

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Title: **Thursday, March 2, 1978 3:00 p.m.**

[In accordance with the Royal Proclamation dated January 11, 1978, summoning the Members of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta to convene on this date, the House met at 3 p.m.]

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Order!

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

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Order, order! Mr. Speaker.

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

MR. SPEAKER: Please be seated.

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

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor.

[His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant-Governor took his place upon the Throne]

THE HONOURABLE RALPH G. STEINHAEUER: Please be seated.

head: **SPEECH FROM THE THRONE**

HIS HONOUR: Mr. Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly:

I have the honor to welcome you to the Fourth Session of the 18th Legislature of the province of Alberta.

The monarchy is a fitting symbol of those basic guideposts which are so important in a fast-changing world: stability, tradition, and the rule of law. Albertans look forward to warmly welcoming Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II to our province this summer. Her Majesty will open and will attend the Commonwealth Games in Edmonton in August, and my government has invited her to visit centres in northern Alberta prior to that event.

In 1978, Alberta must be one of the most fortunate places in the world in which to live. We are blessed with a bounty of natural resources. Integrity and stability are the hallmarks of our Legislature, our courts, and our institutions. Alberta is vibrant and forward looking; our people are talented and resourceful. A continuously expanding economy has provided the basis for increases in the quality of life for Albertans whether at work, participating in recreation, enjoying the arts, or at home with their families.

My government realizes, however, that there are still a number of Albertans who are not enjoying fully the benefits of our general prosperity. We are sensitive to these inequities and will continue to open up new opportunities, to initiate reforms, and to enrich existing programs.

At this time, when the unity of our great country is under strain, Albertans feel deeply that the rich diver-

sity of Canada must be maintained. It is the prevailing view of Canadians that significant decision-making should be shifted to the provinces. With a constructive response to that view — positive new attitudes in Ottawa and meaningful changes to our Constitution — my government believes that the unique Canadian experience can be reworked into a stronger and more responsive Confederation, one in which diversity is recognized as a strength which binds us together. My government will continue to take steps to accomplish these national unity goals.

My government continues to be open and responsive. The views and suggestions of citizens are sought continuously. Opinions and submissions received on cabinet tours and from delegations to cabinet are carefully assessed. The Legislature will adjourn for a week this spring in order that members of the Legislature can seek out the current opinions of their constituents. A policy to expand the public availability of regulations will be announced. The Ombudsman Act will be opened for amendments.

Expenditure restraints by your government, and limitations to its size and growth, will continue as responsible objectives during 1978. My government is determined not to build an unrealistically high expenditure base for the future, in recognition of the eventual decline of revenues from the sales of non-renewable resources. As a guideline, the public sector's share of the gross domestic product should not increase at the expense of the private sector's share. However, in the months ahead some major construction projects will be nearing completion in Alberta. Therefore increasing expenditures will be proposed for necessary public sector capital projects to take advantage of the temporary slowdown in the private sector.

During the 1978 spring and fall sittings of the Legislature, my government will seek the support of members for certain priority activities:

selected initiatives to improve the quality of life and economic circumstances of our senior citizens, the handicapped, and low-income earners;

a new provincial home care program to add a needed new dimension to Albert's comprehensive health service system;

the stimulation of construction of even more homes, apartments, condominiums, and other types of shelter at costs affordable to Albertans;

the establishment by the Legislature of goals and objectives for our basic education system;

emphasis on international tariff and trade arrangements to assist Alberta's agricultural and other sectors in acquiring new, more stable and expanded markets.

The Alberta Economy

The percentage of Alberta's population in the work force is larger than in any other part of Canada, our unemployment rate the lowest. Businessmen and investors have confidence in the long-term future of Alberta's expanding economy. Alberta's record of performance in the economic field is a pacesetter for

Canada, and The Conference Board in Canada has noted that this economic strength is expected to continue through 1978. Exploration and development in the oil and natural gas industry are at record levels, creating a strong economy in many smaller centres and providing numerous opportunities to supplement farm income. Even though parts of the agricultural sector are soft, the overall 1978 outlook is promising. On average, take-home pay is higher in Alberta than in any other part of Canada. With the lowest tax rates and the fewest deductions from pay cheques, individual Albertans and their families have more disposable income than ever before. The natural gas price protection plan shelters Alberta home-owners from 75 per cent of the increases in natural gas rates, thus providing this important domestic fuel to our citizens at the lowest cost in the western world.

