

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Tuesday, February 18, 2003**

3:00 p.m.

Date: 2003/02/18

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

[The Clerk read the Royal Proclamation dated February 5, 2003, summoning all Members of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta to convene on this date]

The Clerk: Please be seated.

[The Sergeant-at-Arms left the Chamber]

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]

head: **Prayers**

The Speaker: Welcome.

Let us pray. Almighty God, author of all wisdom, knowledge, and understanding, we ask Your blessings on all here present. We ask Your guidance in order that truth and justice may prevail in all of our judgments for the benefit of all Albertans. Amen.

Ladies and gentlemen, I would now invite Mr. Paul Lorieau to lead us in the singing of our national anthem. Please join in in the language of your choice.

Hon. Members and Guests:

O Canada, our home and native land!
True patriot love in all thy sons 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.

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 Speaker: Hon. members and ladies and gentlemen, prior to the arrival of Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, the Royal Canadian Artillery Band will play a brief musical interlude. They're located above me.

The RCA Band, Canada's oldest regular army band, was formed in Quebec City in 1879. It was subsequently stationed in Montreal and Halifax. It has seen service in both world wars and in Korea, and it has traveled across Canada and beyond our borders. Reconstituted in Edmonton in 1997, the band today is under the direction of Captain Gerry Heslip, who is in the Speaker's gallery.

The band will play *Crown Imperial*. The piece was written by the English composer William Walton in 1937.

[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, Lois E. Hole, CM, AOE, her party, the Premier, and the Clerk entered the Chamber. Her Honour took her place upon the throne]

Her Honour: Pray be seated.

I would just like to at this time, if I could, please, thank my staff. If I leave it to the end, I'll forget. A lot of the gunners came from Red Deer to be here, to be with us to make this event so special, and of course the Royal Canadian Artillery Band. They are magnificent. Of course, my Gentleman's Escort. I just would like to say to the city police and the RCMP who escorted me here: I'll tell you; it was wonderful. You know, Mr. Premier, that's the time it's great to take the Queen's place. I have to say to all of you that that was the one thing that my husband just loved. He loved the excitement of the escort. It is beautiful, and it is something very special, so I want to thank them because it was both RCMP and city police.

head: **Speech from the Throne**

Her Honour: Fellow Albertans, it is my pleasure to welcome you to the Third Session of the 25th Alberta Legislature. It is an honour to deliver the Speech from the Throne as it is an honour to serve the people of this province as Lieutenant Governor.

In this role, I have had countless opportunities to meet Albertans from all walks of life: farmers, public servants, homemakers, oil field workers, doctors, students, volunteers, [gardeners, and many, many people from all over. I will say that it has been very special for me. I will compliment the government on being so good. The plane is always available for me, and I can get around this province so well because of it. So I'd like to thank the government for that because that means I can meet people from all over.] While each individual's experience is unique, they all hold common values that reflect this province and its people most profoundly. Those values include pride, the pride that comes from meeting challenges head-on and doing things the right way, not the easy way. They include a willingness to try new things and take risks. They include a commitment to work hard because nothing worth having comes without effort. Most of all, Albertans value the freedom to manage their own lives balanced by a strong sense of responsibility to family and community.

Ten years ago the people of Alberta and their government charted a course for a new future. That course has brought the province to an era of unmatched growth and prosperity, but Albertans know that these things on their own are merely the foundation that will nurture a living legacy for generations to come. The challenge this government faces is one of keeping things "steady as we grow." Managing the pressures of growth means building a province that is strong today and remains strong into the future. It means ensuring that the advantage Albertans enjoy today grows into the promise of tomorrow, a promise to our children.

A Bright Future for Children

This government's highest priority must be to secure a bright future for children and youth. The government will demonstrate its commitment to that priority by undertaking a range of initiatives to ensure that Alberta's most precious resource, its children, is protected and enabled to develop to its fullest potential.

