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| ***Province*** | ***Législature*** | ***Session*** | ***Type de discours*** | ***Date du discours*** | ***Locuteur*** | ***Fonction du locuteur*** | ***Parti politique*** |
| Alberta | 27e | 4e | Discours du trône | 22 février 2011 | Colonel (Retired) Donald S. Ethell | Lieutenant-gouverneur | Alberta Progressive Conservative Party |

**Building a Better Alberta**

Hon. Members and distinguished guests, welcome to the Fourth Session of the Twenty-Seventh Alberta Legislature. It is my honour to deliver the Speech from the Throne, as it is my honour to serve Albertans as Lieutenant Governor.

This position follows a career that has taken me all over the world, including Europe, the Middle East, Central America and the Balkans, as a soldier and proud member of the Canadian Armed Forces. After my military career ended, I served as a volunteer with humanitarian groups helping refugees and children in need in Africa.

In all these posts, I saw many tragedies, including hunger, disease, conflict, violence and war. I also observed the triumph of the human spirit, where people of commitment and compassion worked together to make their communities and their countries stronger. These experiences filled me with gratitude to live in a country and a province so blessed as Canada and Alberta are. They reaffirmed the values of citizenship and service to others. And they underscored the absolute necessity of democracy and the rule of law.

This is the background I bring to the post of Lieutenant Governor. These are the values I will work to promote through my service. And it is here, in this Legislature, where those values will guide the people Albertans have entrusted with public office. It is here where the people’s business is conducted. Let it be done with diligence and wisdom, with honour and respect, and with God’s guidance. For surely the times in which we live demand no less of our elected leaders.

As Alberta takes its first steps from recession to recovery, fundamental changes are happening in the global economy. Our province must change too if it is to flourish in the new economy, just as it did in the old.

Albertans look to their government to lead the way, to survey the landscape of both the short-term and the long-term, and plan accordingly, to build a better Alberta so that the province our children and grandchildren inherit is as full of opportunity for them as it has been for us. Ladies and gentlemen, your government is committed to investing in Alberta’s future, so our great province can realize its full potential.

**Meeting the Challenges of a Changing Global Economy**

As 2011 begins, the world is slowly emerging from the shadow of the worst recession since the Great Depression. As that event forever changed the world, so too is the recession that began in 2008 reshaping the economic landscape in which we live. Being successful in the post-recession world will mean doing things very differently from how we’ve done them in the past.

The Sustainability Fund – money saved during good times – is helping to blunt the sharpest edges of the recession, but it won’t last forever. We must use this opportunity to move forward and prepare for the future.

*The New Importance of Asia*

Our province has relied heavily on a single customer – the United States, which buys about 85 percent of our province’s exports. If Alberta is to grow to its greatest potential, we need to diversify our product development through technology and take advantage of other markets.

A major opportunity exists to expand trade and investment with Asia. This region is home to some of the world’s largest and most diverse markets. Bill One of this legislative session will be dedicated to enhancing Alberta’s linkages with Asia, including priority markets such as India, China, Japan and Korea. The *Asia Advisory Council Act,* if passed, will create a council that will make recommendations to government on ways to expand business, education and cultural relationships between Alberta and Asia.

Western Canada has the products these markets need. The vast agricultural, mineral, forestry and energy resources of Alberta, British Columbia and Saskatchewan will underpin Canada’s economy in the 21st century.

It is in the national interest that Western Canada has improved port capacity – whether by pipeline or rail – that will open the door to Asia’s rapidly growing markets. Also necessary is improved direct air service to these markets so that trade and investment can flourish.

*Investing in Infrastructure*

Infrastructure is a critical foundation for our province’s future. It is an economic enabler and a driver of competitiveness and it helps support the quality of life Albertans enjoy. Albertans learned the false economy of delaying infrastructure investments in previous downturns: when growth returned, we were unprepared, struggling to catch up and paying inflated prices.

Now is the best time to invest in infrastructure. Thanks to the billions of dollars Alberta saved in the Sustainability Fund, instead of falling behind, we are catching up and planning ahead. We are keeping people working and making our dollars go further, but most importantly, Alberta will have the facilities it needs now and when growth returns.

The government will continue to look to the 20-year Strategic Capital Plan to build priority public infrastructure, such as schools, hospitals, roads and long-term care facilities, with the goal of having the most advanced infrastructure in North America. We will build new hospitals and renovate existing health facilities in communities such as Grande Prairie, Lethbridge, Red Deer, Medicine Hat, Edson, High Prairie, Sherwood Park and others. We will also embark upon major redevelopment and expansion of cancer-care services in Calgary and Edmonton.

Your government will invest in major economic corridors, such as the twinning of Highway 43 near Sturgeon Lake, the ongoing twinning of Highway 63, and major highway investments within Fort McMurray. And we will move forward with construction of the Edmonton and Calgary ring roads.