My government's challenge is to ensure that the significant benefits currently enjoyed by our citizens continue into the 1980s. Our economy still relies too heavily upon the sale of raw petroleum resources; economic diversification remains, therefore, a key long-term goal, and my government will continue to press vigorously for the required fundamental changes in national transportation, taxation, fiscal investment, and trade policies.

The recently concluded first ministers' conference on the economy set forth in its final communique many new national thrusts and directions specifically proposed by Alberta which should facilitate the required economic diversification in our province. Only time will determine the extent of the federal government commitment to these new thrusts and directions.

Hospitals and Medical Care

A major improvement will be made to the premium subsidy levels of the Alberta Health Care Insurance Commission plan in order to provide significant additional support for individuals and families with low incomes.

Cost effectiveness and citizen accountability in hospital construction and medical care services will be strengthened by the establishment of the Department of Hospitals and Medical Care. Hospital construction planning and cost control procedures will be improved. The hospital and nursing home construction program for the next year in rural Alberta will be the largest in our history. There will be a progress report on the many significant health care projects financed through the Alberta heritage savings trust fund. The Alberta Health Sciences Centre, the Calgary Children's Hospital and the Southern Alberta Cancer Centre projects are proceeding on schedule.

Applied research initiatives have commenced in the field of cancer detection and treatment for Albertans. As well, a comprehensive cardiac care advisory committee will recommend priorities for the diagnosis, treatment, and rehabilitation of heart patients in Alberta. This will include a provincial plan for cardiac rehabilitation services geared to primary and secondary prevention.

Policy recommendations regarding nursing homes, rural health care, and health economics will be brought forward. While Alberta continues to have a high number of acute care beds, your government is sensitive to the priority need for longer term and

extended care facilities in our province. Accordingly, the innovative Dr. Vernon Fanning and Bethany extended care centres were recently opened in Calgary. The Lynnwood and Dickensfield extended care centres in Edmonton are currently under construction. In addition, acute and extended care needs in growth centres are being met with facilities currently under construction in Fort McMurray, Red Deer, and Hinton.

A contemporary Alberta hospitals and nursing homes act, now in preparation, will reflect desirable policy initiatives resulting from a two-year assessment and consultation with hospital and medical associations and interested citizens. For the first time, funding for the construction of voluntary nursing homes will be made available through the Alberta Home Mortgage Corporation.

Social Services And Community Health

The minister will shortly announce the first stage of a phased, provincially co-ordinated home care program to be delivered through local health authorities. This initiative will expand home care programs in 11 Alberta communities and will enable other communities throughout the province to provide such services. Extensive voluntary participation will be a feature of the program.

There will also be a major expansion of day care services in Alberta. Higher program and licensing standards and increased family subsidies for day care will be proposed for the coming year. This program will provide both economic and social benefits for Albertans in need.

Consistent with our support for dependent handicapped persons, new residential facilities will be proposed for the Edmonton region. Three new resource centres will become operational in 1978-79, to provide day programs for dependent handicapped persons.

Planning for a permanent inpatient rehabilitation unit of the Alberta Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Commission in Claresholm will continue. The David Lander Centre, now operating there in temporary accommodation, provides rehabilitation and treatment similar to that provided for residents in the northern part of the province at Henwood in Edmonton.

Planning for a major new forensic unit at Alberta Hospital, Edmonton, is well under way. It will accommodate 150 persons and will provide treatment facilities for the mentally ill who have come into conflict with the law.

The Department of Social Services and Community Health will continue to stress individual responsibility. Working relationships developed with voluntary health and social service agencies and local communities will be maintained so as to encourage the fullest public participation and involvement.

Education

My government will continue to invest more extensively in education, on a per capita basis, than any other provincial government.

After consideration by the Assembly, the goals and objectives of basic education will be established. The Curriculum Policies Board will then examine pro-

grams in the elementary, junior and senior high schools in light of those goals and objectives. Since its creation, this important board has recommended curriculum changes in mathematics, language arts, science, and social studies, thus providing a clearer identification of the concepts to be taught and an upgrading of content.

