

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Thursday, March 7, 1974

[In accordance with the Royal Proclamation dated February 13, 1974, summoning the Members of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta to convene on this date, the House met at 3:00 o'clock.]

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS:

Order!

[All stood, and the Clerk read the Royal Proclamation.]

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS:

Order! Mr. Speaker.

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

MR. SPEAKER:

Would you be seated please.

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

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS:

His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor!

[His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant-Governor entered the Chamber accompanied by his escort, and took his seat upon the Throne.]

HIS HONOUR THE HON. J. W. GRANT MacEWAN, LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR:

Please be seated.

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

HIS HONOUR:

Mr. Speaker, hon. Premier, hon. ministers, Mr. Leader, hon. members of the Legislature, ladies and gentlemen and young ladies and young gentlemen: I have the honour to welcome you to the Third Session of the Seventeenth Legislature of the Province of Alberta.

The first two phases of my government's administration were primarily directed towards remedying certain basic social inequities. These priorities were to assist our senior citizens, the handicapped, the mentally ill, and those working to preserve that basic cornerstone of our society - the family farm. Of special priority was The Alberta Bill of Rights and The Individual Rights Protection Act. The Alberta Human Rights Commission is now in full operation. Its members seek the support of all citizens in eliminating discrimination against minority groups. My government will continue to be alert to the needs of those Albertans less fortunate than the general public.

The third phase of my government's administration is well under way. In part its emphasis is to effectively implement the wide-ranging new programs of reform and innovation enacted and announced since September, 1971. Amendments to simplify and refine previous legislation will maximize benefits for our citizens and minimize problems of administration and delivery of services. Also, phase three will include significant follow-up steps to the phase one and phase two social program priorities. Because Alberta is Canada's energy province, phase three will see further measures and actions to reflect our unique position and special responsibilities in energy matters.

Phase three will see contemporary government initiatives, in cooperation with the cities of Edmonton and Calgary, to enhance the quality of life for citizens in our two metropolitan areas.

A highlight of phase three will be the provision of opportunities for Albertans to invest in the exciting new projects of resource expansion now on the horizon.

Part A THE OPPORTUNITY FOR CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

Increasingly, individual Albertans have felt that circumstances have not given them a full opportunity to invest and participate as shareholders in the major resource developments of our province. My government has recognized this concern. The Third Session will feature two highlights: the presentation of an historic bill - The Alberta Energy Company Act, and the release of a position paper regarding an Alberta Resources Growth Company.

The Alberta Energy Company Act will provide a legislative framework for the concept which was announced last September and subsequently detailed in a position paper in December. As never before, it will provide an opportunity for virtually all Albertans to invest in major energy resource projects such as the Alberta oil sands and Suffield natural gas.

The 'citizen partnership' approach, involving individual Alberta shareholders and their government, will strive for the appropriate balance of Alberta resource control and private enterprise management. Shares will be offered first to the citizens of Alberta and then to other Canadians during 1974. First-time investors and an instalment purchase plan will be emphasized.

A special position paper will outline a proposed Alberta Resources Growth Company - it will provide Albertans with the opportunity to invest in resource, petrochemical and resource-upgrading projects in the exciting decade ahead. By this means, balanced growth involving smaller centres throughout the province will be achieved.

Part B ALBERTA - THE ENERGY PROVINCE

My government reaffirms its pledge to honour its trusteeship and to protect the ownership interests of Alberta citizens in the natural resources belonging to them in accordance with the spirit and intent of our Canadian Constitution and the Natural Resources Transfer Act of 1930. Accordingly, appropriate amendments to The Petroleum Marketing Act and to other oil and natural gas legislation will be presented for your consideration.

My government will strive to convert the world energy picture into an 'energy opportunity' for Albertans and Canadians by converting the demand for our provincially-owned natural resources into diversification of the Alberta economy, thus reducing our dependency upon primary, raw natural resource disposal. This will help to assure Alberta's continued prosperity and also meet Canada's objective of balanced regional development.

To further strengthen the Canadian petroleum industry based in Alberta, new and additional incentive systems to stimulate exploration drilling and technological progress in oil and natural gas production within the province will be detailed.