To ensure that children at risk receive the help they need when they need it, the government will amend the Child Welfare Act. The amendments will emphasize the importance of early intervention and the preservation of the family and will increase the involvement of communities in the care of children. This approach recognizes that creating an environment where children succeed is an endeavour that stretches far beyond the ability of any one family or any government. Education and health systems, the corporate and voluntary sectors, parents, extended families, and caregivers are all part of a vital community network of supports that must be in place for children to thrive.

The first piece of legislation this government will introduce in 2003 will set in motion the creation of such a network. Bill 1, the Premier's Council on Alberta's Promise Act, will enshrine in law this government's commitment to children and youth. Alberta's Promise will mobilize every sector of Alberta to build the character and competence of young people by making and keeping promises that focus on five specific areas of commitment. These are

- giving children a healthy start and a promising future,
- providing safe and healthy communities for our children's growth, education, and development,
- ensuring that every child receives ongoing support, care, and guidance from at least one caring adult in his or her life,
- offering children the chance to make a difference through volunteer activities and opportunities to serve others, and
- seeking out the best tools, models, and examples of other individuals and communities so that Alberta's children may learn, benefit, and succeed.

This initiative will provide funding to the Alberta Centre for Child, Family and Community Research, a private, not-for-profit agency that will be established by stakeholders to explore the issues and challenges faced by children and families. The first priority of the centre will be to conduct research on the prevention of fetal alcohol syndrome. Over time the research agenda will be broadened to address other issues such as early childhood development and youth at risk. By learning more about the best ways to prevent future problems, we will be better able to give children what they need most in life, a good start.

Part of that good start is a good education. Alberta has an excellent learning system with gifted, caring teachers, a strong curriculum, and students who have proven themselves to be national and international leaders. Maintaining the province's high-quality learning system is a top priority for this government.

The Alberta Commission on Learning has been struck to review the issues and challenges facing the education system and develop recommendations on how the system can meet the demands of students both today and tomorrow. While the commission undertakes its review, the government will continue to support and improve student learning. One of the ways government will do this is by dedicating an additional \$20 million to help Alberta school boards purchase additional classroom resources that support the curriculum including textbooks and reference books, teaching resources, and computer software.

The most important classroom resource is teachers. Alberta teachers already play an active role in developing curriculum, provincial exams, and learning and teaching resources, but there is

still a need for more direct feedback from teachers. This government will explore opportunities to better connect with teachers.

The government will also take steps to strengthen the postsecondary education system to promote lifelong learning. Legislation will be introduced this session to enable the adult learning system to better anticipate and respond to future economic and workforce trends and needs.

A Strong Economy

One of the foundations of the promise to children is a strong economy. Albertans know that economic strength is a means to a better life, not an end in itself. A robust economy generates the prosperity that allows people to realize their dreams. It creates challenging, high-paying jobs. It sustains a thriving arts and cultural sector. Most importantly, a strong economy gives a society the ability to invest in the programs most valued by its citizens.

The government will move forward in a number of areas to ensure that Alberta remains an economic leader in Canada. First among these is a commitment to the province's agricultural producers and rural communities, the backbone of this province's economy. Through good times and bad the province's farmers and ranchers have never let Albertans down. They provide safe, high-quality, affordable food products and support an economic base that extends well beyond rural communities into a global marketplace. In these times of uncertainty marked by persistent drought and rising input costs this government will not turn its back on its producers.

The government will continue to improve safety nets that allow farmers and ranchers to make the best management decisions for their operations. Through the life sciences strategy and the complementary Alberta agricultural research and innovation strategy it will advance research and innovation, which are the keys to long-term industry growth, profitability, and environmental sustainability. It will work with rural communities to identify and resolve barriers to growth, and it will continue to oppose the monopoly of the Canadian Wheat Board and advocate for marketing choice for Alberta wheat and barley producers.

