobs our economy most needs and where they are often already qualified to work by working with our professional regulatory partners to create a more efficient and streamlined system for the best and brightest to join the workforce of tomorrow and secure our province's future.

Alberta's government will also remain steadfastly committed to economic reconciliation by partnering in prosperity with Indigenous communities as we unlock Alberta's full economic potential together. Alberta's government has expanded the capacity of the Alberta Indigenous Opportunities Corporation to \$2 billion and will further increase it to \$3 billion so it can continue to remove barriers to

Indigenous investments by providing large loan guarantees that weren't previously available. And in Budget 2023 Alberta's government created the Indigenous reconciliation initiative, which supports Indigenous-led economic and cultural initiatives.

Economic reconciliation is about improving social outcomes by creating jobs and opportunities for Indigenous peoples in Alberta. It is about collaboration, and it is a central part of this government's commitment to walking the path toward reconciliation together.

Infrastructure

Hon. members, as our province grows by another million people over the next five years and to 10 million by 2050, so too must investment in our municipalities and provincial transportation network. Aside from health care facilities, schools, and other needed building infrastructure, the province needs to substantially invest in infrastructure that incentivizes economic development, attracts skilled professionals, and increases the quality of life of Albertans. That is why Alberta's government has been working closely with municipalities across Alberta to finalize a new funding framework that is tied to provincial revenues and provides more predictability for capital planning at the municipal level.

But the province also needs to significantly expand our provincial transportation and highway network and build commuter rail links between our two largest cities and their growing neighbouring communities and airports. We need to decongest our highways to Kananaskis and Banff with a passenger rail tie between the Calgary airport, downtown Calgary, and Canmore/Banff. And, yes, we need to start planning for the inevitable need for high-speed rail through the Calgary-Red Deer-Edmonton corridor when 6 to 7 million Albertans eventually call that corridor their home.

These investments are decades long and should not be made randomly. They must be planned carefully and in an integrated fashion to ensure the most efficient and timely use of tax dollars. Alberta's government intends to do just that.

Fiscal Responsibility

Alberta's government will do all of what has been spoken of today within the discipline of our province's newly passed fiscal framework. It will simply not place crushing debt on the backs of future generations of Albertans. Our children and grandchildren deserve so much better. Alberta's government will give them better. It will balance our provincial budget each year. It will limit spending increases each year to below inflation plus population growth. It will pay down debt every year until our province is debt free again.

And when the province runs surpluses, rather than spend it all away on the wants of today, Alberta's government will build our heritage fund by billions of dollars and eventually by tens of billions of dollars so that one day our province's reliance on oil and natural gas royalties will be eliminated. Let us leave future generations of Albertans a legacy of prosperity and opportunity built on a fiscal foundation as strong as our Rocky Mountains.

Closing

Yes, hon. members, this government's agenda is ambitious. But so, too, are Albertans. We are not content with average. We are not a people to say, "Good enough" when the job is not yet finished. And we do not shy away from a challenge, not when the future of our families, friends, and neighbours is at stake.

We are indeed a province of leaders, innovators, pioneers, and visionaries. But we are also a province of teachers, healers, and protectors. And we will need the unique strengths and gifts of all of

us and those of our children and their children to realize the limitless promise of this great province.

God save the King, and may God bless Alberta to be forever strong and free.

The Sergeant-at-Arms: Order! All rise, please.

The Speaker: Ladies and gentlemen, I would now invite Ariana Whitlow, accompanied by the RCA Band, to lead us in the singing of *God Save the King*.

Hon. Members and Guests:

God save our gracious King,
Long live our noble King,
God save the King!
Send him victorious,
Happy and glorious,
Long to reign over us,
God save the King!

The Sergeant-at-Arms: Order!

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

[The Mace was uncovered]

[Disturbance in the gallery]

The Sergeant-at-Arms: Order!

The Speaker: Please be seated. Order. Order. Please be seated. I'm glad the rest of you are here.