Achievement tests in English, with appropriate emphasis on written work, will be administered. Similar tests in social studies, emphasizing mastery of Canadian content, will also be held. The report of the task force on the Alberta school facilities study will be examined, as will an evaluation report on the early childhood services program.

Support for the French instruction program will be expanded. The initial phase of Education North will be completed and, if the evaluation is positive, phase two will be implemented. Intensive specialized curriculum development for handicapped children will take place. The materials production centre for the blind will be expanded.

The Alberta heritage learning resources project, announced to this Legislature last fall, is well under way. The purpose of this project is to provide Alberta students with needed learning resources which will give them the opportunity to learn more about Canada, western Canada, and Alberta. The committee structure overseeing the project is in place and operating. The Honourable Grant MacEwan, former Lieutenant-Governor of this province, has accepted the chairmanship of the advisory committee.

Necessary amendments to The School Act will be proposed.

Advanced Education and Manpower

High-quality postsecondary education and manpower programs, offered to adult Albertans, will be continued. Further education policies will provide increased opportunities to adults in rural Alberta. During 1978, the transition of four provincially administered colleges to publicly governed status will be completed. The future direction of nursing education in Alberta will be presented.

The very successful apprenticeship and industrial training program will expand, as will career counselling services and youth employment programs. The employment counselling and relocation program, designed to assist native Albertans, will be improved.

The number of skilled tradesmen being developed through the successful apprenticeship and trade certification program continues to increase rapidly. Apprenticeships have risen from 2,800 in 1967 to over 7,000 citizens in 1977. During the last five years the total of registered apprentices has increased by 106 per cent. Some construction trades have seen dramatic increases in the number of apprentices over the past 10 years, ranging from two to eight times as many participants.

New programs will provide educational opportunities for senior citizens and language services to assist new Canadians. Joint participation with the three other western provinces will be explored in the area of occupational health for the development of training programs for teachers of the handicapped.

Culture

In the year ahead, your government will continue to give full expression to its widely endorsed cultural development programs, to emphasize our recognition of the essential place that culture and the arts play in the personal enrichment of all Albertans.

Encouraged by unprecedented public involvement in the arts, your government will continue its policy of matching financial support. The highly successful government touring programs, which have brought to Alberta communities, often for the first time, some of the most talented artists of our day, will be continued. In 1976-77, 391 productions were performed for the benefit of over 124,000 people, mainly in rural Alberta. For Alberta artists and performers, my government has brought many of them firm hope and a chance for a decent livelihood in the pursuit of their careers.

My government, through Alberta Culture Library Services, will provide cassette tapes, or "talking" books, for those unable to read conventional print, benefiting an estimated 7,000 users. For those who through no fault of their own can read only in a language other than English, your government will provide a multilanguage book service, bringing the riches of the written word in 24 other languages.

Alberta Environment

A major priority of my government continues to be the enrichment and protection of Alberta's air, water, and land environment.

A vigorous program relating to the conservation and reclamation of the Alberta environment will be undertaken. Last year, 83 communities were assisted in the installation of municipal sewage and water facilities. It is estimated that this year another 101 communities will be assisted, bringing to 213 the number of Alberta municipalities that have been helped by this program since its introduction in 1972.

Investing funds from the heritage savings trust fund, land reclamation projects will be carried out for municipalities throughout Alberta. Last year, 125 projects restored derelict land sites throughout the province.

Another investment of the heritage savings trust fund, the Capital City Provincial Recreation Park, will be completed in the centre of Edmonton on time for visitors attending the Commonwealth Games. Work will continue in the Strathcona County portion of that park. To date, approximately \$27 million has been invested by the province in this metropolitan provincial park.

Work will commence on the Red Deer River flow regulation project. The first component, flood protection works for Sundre, will be completed this year.

The Environment Council of Alberta will complete public hearings and report to the government on two major items: forestry operations in Alberta and the Oldman River management proposals.

Agriculture

My government will continue its efforts to ensure that Alberta farmers are able to market their projects at a reasonable return. Important negotiations with other governments, relating to trade and tariff mat-

ters as well as transportation facilities, will be a priority activity of my government in 1978.

My government will also continue to seek vigorously new and expanded markets in other countries for Alberta farm products.