The government will also focus efforts on ensuring the long-term stability of the energy sector. Energy is a major driver of the province's prosperity, creating jobs, stimulating economic growth in numerous other fields, and generating significant revenues for Albertans. Alberta is well established as a producer of conventional oil and natural gas, but the future of energy development is nonconventional resources like the oil sands, which hold the second largest supply of oil reserves in the world. Given the enormous potential of Alberta's resources, this province will continue to be a leader in the energy economy.

The government will focus on adapting the regulatory regime and investing in energy research and technology development to unleash the potential of nonconventional resources such as oil sands and coal bed methane. New technologies such as the use of carbon dioxide in enhanced oil and gas recovery will also play a role in extending the life span of known resource reservoirs and addressing the province's commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

As well, this year the government will accelerate the implementation of the Alberta energy research strategy. This includes exploring new technologies for the cleaner use of Alberta's vast coal resources. Funding will be provided for a clean coal demonstration project to develop better techniques for the use of coal in electricity generation.

Government will also focus on the consumer side of the energy sector, particularly in the area of electricity. While progress has been made on delivering new generation to meet growing consumer demand, there are still issues to be addressed around customer

choice and service, particularly in rural areas. The government will introduce legislation that will refine the structure of the electric industry. This will further level the playing field to attract new investors into Alberta's electricity and natural gas markets to increase competition and value for consumers. It will also provide consumers with a new regulated option to purchase power at a rate tied to the competitive wholesale market.

Agriculture and energy are only two examples of areas in which Alberta is a player in a world market. In all sectors prosperity is created by the evolution to a broader, more diverse, knowledge-based, and globally competitive economy. To encourage this transition, the government will create a value-added strategy. This will be a long-term plan focusing on a 20-year horizon. It will encourage increased manufacturing, tourism, exportable services, and the processing of the province's resources here in Alberta rather than simply exporting raw materials along with the jobs and wealth that go with them to other jurisdictions. Key to this strategy will be mobilizing the enormous potential of Alberta's northern economy for the benefit of all Albertans.

A Clean Environment

The government recognizes that economic growth must not occur at the expense of environmental protection. Instead, they go hand in hand. Sustainable economic growth requires clean air, water, and land, and Albertans will accept no less.

This year the government will move ahead with a made-in-Alberta plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It will reintroduce legislation to enshrine Canada's first comprehensive climate change action plan in law. Albertans are committed to doing their fair share to address global warming, and this bill will reinforce the province's pledge to take meaningful action.

Alberta will continue to be a strong national voice on this issue to ensure that any actions taken have environmental benefits and are not simply motivated by political posturing or rhetoric. This government will not allow Ottawa's implementation of the Kyoto protocol to endanger Alberta's economy, its environment, or its way of life. The government will use any and all tools available to assert the province's constitutional right and responsibility to manage its natural resources.

The government is also moving forward to address Albertans' concerns about the future of one of their most valued resources, water. [And I can say quite honestly that I find water very important. Of course, we do have greenhouses. But it is important.] This spring the government will bring forward a water management strategy that will outline short-, medium-, and long-term actions that can be taken collectively and individually to protect the quality and manage the quantity of Alberta's water supply.

A Solid Infrastructure

One of the key supports for a strong economy is a solid infrastructure. As Alberta has grown, so has its need for health facilities, schools, and roads. The province's unprecedented economic growth has surpassed its investment in capital projects, and Albertans aren't willing to wait until tomorrow for the infrastructure they need today. That's why the government will develop a new capital plan to address infrastructure needs. Budget 2003 will call for significant new investment in each of the next three years toward this priority area. This approach will bring predictability and stability to capital spending and end the pattern of deferring sorely needed infrastructure projects when provincial revenues fall unexpectedly.