[The Premier returned to the Chamber]

The Speaker: Hon. members, elders, chiefs, Chief Justice, high commissioners, consuls general, members of the diplomatic corps – please be seated, Premier – I'd like to take just a moment and provide an opportunity to reflect on the significance of today. Thirty-four of you make your first appearance in this Assembly, and each and every one of you who has joined us today plays an important part in your community respectively. It is one of the greatest honours that I have as the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly to host you all here in your House, the people's House.

I'd like to briefly comment on the makeup of the 31st Legislature of Alberta. This Legislature has a few notable firsts to mention: the largest Official Opposition in Alberta's history, with 38 members of His Majesty's Loyal Opposition. The Assembly has 33 women members, which is 38 per cent of all members. The 31st Legislature also has the largest number of Indigenous and Métis members – five – of any Legislature. Other 31st Legislature firsts are the first Black woman and the first Black Muslim.

In terms of languages, there are 21 languages, other than English, spoken by members, with French being the most common language. Other languages are Arabic, Bahasa Indonesia, Chinese, Mandarin, Cree, German, Greek, Hindi, Italian, Low German, Nakota Sioux, Polish, Portuguese, Punjabi, Siksika, Somali, Spanish, Ukrainian, and Urdu.

One other interesting note about the composition of the Legislature is that occupational backgrounds of our membership include that the most common occupation, of 18 members, was businesspeople or entrepreneurs; 14 were executive directors or directors; nine worked as postsecondary instructors or lecturers; eight were lawyers – that's probably the right number – and eight are also farmers or ranchers.

I also would like to take a brief moment to mention that 2023 is an important year because it marks the 40th anniversary of the Legislative Assembly Office of Alberta, or the LAO. The origins of the Legislative Assembly Office are traceable back to the 14th century in England, when the first Speaker was elected by the Parliament and the first Clerk was appointed.

In more recent years in Alberta the sometimes-called Speaker's department was established to support the work of the Speaker and the members. The name of the organization was formalized as the Legislative Assembly Office in 1983, when the Legislative Assembly Act of Alberta was passed. The Speaker, your Speaker, has the absolute honour of leading the LAO, with the Clerk of the Assembly serving as the lead administrative and procedural assistant to the Speaker. The LAO provides a multitude of services to members, including providing administrative, financial, legal, procedural, information technology, human resources, and security services. The Legislative Assembly provides library and information and outreach services to the members and to members of the public.

In addition, in 2023 the LAO received a Great Place to Work certification. This designation demonstrates to those in the job market that the LAO is an employer of choice, and it strengthens an already strong workplace culture.

Please join me in recognizing the work and the significant anniversary of the Legislative Assembly Office of Alberta.

Tablings

The Speaker: I have the honour to table a copy of the speech graciously given by Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor.

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Bill 1

Alberta Taxpayer Protection Amendment Act, 2023

Ms Smith: Why, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to rise today to introduce Bill 1, the Alberta Taxpayer Protection Amendment Act, 2023.

This legislation fulfills a promise that we made to Albertans to keep taxes low for individuals, families, and businesses and to protect Albertans from increases to personal and corporate income taxes by requiring an approval through a referendum. Mr. Speaker, Alberta's low-tax environment is attracting newcomers by the thousands and driving further growth and diversification of our province's economy. Pro-growth policies like the job-creation tax cut have made us one of the most business-friendly jurisdictions in all of North America, and this legislation will further cement our position as the best place to live and do business.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I hereby move first reading of Bill 1, the Alberta Taxpayer Protection Amendment Act, 2023.

[Motion carried; Bill 1 read a first time]

Motions

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that the speech of Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor to this Assembly be taken into consideration on October 31, 2023.

[Motion carried]

Certificates of Election

The Clerk: Mr. Speaker, I have received from the Chief Electoral Officer of Alberta pursuant to the Election Act reports containing the results of the general election conducted on the 29th day of May, 2023, which state that an election was conducted in the following electoral divisions, and such reports further show that the following members were duly elected.

[The Clerk read the election returns]

The Speaker: The hon. the Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that the Assembly stand adjourned until Tuesday, October 31, 2023, at 1:30 p.m.

The Speaker: I, for one, will be dressed as the Speaker.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 4:14 p.m.]

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