My government has long recognized the importance of the Alberta oil sands to Canada's energy supply requirements. As this awareness spreads, the northeastern portion of our province will be subject to rapid and intensive growth pressures. The accelerated development of the Alberta oil sands will be reflected in a "Statement of Guidelines" for future projects; it will include ownership and environmental provisions.

An act to establish a Northeastern Alberta Regional Planning Authority will be presented to provide for a Commissioner with powers to assure the orderly development of those provincial and municipal services required to support the rapid expansion of the needs of the citizens living in the oil sands area.

An act to incorporate the Alberta Oil Sands Technology and Research Authority will also be introduced - it will set the framework for an expenditure of \$100 million over the next five years. It will ensure that this valuable and unique resource does not lose its competitive advantage over other world energy supply sources.

An up-dated, comprehensive Coal Mine Safety Act will be presented for your consideration.

The Alberta Natural Gas Rebate Act will guarantee that our citizens, and the businesses they own and operate, will enjoy the ultimate benefits of our natural gas

resources. Not only must these depleting resources be sold only at fair value; my government is committed to policies that will assure that Albertans will derive benefits from their ownership of the natural gas by a reduced net cost for such gas used in their homes and businesses. This program will also assist in restraining increases in the cost of living in Alberta.

Part C REDUCING THE FINANCIAL BURDENS FOR ALL CITIZENS

In 1971 a commitment was made - that the burden of provincial education property tax would be removed to assist our home-owners and farmers. As a first stage towards keeping this pledge, the Alberta Property Tax Reduction Plan was implemented in 1973. This year Alberta citizens who own homes or live on farms will be relieved totally of the provincial education property tax. The present 28 mill levy on such property will disappear, providing over \$22 million of major financial relief, giving municipalities more elbow room to effectively carry out their responsibilities and reducing administrative costs. This reform will give tax relief to Albertans at their places of residence and also will help to lower the cost of living. To reflect these significant improvements, substantial amendments to the Alberta Property Tax Reduction Plan will be proposed. The Renters' Tax Credit Program will continue to assist many thousands of Albertans who live in rented accommodation.

During the coming year, my government will continue to assist the handicapped and reduce the financial burden for our senior citizens caught between rising costs and fixed incomes:

The \$15 deductible applied to benefits provided under Alberta Blue Cross will be removed effective July 1, 1974 - improvements will enable senior citizens to obtain drugs by payment of only 20 per cent of the retail cost.

The Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan premium subsidy will be fully implemented. It will relieve those who have no taxable income from the payment of premiums for basic health services.

The new programs for the handicapped and mentally ill will continue to be improved and expanded.

Part D LEGISLATIVE AND PROGRAM PROPOSALS

Agricultural emphasis during the forthcoming year will be upon implementation of the many new programs launched by my government since September, 1971. This will require the funds allotted to The Agricultural Development Corporation Act to be doubled to \$100 million, coupled with a substantial increase in moneys available for loans to stimulate agricultural product industries.

My government will continue to move ahead on all fronts to maintain and improve the quality of life in rural Alberta. Extended area telephone service, rural electrification expansion, rural natural gas lines and highway construction will be further accelerated in the months ahead.

Specifically, the Extended Flat Rate Calling Program, which substitutes a nominal monthly charge for call-by-call tolls and long distance messages between exchanges 30 miles apart, will be significantly expanded. New highway construction and improvements to existing roads will continue at an even greater pace in 1974.

The Water Resources Act will be revised to upgrade irrigation and management techniques, and initiatives in the management of Alberta's rural fresh-water resources will be intensified. The irrigation rehabilitation agreement with the Government of Canada will be fully implemented during the coming year, thus expanding the availability of a resource that can increase food production and processing in southern Alberta in a major way. The Peace-Athabasca delta area will be protected by the construction of a weir. Marked progress towards a decision on the Red Deer River Dam will be made. New approaches in environmental research and source standards control will be announced. The availability of modern water and sewage facilities for small centres will be increased.

An entirely new Provincial Parks Act will provide the framework for the expanded parks commitment made by my government last year.