The capital plan will include a framework for public/private partnerships that will pull together the best resources and skills from

both the public and private sectors. An advisory committee of experts will be struck to evaluate proposals over the life of a project to determine whether there is a net benefit to taxpayers. The government recognizes that the partnership approach will not be the right solution for every project, nor will it replace conventional pay-as-you-go capital financing. However, there are some situations where such an approach may work well. The government will carefully consider partnerships and all other options so that Alberta can meet its infrastructure needs at an affordable price.

The government understands that existing infrastructure must be preserved and maintained in order to continue to serve Albertans in the future. Looking after the infrastructure the province already has will continue to be a high priority for this government. So, too, will be working in partnership with municipalities under the Premier's Task Force on Infrastructure to address their infrastructure needs.

A New Fiscal Framework

The new capital plan is part of a larger fiscal framework the government will implement to bring predictability, sustainability, and more discipline to its fiscal management. Just as the new capital plan will eliminate the need for stop-and-go infrastructure spending, a new sustainability fund will be created to do the same thing for operational spending.

Government will add to the sustainability fund when energy revenues are high and rely on the fund when energy revenues are low to ensure that government spending doesn't rise and fall with volatile energy prices. The new fiscal framework will enable the government to address growth pressures while remaining true to its principles of balanced budgets, debt repayment, and accountability.

A Focus on People

A strong economy and a solid infrastructure enable a society to respond to the needs of people, especially those who are most vulnerable. Albertans recognize that they owe a debt of gratitude to seniors and have a responsibility to care for those who are most vulnerable.

The government will increase monthly payments to low-income seniors who live in lodges and receive the Alberta seniors' benefit to ensure that they can obtain the additional services they require to remain independent and healthy for as long as possible.

This government will also work to ensure that low-income seniors and families, individuals with special needs, people in remote communities, and the homeless have access to basic shelter. It will integrate homeless shelter programs to provide a more comprehensive approach to addressing the needs of homeless and near-homeless Albertans. As well, it will facilitate the development of more affordable housing under the Canada/Alberta affordable housing agreement.

The government will continue to implement the reforms recommended by the low-income program review. Legislation will be introduced to create the framework for a new integrated income support program to begin in 2004. The new program will reduce complexities and improve service in the current system of supports for low-income Albertans. The government will also adjust its employment training programs to be more flexible to make it easier for Albertans to gain the skills they need to find and keep jobs.

A Better Health System

A good health system helps all Albertans play a role in the economic, social, and cultural life of the province. Health care and the need for health system reform have led the public agenda in

Alberta and across the country for the past year. System reform will continue to be a major focus of the government in 2003-2004. That's because even with one-third of all government spending going to health care, too many people are still waiting too long in emergency and for diagnostics, surgery, long-term care, and other services. Budget 2003 will increase funding for this priority area.

Still, more money is not the only answer. For Albertans who have been disappointed in their access to the health system or the quality of their care, the need for reform is real and personal. The government will continue to reform the health system to improve access and quality. It will set limits on how long Albertans should wait for selected services like consultations with specialists and some major surgical procedures.

But access is not just about hospitals and high-technology diagnostic procedures. It is about getting good advice quickly and easily no matter what the day or the time, and it's about getting continuing support so Albertans stay healthy. Primary health care reform is essential to make the system work for Albertans. Many family doctors are too rushed to provide the type of care wanted. The government will work with caregivers, especially doctors and nurses, to create 24-hour, seven-days-a-week, comprehensive care practices that make better use of all health professionals.

The ultimate goal of any health system must be to help people enjoy a high quality of health that leads to a high quality of life. Staying healthy is the first step toward that goal. The government will set targets for the next 10 years to develop, implement, and evaluate strategies to promote healthy behaviours and prevent injuries and chronic diseases. This work will begin with diabetes and will extend to other ailments.

The number of Albertans living with diabetes is expected to double over the next 15 years. The rate of incidence of diabetes is even higher in aboriginal communities. The government will develop a new diabetes strategy that will focus on preventing the primary risk factors that lead to type 2 diabetes and addressing the needs of those who already have the disease to prevent and reduce serious complications.