Farm input costs are of crucial importance to those in our agricultural industry, and my government will take significant steps to ensure that Alberta farmers continue to have the lowest farm input costs in the nation.

Consistent with the Premier's leadership on agricultural development policies at the recent first ministers' conference, my government will use its best efforts to encourage the development of national agriculture and food policies intended to ensure that Alberta farmers receive a fair return from their production.

The Alberta property tax reduction plan for farmers will be continued. The successful programs for beginner and established farmers, under the Agricultural Development Corporation, will be expanded. Amendments to The Agricultural Societies Act and The Weed Control Act will be proposed.

Projects involving weather modification and hail suppression will be continued through 1978 and 1979.

Public Lands

Public land grazing capacity will expand with the setting up of three new grazing reserves. Additional new reserves will be selected this year in other locations in northern Alberta. Improvements to existing reserves throughout the province will result in increased grazing capacity and will provide some relief to farmers and ranchers who have insufficient land on which to graze their cattle.

Procedures have been instituted to monitor and control all proposed purchases of agricultural and recreational private land by non-Canadians. The temporary regulations which were established to control foreign land ownership will be replaced by new regulations under The Agricultural and Recreational Land Ownership Act (Alberta) and the Citizenship Act (Canada).

Energy and Natural Resources

My government's energy resource management policies have been very effective. Pricing arrangements, lease tenure changes, geophysical and drilling incentive programs, and appropriate royalty systems, have all contributed to the highest level of exploration activity ever experienced in Alberta. Equally important, this activity has resulted in a number of significant discoveries which should add new reserves of natural gas and crude oil to our existing inventory.

Nineteen seventy-eight should see a continuation of record exploration and development drilling in the conventional petroleum areas of the province. As well, the massive Syncrude oil sands project, unique in the world, will come on stream this year.

Our forestry outlook is mixed. The wood pulp market is weak, but the notable recovery in lumber prices during 1977 should continue during 1978. A major new sawmill at High Level is now in production, while a second phase of the Blue Ridge laminated wood products plant will commence con-

struction later this year. The pulp mill at Grande Prairie will start a program to increase production significantly. The heritage reforestation nursery near Smoky Lake will commence seedling production this summer. It is an illustration of the conversion of heritage trust revenues from a depleting energy resource into a future renewable resource for Albertans.

Housing

It is anticipated that the apartment vacancy rate will continue to improve to about 3 per cent in both Edmonton and Calgary by the end of 1978. Housing starts in the province for 1977 have, for the second consecutive year, exceeded 38,000, which is about 70 per cent higher than the 1970-75 average annual number of starts. More than half of the housing starts financed by the Alberta Housing Corporation and the Alberta Home Mortgage Corporation will be located outside the major metropolitan areas of the province.

As a result of my government's inventive new shelter policies, the overall quality of housing for citizens in our towns and villages, and on farms, has been effectively improved over the past six years. The general level of accommodation for all Albertans is now only three persons per shelter unit, making Albertans the best housed citizens in the nation.

My government's multifaceted programs to assist low-income citizens to obtain adequate accommodation will be expanded. The modest apartment program of the Alberta Home Mortgage Corporation will be expanded by 25 per cent to 1,250 units. The program provides financing to builders for construction of small apartments in smaller centres of the province.

Senior citizen shelter programs will be maintained at the record level established last year. In a working partnership, non-profit and religious organizations and my government are providing accommodation for our senior citizens that is unequalled in Canada.

Transportation

Highway programs will concentrate on servicing increasing traffic flows and providing access to major resource and industrial projects. The secondary road program will be further expanded to service increasing agricultural, recreational, and industrial traffic in the rural areas. An expanded street assistance program for towns and villages will be implemented to upgrade standards in smaller communities.

Continued assistance to cities for major street network improvements and continuous corridors, together with public transit facilities, will emphasize efficiency in determining the balance between transportation modes.

A small airport program will improve service to rural communities and remote areas and will provide multipurpose capabilities at sites which service expanding resource and industrial developments.

The development of safety measures supported by the analysis of the highway accident investigation team will be a feature of the department's activities in 1978. School bus safety programs and driver improvement activities will also be expanded.