Some land-use guidelines for the eastern slopes of the Rockies will be outlined; they will permit the development of some recreational facilities needed for our citizens, and hence will reduce overcrowding in the national parks in Alberta.

There will be increasing emphasis on urban programs with special attention to the metropolitan areas of Edmonton and Calgary:

Financial assistance to municipalities has been and will be substantially increased.

A multi-year program of government financial assistance for urban mass transit will be announced.

The recreational grant program has been refined to enable expansion of needed recreation facilities in urban centres. Funds for the rural portion of this program have been increased; for major cities they have been substantially increased to alleviate previous inequities.

An unique new provincial park will be announced for Edmonton providing for the first time a nearby provincial recreation facility for the enjoyment of citizens in the area. It will complement the Fish Creek Provincial Park already announced for Calgary.

The province will contribute \$2.75 million or up to 25 per cent of the cost towards neighbourhood improvement programs in many Alberta urban areas. Commencement of special planning programs for the Crowsnest area, in consultation with local citizens, will proceed.

Continued initiatives will come forward in the Rural Housing Program, the Assisted Home Ownership Program and the Rental Subsidy Program. Twelve new senior citizens' lodges and 750 units of self-contained accommodation are planned.

In education, the successful Early Childhood Services Program, now serving over 15,000 youngsters in 367 rural and urban centres, will be substantially expanded. Support for handicapped children aged three and a half to four and a half will be provided for the first time. A special grant for small, remote, rural schools will further slow centralization and help preserve community schools in smaller centres. A program to stimulate voter interest in the fall school trustee elections will be outlined. New approaches in flexible, modular, school design are being implemented.

A proposed Dependent Adults Act will provide a contemporary procedure, unique in Canada, for the appointments of trustees of the estates of mentally incapacitated adults and guardians of dependent adults. As well, extensive amendments to The Nursing Homes Act will change the role of existing auxiliary hospitals and nursing home boards and will require directors and the majority of voting shareholders of private nursing homes to be bona fide Alberta residents. Substantial new initiatives in day care will be undertaken through the Preventive Social Services Program.

A report on improvements in the province's health delivery system will be presented for your consideration during the fall sittings. The report will outline progress in utilization of services, metropolitan planning councils, conversion to lower-cost facilities, use of under-utilized facilities, special services and other aspects of an improved health delivery system for Albertans.

Appropriate recommendations of the Kirby Board of Review regarding the duties of coroners will be implemented.

Guarantees of fairness and equity, including the 'home-for-a-home' concept, will be seen in the reintroduced Expropriation Bill - it will provide a model for all of Canada.

New approaches to consumer education will involve extension programs, community colleges, school systems and media information channels. Their objectives will be to improve our citizens' awareness and knowledge as purchasers of goods and services; to expand their appreciation of the various laws and services available to assist and protect them; to expand consumer programs and provide greater service to citizens in every part of the province.

My government will continue to take the appropriate action to ensure that younger drivers will only be charged fair and equitable automobile insurance premiums.

Further development of a Manpower Information System will be featured, providing accurate information concerning employment conditions and trends in the province. Expansion and improvement of services to industry and business with respect to industrial training, especially apprenticeship, will take place. The promotion of industrial safety will receive added attention.

My government will promote the importance of physical fitness during the coming year and is currently working with "Participation" across Canada. The Alberta Summer Games in Calgary, the Canadian Junior Olympic Games in Edmonton and the Canada Winter Games in Lethbridge will all receive government support and technical advice where requested.

The Alberta-RCMP Centenary celebrations will be a focal point for public attention and participation in 1974. My government is providing substantial support for nearly 250 community commemorative projects valued at over \$4 million. My government salutes the

thousands of citizens offering their time and energies to the recognition of this special event.

My government will sponsor a major Arts Conference in late spring to demonstrate how all communities can participate in and be enriched by the arts of everyday living.

To improve communication with our citizens regarding government spending programs, a start on a simplified Program Budgeting System will be reflected in the budget.