Comprehensive health care requires reliable, immediate information sharing among all the people involved in providing care. Alberta will implement electronic health records to provide quicker access to patient records, fewer treatment errors, improved efficiency, and reduced costs.

The government recognizes that the way to reach its goals will be different in rural Alberta than in the cities. It will develop a rural health action plan to determine how best to implement changes to improve access to health services in rural areas. The plan will focus on primary health care and continuing care reform, ambulance services, and getting and keeping skilled health care workers in small-town Alberta.

Government will ensure that the changing needs of Albertans are met. Continuing care service plans will be implemented in each health region. These will involve fully implementing a co-ordinated system to provide one-stop access to information, assessment, and continuing care referrals as recommended in the long-term care review.

Safe Communities

Staying healthy means staying safe. Albertans already enjoy the lowest property and violent crime rates in western Canada despite having the fastest growing population in the country, but further steps can and will be taken to ensure that all Albertans feel safe in their homes and communities.

New legislation will be introduced to improve the province's corrections system by creating a zero tolerance level for illegal drug use, violence, and gang-related activities in provincial prisons. Offenders will be held fully accountable for misbehaviour while in custody and will have to earn remission through good behaviour, not merely time served.

The government will strengthen the province's ability to prepare for, respond to, and recover from major emergencies by providing each municipality in the province with advice and assistance on developing emergency plans and emergency management training.

The government will improve Albertans' access to justice by introducing a new family law act that consolidates and updates provincial family laws and makes them easier to understand. The bill will address many issues that affect Alberta families including spousal support, child maintenance, custody, and access.

The government will also introduce new legislation this session to amend the Young Offenders Act to reflect federal legislative changes. It will continue to work with the federal government in this area of shared responsibility to produce the best results for young people in the justice system and for communities.

A Full Partner in Canada

Albertans are committed Canadians. They hold dear the traditions that have shaped this nation and the ideals for which it stands. Albertans want to be full and equal partners in Canada, but true partnership is only possible when all parties are respected and valued for what they bring to the table. Alberta's ability to be a partner in Canada is compromised by the current federal government, which often does not listen to the people of this province.

This government remains committed to protecting Albertans' interests nationally. It will continue to press the federal government to make a genuine effort to deal with Albertans' concerns and ensure that their priorities are addressed fairly and genuinely. It will do everything in its power to protect Alberta's economy and make certain that provincial jurisdiction is respected.

The government will also continue to press the federal government to live up to its responsibilities for aboriginal peoples, particularly in the areas of health and child welfare.

Conclusion

Fellow Albertans, the government's agenda for 2003 is about keeping steady as we grow. It is a promise to the children of Alberta. Keeping the promise means unleashing innovation, leading in learning, and competing in a global marketplace. It means making Alberta the best place in the world to live, work, and raise a family. Keeping the promise means showing leadership and working in partnership. Keeping the promise means promoting Alberta's interests and securing benefits for Albertans as equal partners in a strong, united Canada. Keeping the promise means all Albertans working together to turn the many advantages we enjoy today into opportunities for those who follow us.

With the help, goodwill, and hard work of all Albertans it is a promise the government can and will keep.

[Before I thank you all, may I just say again to everyone here that it is a pleasure for me to serve you as the Lieutenant Governor. You've all been great to me, every one of you, and I thank you for that. I just have to say that I am very, very pleased to have Harriet Winspear here with me today. May I just say that Harriet is one of the people that I often talk about because she is a person who knows what volunteering is all about. She is great; she sets such a wonderful example for all Albertans, as I know all the rest of you do too.]

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen, and may God bless you all.
 God bless Alberta.
 God bless Canada.
 God save the Queen.

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

The Speaker: Hon. members and ladies and gentlemen, I would now invite Mr. Paul Lorieau to lead us in the singing of *God Save The Queen*. Please remain standing at the conclusion.

