

Minister Hayden's consideration of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor's the Speech from the Throne

It's indeed an honour for me to stand to respond to the Speech from the Throne.

Firstly, however, I want to take this opportunity to recognize the amazing contribution of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor, the Hon. Norman Kwong, and the contribution that he has made to the province not just recently in his role as Lieutenant Governor but as an example to all Albertans about hard work, drive, humour, his caring attitude towards the people of Alberta, and the amazing contributions he and his wife have made. His is a lasting legacy that we will be able to look back on and see what actually can be achieved and what amazing, wonderful people a province like Alberta produces and can foster the growth of. The Lieutenant Governor, of course, in the Speech from the Throne mentioned that much has changed in Alberta. He also said that much has changed in our world, and I believe that the Speech from the Throne represents much of the response that was necessary to that change that we've seen. I would like to speak about Alberta's fiscal advantage and the amazing steps that have been taken forward with the \$50 billion improvement to Alberta's financial situation that has taken place. I believe it's important to note the \$23 billion of debt that was taken care of by good fiscal management. The huge investment in Alberta's infrastructure making it the envy of the rest of our nation is also important to mention. However, most importantly is the foresight – and I wish that I could take credit for it, but I wasn't here when the decision was made – of the Members of this Legislative Assembly in establishing the \$17 billion sustainability fund. At a time when many of the jurisdictions, provinces and territories, in our nation were accumulating debt and not making the tough decisions that this province did, we set aside money in Alberta for a situation that no one could have predicted. The economic correction that's taken place in the world has made us all very aware that not only is it important to plan – and that \$17 billion shows the importance to plan – but it's also important to get value for the money that we spend on behalf of Alberta taxpayers. The history of our province is rich, indeed. As we look at the Speech from the Throne this year, we see some of the advantages we are able to bring Albertans because of that good planning. I don't think it would be correct to say that without talking about the very hard work, dedication, and sacrifices Albertans have made for us to be in the situation we are in today.

I'd like to speak about a few of the specifics addressed in the Speech from the Throne and I'm going to make reference a bit to my family's history in this province and how I feel that it connects to what's taking place. This year my family will celebrate the centennial for our farm - 100 years. It's with a huge sense of pride that I look back on those one hundred years and what's taken place that's allowed me to be standing here before you today. I have three grandchildren now, the sixth generation in Alberta. My family's history goes back to the days of the homesteader, obviously. I think about my grandfather, and I think about a health care system that was in place when I was a teenager. I was a teenager and I do think about the changes that have taken place because my grandfather was a very important person in my life. I visited him in the seniors' care that was available at that time, which was 1963 and that will give you an idea of just what's happened since then. My grandfather had retired from a very hard life on the farm and come into the city to enjoy his retirement. He had a fall on a slippery sidewalk and broken his hip. When he broke his hip, he lay in the extended care that was available to us at that time. There were no hip replacements, and he passed away because of the immobility. When I fast-forward to today and I see people who get hip replacements, knee replacements, I see the amazing things that are available to them, and I realize that we are so blessed because we have members of our families that are with us well into their 80s or 90s. It wasn't that long ago these services were not available to us. I think about the health care plan and the improvements that we're talking about in this province, and it's important to point out that no one in our entire nation spends more per capita on health care than we do in Alberta. Albertans are truly blessed because of that. So where do we find the efficiencies? First of all, the improvements that we've made, and our commitment now to a five-year funding plan will result in improvements that we can be extremely proud of. When we look back, we think, how could we possibly improve on something that's gone this well? We always seem to come up with improvements, and we have a lot of dedicated people out there that are doing it. One of my colleagues said in a speech to a group of people I had asked him to come and talk to that we have too many healthy people in our hospitals. That's absolutely true. As we move forward and create the spaces that have been referred to, these healthy people in our hospitals are going to be in more appropriate care. People questioned our commitment on the bond issue that is going to triple the number of seniors' residences, seniors' care opportunities from what we would have otherwise been able to do, which makes us a leader in the entire nation once more. I'm very proud of what we're doing, and I'm very supportive of our way forward. People in this province are blessed in the wonderful communities that they're in, but that doesn't mean that we can't improve it. The direction we are taking as a government and moving forward with will definitely make the lives of Albertans safer. They'll have a richer experience where they live. They'll be able to enjoy their friends and families far more than they would have before. I want to also where we're going with our competitive position in a global economy. As Albertans we are in a new world along with

everyone else. We need to be more competitive than we've ever been before. If there's a downside to what we produce in Alberta, it's that the quality of what we produce is so much higher than it is in other places, we have to be a little more selective in the markets that we look for. I think about this economic downturn and the correction that's taking place. We find ourselves as Albertans producing T-bone steaks in a hamburger market. However, there are still a lot of people in the world that want the T-bone steak. There are growing economies in China and India and we are taking actions in agriculture to grow those markets and to move into them and to find that customer that suits the things we produce. Nowhere in the world is anyone better positioned for this global recovery than we are in Alberta. There are two things that the world needs as we move forward. The first one is energy to fuel that recovery. We are the best positioned in the entire world to provide that energy and to do it in a responsible, predictable and safe manner for those people who are going to need it. The next is the agriculture sector, which is our number two industry in this province as well as our largest renewable resource industry. It must be there to feed them and give them the things they need. I see that as the recovery takes place, we are going to recover more quickly than others. People are already investing in our province and always have invested in our province because they can come here and enjoy the lowest tax rate in the entire nation, which also produces the highest income. I want to point out that Albertans' average income is the highest in the entire nation. There are amazing opportunities in this province. In this global economy, we are in the best position possible. I'm so pleased to be a part of that, and I am also pleased that the Speech from the Throne provides a new Direction to take us forward. People from around the world will continue to invest. We continue to see our province growing at approximately the size of Red Deer. Those people coming here every year are not coming here to suffer with the rest of us. They are coming here to enjoy the benefits that this province has for them, the opportunities for growth, and the amazingly bright future that we have. I would like to speak about the clean energy future of our province and talk about a couple of initiatives. We are a world leader in clean energy. In this province we have about 1,500 provincial buildings. Ninety per cent of the power in those building is produced by green energy - wind energy and biomass. We are absolutely a leader. We have the most pristine environment imaginable anywhere in the world. Although we are criticized in certain areas, Alberta is known around the world for that pristine environment, beautiful vistas, amazing recreational opportunities, and healthy, clean, and safe food. These are things that we can be very proud of. We have a responsibility to the rest of our nation to carry on forward as we have. We are the engine of the Canadian economy. Fifty per cent of the activity on Bay Street in Toronto, in the banking industry, is funded out of the industries of Alberta. Our entire nation depends on us. The Speech from the Throne sets our way forward, and we will be able to not only benefit Albertans by these actions, but we'll be able to benefit all Canadians. I am very proud and confident in the direction this government is taking, And that it will pay huge benefits to the Albertans who live here. I'm also proud that the sixth generation of my family is here, and I hope that many generations beyond enjoy the benefits that will be incurred because of the good planning that has taken place in the past and that is taking place now. Thank you.