Adjacent to the Legislature Building, an attractive, relaxing park will be initiated by an unique architectural competition. Alberta Public Works is instituting a program of cooperation with communities to develop expanded joint facilities to house government offices.

A newly organized Northern Alberta Development Council will prepare a short-term 'action plan' and a long-range set of priorities for northern Alberta. The successful Metis Housing Program will be continued in cooperation with the Metis Association of Alberta.

Reflecting consultations with the private sector, legislation to establish a trust fund to finance research programs to improve timber development and forest production will be presented.

In keeping with the concept of 'Open Government', contact and communication with Albertans will be improved by a Citizens' Inquiry Service using a telephone system connecting every community directly with the provincial government in Edmonton. A requirement for annual reports from each and every government department will ensure that legislators and citizens are fully informed of government initiatives.

CONCLUSION: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

The economy of Alberta and the financial position of the provincial government have never been stronger; the future for Albertans has never been brighter; the opportunity for our citizens never greater. But such times create special responsibilities for governments and legislators - to preserve the quality of our life, to protect our environment and to balance social reforms with economic progress. Such times also create natural stresses within our country as long-term term power structures are challenged and altered.

A vigorous, expanding economy brings with it shortages of labour and materials. My government and our people must understand and face this reality. It is with an awareness of these factors that my government will stress policies, legislation and programs that create opportunities for voluntary citizen participation, emphasize self-reliance and individual initiative, and strengthen all facets of the energy province of Canada.

Members of the Legislative Assembly: in due course you will be presented with taxation and budget proposals by my government to support these legislative proposals. You will be asked to grant the necessary funds for the operating services and expenditures authorized by the Legislature and to endorse a program of capital financing.

The Premier will be announcing a significant new direction by way of fiscal policy for Alberta during the course of the session.

The Public Accounts for the period concluding March 31, 1973 will be presented for your scrutiny.

I leave you now to the business of the session, with full confidence that as elected representatives your debates and your votes will reflect your understanding of the public interest of all the people of Alberta.

I pray for your wisdom and your strength in your deliberations.

[The Lieutenant-Governor and his escort left the Chamber.]

CLERK:

Order!

MR. SPEAKER:

Be seated please.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 1 The Queen's Counsel Amendment Act, 1974

MR. LOUGHEED:

Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce a bill, being Bill No. 1, The Queen's Counsel Amendment Act, 1974.

[Leave being granted, Bill No. 1 was introduced and read a first time.]

MR. SPEAKER:

I have obtained a copy of the speech of His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant-Governor which I will now table.

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

MR. LOUGHEED:

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move, seconded by the Hon. Dr. Horner, that the speech of His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant-Governor to this Assembly be taken into consideration tomorrow, Friday.

[The motion was carried.]

MR. LEITCH:

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move, seconded by the hon. minister, Mr. Farran, that the Votes and Proceedings of this Assembly be printed, after first being perused by Mr. Speaker, and that he do appoint the printing thereof, and that no person but such as he shall appoint do presume to print the same.

[The motion was carried.]

MR. HYNDMAN:

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move, seconded by the hon. minister, Mr. Yurko, that the Select Standing Committees of this Assembly for the present session be appointed for the following purposes:

Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing;
Public Accounts;
Private Bills;
Law and Regulations;
Public Affairs,

which said committees shall severally be empowered to examine and enquire into all such matters and things as shall be referred to them by the Assembly, and to report from time to time their observations and opinions thereon, with power to send for persons, papers and records.

[The motion was carried.]

MR. GETTY:

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move, seconded by the hon. minister, Mr. Russell, that a special committee be appointed, consisting of the seven members hereinafter named, the said committee to prepare and report with all convenient speed lists of members to act on the select standing committees ordered by this Assembly: the hon. minister, Dr. Horner; Mr. Cookson, as Chairman; Messrs. Appleby, Bouvier, Lee, Wilson and Wyse.

[The motion was carried.]

MR. HYNDMAN:

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Provincial Treasurer, that this Assembly do now adjourn until tomorrow morning at 10:00 o'clock.

[The motion was carried.]

MR. SPEAKER:

The House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 10:00 o'clock.

[The House rose at 3:38 c'clock.]