A long-range program for the modernization of the

province's survey control system is being implemented; it will provide improved efficiency in surveying and mapping for urban growth, resource management, and general land use.

Intensified effort will be applied to bring about the development of the Prairie Rail Authority, in order to increase efficiency in grain transport facilities and establish viable group rate systems which will complement the decentralization of industry.

Implementation of other recommendations of the Hall commission report will be emphasized in the forthcoming year.

Labour

Amendments will be proposed to The Individual's Rights Protection Act, to ensure that individual Albertans will continue to enjoy the protection of human rights legislation which is second to none in Canada.

A number of significant changes to The Workers' Compensation Act will be recommended, reflecting the conclusions of the Select Legislative Committee on Workers' Compensation. As well, increased compensation rates to benefit a number of categories of Alberta workers and their dependants will be proposed.

A review of The Pensions Benefits Act will be completed; my government recently asked interested Albertans to submit opinions and recommendations. The government's proposals for improvements in various aspects of the administration of private pension plans within Alberta will follow the review.

Attorney General

My government will continue the implementation of the extensive reforms for administration of justice in Alberta recently recommended by the board of review chaired by Mr. Justice W. J. C. Kirby. A number of new judges, Crown counsel, and court staff, in new working relationships, have been engaged. New systems and procedures to improve court administration have been developed. By the year's end almost all the concerns identified by the board of review will have been resolved or nearing final solution.

A new summary convictions act will be introduced to create an improved administrative system for the handling of traffic offences and other offences considered to be of a non-criminal nature. The Legislature will also be asked to consider recommendations resulting from the recently released third report of the board of review respecting the juvenile justice system in the province.

Matrimonial property legislation will be introduced, providing for a significant improvement in the law and ensuring a fair and equitable distribution of property between spouses upon marriage breakdown.

My government will continue to respond positively to law reform recommendations of the Institute of Law Research and Reform. Legislation relating to minors' contracts, partition and sale of land, and survival of actions will be presented to the Assembly.

The public interest and the administration of justice are best served by a simple, flexible, and easily understood court structure in the justice system. Accordingly, my government will propose a new court of superior jurisdiction, which will amalgamate the dis-

trict court of Alberta and the trial division of the Supreme Court of Alberta. Also a new court of appeal act will be introduced.

Solicitor General

My government will further expand its policies of providing work for convicted offenders and classifying inmates according to age and type of offence. Four more forestry camps to expand healthful, active outdoor work for inmates will be instituted. A total of 11 camps will provide labor for Alberta forestation programs and for work gangs in provincial parks and highways. The successful work-for-fine program will be extended.

The new remand centre for northern Alberta, located in Edmonton, is scheduled to be opened during the forthcoming year. A new minimum security facility at St. Paul, and a new correctional institution at Lethbridge, will be proposed. The wilderness challenge project at Nordegg will be improved, and trade training at Peace River Correctional Institution will be expanded.

The Alberta Liquor Control Board plans completion of its highly successful policy to promote a better atmosphere in taverns through reduction in beverage room size, more music and dancing, and extended food service.

My government proposes to step up law enforcement related to suspended drivers and to this end will provide that all information regarding suspended licences will be instantly available to police in the field. Alberta has been a leader in the fight against impaired driving, with pioneering programs such as Operation Check Stop, 24-hour suspensions for borderline cases, mandatory licence suspensions upon conviction, and roadside breathalyzers. Strict enforcement of suspensions will continue.

Native Affairs

Policy developments relating to the extension of provincial government services and programs to treaty Indians and Indian bands in Alberta should be announced this spring.

Opportunities for native employment will continue to be expanded both through placements within the Alberta public service and encouragement and support for private initiatives. As well, my government will financially support the native employment advocacy function of Native Outreach.

My government will continue to place a high priority on the provision of improved housing through such programs as the isolated communities log house program, the rural and native housing program, the transitional housing program, and the emergency trailer program.

Recreation, Parks and Wildlife

The Commonwealth Games, to be held in Edmonton in August, will attract thousands of visitors. This event will be a catalyst in encouraging amateur sports and physical fitness in Alberta.

The improvement of existing facilities and the development of new recreation opportunities for Albertans are continuing priorities.

Increased funding to provincial sport governing

bodies will be proposed, together with increased local autonomy in the control of such funds.