Hon. Members and Guests:

God save our gracious Queen,
 long live our noble Queen,
 God save The Queen!
 Send her victorious,
 happy and glorious,
 long to reign over us:
 God save The Queen!

The Sergeant-at-Arms: Order!

[Preceded by the Sergeant-at-Arms, Her Honour, her party, and the Premier left the Chamber as a fanfare sounded]

The Speaker: Please be seated.

[The Mace was uncovered]

[The Premier returned to the Chamber]

head: **Introduction of Bills**

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Bill 1

Premier's Council on Alberta's Promise Act

Mr. Klein: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce a bill being the Premier's Council on Alberta's Promise Act. It gives me a great deal of pleasure to move first reading of Bill 1.

This bill, Mr. Speaker, proposes the creation of a community network of supports for all Alberta children. It will marshal the resources of the private and voluntary sectors, the health and education systems, families, and governments to create an environment where children have the opportunity to thrive, succeed, and be happy. The bill enshrines a promise made on behalf of all Albertans to the province's children. It's a promise to be partners with our neighbours, heroes to our children, and champions of their future.

[Motion carried; Bill 1 read a first time]

Tablings

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

Motions

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Mr. Klein: 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 Wednesday, February 19.

[Motion carried]

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that pursuant to Standing Order 49(1) the select standing committees for the present session of the Legislative Assembly be appointed for the following purposes:

- (1) Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund,
- (2) Legislative Offices,
- (3) Private Bills,
- (4) Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing, and
- (5) Public Accounts.

[Motion carried]

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that the following members be appointed to the Assembly's five standing committees:

- (1) Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund Committee: Mr. Hutton, chair; Mr. Magnus, deputy chair; Mr. Bonner; Mr. Broda; Ms Carlson; Mr. Knight; Mr. Lougheed; Mr. Marz; and Mr. VanderBurg.
- (2) Legislative Offices Committee: Ms Tarchuk, chair; Mr. Ducharme, deputy chair; Ms Blakeman; Mr. Friedel; Mrs. Fritz; Ms Graham; Mr. Hlady; Mrs. O'Neill; Dr. Pannu; Dr. Taft; and Mr. Tannas.
- (3) Private Bills Committee: Ms Graham, chair; Ms Kryczka, deputy chair; Rev. Abbott; Mr. Bonner; Mr. Goudreau; Mr. Graydon; Mr. Jacobs; Mr. Johnson; Mr. Lord; Mr. Magnus; Mr. Maskell; Dr. Massey; Mr. McClelland; Mr. McFarland; Mr. Ouellette; Dr. Pannu; Mr. Pham; Mr. Rathgeber; Mr. Snelgrove; Mr. VanderBurg; and Mr. Vandermeer.
- (4) Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing: Mr. Klapstein, chair; Mr. Johnson, deputy chair; Rev. Abbott; Mr. Amery; Mr. Cao; Ms Carlson; Mr. Danyluk; Mrs. Fritz; Mr. Graydon; Mr. Hlady; Mr. Jacobs; Mr. Knight; Mr. Lord; Mr. Lougheed; Mr. Lukaszuk; Mr. MacDonald; Mr. Masyk; Mr. McClelland; Dr. Pannu; Mr. Renner; and Mr. Zwozdesky.
- (5) Public Accounts: Mr. MacDonald, chair; Mr. Shariff, deputy chair; Mrs. Ady; Ms Blakeman; Mr. Broda; Mr. Cao; Mr. Cenaiko; Ms DeLong; Mr. Goudreau; Mr. Hutton; Mrs. Jablonski; Mr. Lukaszuk; Mr. Marz; Mr. Mason; Mr. Masyk; Mr. Ouellette; and Dr. Taft.

[Motion carried]

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Assembly stand adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

[Motion carried; at 4:03 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Wednesday at 1:30 p.m.]