Recognizing the increased need to sustain an adequate sport fishing capability in the province, a brood stock rearing station will be developed in the Crowsnest Pass area. Rearing pond facilities will be substantially expanded at the existing Raven Rearing Station near Caroline.

Alberta's unique and first mountain park at Kananaskis, and the surrounding Kananaskis Country recreation area, will be developed at an accelerated pace. Other provincial park upgrading and redevelopment plans will accelerate, and major capital development programs will commence at the Midland Coal site near Drumheller and in the Cypress Hills.

A new provincial park will be established on the west end of Lesser Slave Lake at Hilliards Bay near Grouard. Sylvan Lake Provincial Park will be re-established in the town of Sylvan Lake.

Alberta remains the only province in Canada with provincial parks within metropolitan centres. Development in the eastern portion of the Calgary Fish Creek Provincial Park is near completion. The major outdoor aquatic centre will be opened this year.

The major cultural recreation facility development program moves ahead with marked increases in participation by municipalities taking advantage of its opportunities. The many projects completed last year under this successful program varied from the major recreation facilities at St. Albert to the installation of a sound system in the Polar Palace in Edgerton.

Municipal Affairs

The Alberta property tax reduction plan has, since 1973, saved Albertans almost \$500 million in property taxes. It provides relief from payment of the provincial school tax for all developed residential property and most farmland.

The municipal debenture interest rebate program will continue to expand, with total savings to municipalities in 1978-79 reaching more than \$11 million.

To expand and to reinforce local decision-making in land-use matters, and to ensure that the planning process is more responsive to regional needs, a new regional planning commission will be established to serve the special areas and the Drumheller and Hanna districts.

The Planning Act, and important new regulations, will be proclaimed April 1, 1978.

Business Development and Tourism

In light of my government's continued recognition that the private sector is the key in the creation of new jobs, Alberta's favorable investment climate will continue to be sustained.

Assessment of selected business sectors will be undertaken to help identify opportunities for diversification of Alberta's manufacturing base. The support of small businesses has been enhanced by the opening in Edson and Medicine Hat of offices of the Alberta Opportunity Company.

Continued assistance will be provided to the private sector in expanding international markets for Alberta products and services. Export-oriented training programs and assistance for incoming foreign buying missions will receive greater emphasis this year. For

the first time Alberta will participate in a trade show in the Middle East.

There will be increased encouragement of travel by Albertans within Alberta. The Stamp Around Alberta campaign will be proceeding in the weeks ahead. Your government strongly supports the concept of advance booking charters and other proposed domestic travel incentives.

The Northern Alberta Development Council will hold a major agricultural seminar this fall.

The Alberta Research Council will continue to emphasize energy-related programs such as the new solar and wind energy research.

Consumer and Corporate Affairs

My government believes that the co-operative is a useful form of business organization, particularly for some enterprises of modest size or capital requirements. Programs for co-operative development will be reviewed and reorganized. Suggestions from those interested in co-operative businesses, particularly with respect to improvement of existing laws and regulations, are welcomed.

Amendments to several important statutes, including The Securities Act, The Collection Practices Act, and The Companies Act, will be proposed. An entirely new commodity futures act will be introduced.

The gradual withdrawal from rent regulation will continue pursuant to The Rent Decontrol Act. Concurrently, my government is continuing to study all aspects of the residential tenancy market in Alberta, with a view to amending The Landlord and Tenant Act. Very useful comments have been received from citizens following the introduction last fall of a draft of The Condominium Property Amendment Act; a revised draft will be introduced for consideration.

My government believes that the most effective role of the department's consumer relations division is in consumer education rather than market place mediation. A consumer who is aware of the complexities and alternatives in the market place will be able to make better buying decisions, and thus personally contribute to and strengthen our free market economy. Accordingly, the consumer education program is being strengthened, particularly through work with teachers and, through them, to new consumers.

Utilities and Telephones

The natural gas price protection plan commitment to Albertans will be substantially strengthened for 1978. The resultant greater stability in natural gas prices will provide relief to our citizens, particularly those on fixed incomes and rural gas co-op members.

The rural natural gas program has already made this clean, convenient fuel available to nearly 45,000 new rural users, over 175,000 rural Albertans. Construction will continue with particular emphasis on financial management and operational maintenance. Safety efforts will be a special focus in rural gas systems; cathodic protection and leak prevention highlight these efforts.

Rebuilding of rural electric systems, begun in the Athabasca and Lac La Biche areas last year with Alberta government assistance, will be extended. Longer term preventative measures will be evolved in consultation with the Alberta Union of Rural Electrifi-

cation Associations.

The transfer of the rural power and gas division from Consumer and Corporate Affairs to Utilities and Telephones will be completed in 1978.

Alberta Government Telephones will proceed with a significant construction program, and again there will be an extension of services to developing areas. A special \$9 million AGT northern project will be undertaken starting in 1978; some 20 communities north of the 55th parallel will benefit from communications service improvement.

Government Services

Through the computerized operation of mechanical and electrical systems in government buildings, reduction of lighting levels and other conservation techniques, my government will effect annual energy savings amounting to almost \$2 million during the next year.

Eight-two per cent of all government printing last year was tendered to private industry, a substantial increase over previous years. While all computer systems development work was previously performed by the public service, your government placed \$750,000 of private sector contracts in this area in 1977-78; we will continue to explore areas of the public service which could be transferred to the private sector.

Treasury

Your authorization will be requested for the transfer of 30 per cent of the revenues from our non-renewable resources to the Alberta heritage savings trust fund, for the fiscal year commencing April 1, 1979.

The Provincial Auditor's position will be changed to that of Auditor General, effective April 1, 1978, and will make that important office more independent of the government and under greater direct control of the Legislative Assembly. The Auditor General's office and the new Controller's position in Treasury will increase the efficiency and effectiveness of both the management and expenditure of public funds.

In keeping with the high priority placed by government on occupational health and safety, my government's expanded internal public service occupational health and safety program will become fully operational in 1978. The program is the product of a joint union/management committee established in 1977 and reflects the policy outlined in The Occupational Health and Safety Act. This program is intended to reduce the frequency of injuries in the provincial public service and to ensure that all reasonable precautions are taken to protect the health and safety of government employees. Under the program, safety concerns are brought to management's attention through a series of joint worksite health and safety committees. The program is co-ordinated by the office of the Public Service Commissioner.

Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs

My government will continue to take the initiative in interprovincial and federal/provincial, and international affairs during 1978.

The Alcan pipeline project will have a significant impact on Alberta and Canada; it will require co-

operation and co-ordination of effort between the interested parties and governments.

My government has made effective representations on behalf of Albertans regarding GATT and the important multilateral trade negotiations. Continued monitoring of the current Geneva talks will be carried out to ascertain the degree of Canada's success in meeting Alberta's objectives and the regional needs of the nation.

Our citizens are fully committed to a strong and united Canada. The flexibility of our federal system should prove to be our strongest asset as a new federalism begins to evolve. Alberta will continue to play a leadership role in strengthening the unity of our Confederation.

Members of the Legislative Assembly: in due course you will be presented with budget proposals by my government to support these priorities and legislative initiatives, and to reflect a restraint program of consolidation. 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 for the government of Alberta.

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 people of Alberta.

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

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Order!

[The Lieutenant-Governor left the House]

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

MR. SPEAKER: Please be seated.

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce a bill, being The Interpretation Amendment Act, 1978.

The purpose of this bill is to clarify the reference to the word "province" in Alberta acts and regulations so as to include the Northwest and Yukon territories in the definition.

[Leave granted; Bill 1 read a first time]

MR. SPEAKER: For the records of the Assembly, I'm tabling a copy of the speech of the Honourable the Lieutenant-Governor.

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Speech of His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant-Governor to this Assembly be taken into consideration tomorrow, Friday.

[Motion carried]

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

[Motion carried]

MR. JOHNSTON: Mr. Speaker, I move that the select standing committees of the 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;
- The Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund Act;
- Auditor General;

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

[Motion carried]

MR. KOZIAK: Mr. Speaker, I move that a special committee be appointed, consisting of these 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: Messrs. Appleby, Bradley, Diachuk, Hyland, [R.] Speaker, Trynchy, and Cookson as chairman.

[Motion carried]

[At 4:02 p.m., on motion, the House adjourned to Friday at 10 a.m.]