Almost 90 percent of the Edmonton Ring Road will be completed when the northwest section of Anthony Henday Drive opens this fall. Five new interchanges in the southwest will remove all the traffic lights to make the entire stretch of the freeway free-flow. Your government continues to move forward on the final phase, the northeast section, with a P3 process that will begin this year. In Calgary, work continues on the southeast section of Stoney Trail, which will open to traffic in the fall of 2013. Completion of the two interchanges on the northwest leg, which will make this section free-flow, will be done by fall 2012.

*Boosting Our Competitiveness*

Our province’s long-term prosperity depends on our industries being globally competitive, productive and diverse. Alberta must make every effort to create an environment where entrepreneurship, productivity and investment thrive.

Last year, this Legislature passed the Alberta Competitiveness Act*,* creating a partnership between government and industry to help position Alberta as one of the most competitive economic jurisdictions in the world. The resulting government and industry-led Competitiveness Council has analyzed our province’s competitive strengths and weaknesses. It will report to government in the next few months with recommendations to enhance Alberta’s ability to compete in the global marketplace. These recommendations – for both government and industry – will be implemented in the short term with measureable results anticipated in the next three to five years.

Effective regulation of financial securities is essential to the expansion and smooth functioning of capital markets and the economy. Canada’s passport system for securities regulation has been rated as one of the best regulatory systems in the world by objective and independent international organizations, including the World Bank. In the interest of maintaining a system that is working well, Alberta – together with Quebec, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan – is challenging the unprecedented attempt by the federal government to take control of this area of provincial jurisdiction. Having made our case before both the Alberta Court of Appeal and the Quebec Court of Appeal, Alberta will next take its challenge to the Supreme Court of Canada later this spring.

We will also continue to urge the federal government to abandon its present course of action in favour of supporting the existing provincially administered national system. The persistent negative public comments about the passport system are unmerited, and serve to undermine the confidence in capital markets that the federal government says it is trying to protect.

Reducing red tape is another key to improving Alberta’s competitiveness. While rules and regulations are required in the interest of public health, safety and environmental protection, it is important that they not create unnecessary and costly burdens that limit the ability of business to create jobs.

One area of particular concern has been the energy sector. With the help of stakeholders, government has extensively reviewed the oil and gas regulatory system to create a more modern, flexible and efficient system. Implementation of the changes identified will begin this year. Smart regulation achieves public objectives to protect our environment and the high standards Albertans demand. It also provides clarity and predictability so business can invest and compete with confidence.

**Making the Most of Our Resources**

Being competitive also means making the most of the advantages we have. These include our abundant resources – energy, wood fibre and food products grown on our rich, productive land.

*Renewed Confidence in Oil, Gas and Oil Sands*

Changes to the royalty system have led to renewed confidence in oil and gas exploration. And for the first time in this province’s history, land sales exceeded $2.3 billion in a calendar year. This shows that Alberta continues to be competitive in attracting new investment. It also means new jobs for Albertans and new opportunities for industry, and sends a strong signal to the world that our province is a safe, effective place to do business. That this message has been heard is evidenced by renewed interest in Alberta, particularly in the oil sands, by a variety of international companies.

Your government will continue to implement *Responsible Actions,* Alberta’s 20-year strategy for the oil sands. It will also continue to address growth pressures brought on by oil sands development, and will lead the process to develop a comprehensive regional infrastructure plan for the Cold Lake oil sands area.

*Adding Value to Raw Resources*

Your government is also taking action to ensure that Albertans receive the most benefit possible from energy development as resource owners. The Bitumen royalty in kind program, for example, will allow Alberta to seek out opportunities for adding value to bitumen here in our province. This will help diversify our economy, create jobs for Albertans and provide spin-off opportunities for businesses along the supply chain.

Value-added upgrading also holds the potential to create more energy revenues for the province. By integrating carbon capture and storage technology, carbon dioxide from upgraders can be used to revive depleting oil reservoirs. This process is called enhanced oil recovery. It is estimated that an additional 1.4 billion barrels of oil can be produced using this technology. To put it in more familiar terms, Alberta could produce more conventional oil in the future than it has already produced in the past. This could generate up to $25 billion in additional provincial royalties and taxes.

*The Future of Forestry*

In recent years, Alberta’s forest industry has felt the impact of a devastated U.S. housing market and economy. As in other sectors, the journey back to prosperity begins with diversifying both products and markets. Government will work with the forest industry to develop a road map to do both these things, including using wood fibre in the emerging bio-economy, especially in renewable energy and fuels. This road map will help companies make efficient use of fibre, and build a bridge to a more sustainable future for this renewable resource.

Government will also continue to respond aggressively to the triple forest threats of wildfire, insects and disease. We saw some success in the war on the Mountain Pine Beetle last year, thanks to an aggressive provincial control program with some help from Mother Nature.

*Agriculture and Rural Communities*

Alberta’s agriculture and agrifood industries are key economic drivers of our province, especially in rural communities. Over the next two decades, hundreds of millions of people in the emerging markets of China and India will rise out of poverty and demand a quality of life that comes closer to what we enjoy here in Canada. The opportunity for Alberta and its western neighbouring provinces to provide food will usher in a period of opportunity and rising prices for Alberta farms.

Access to reliable broadband Internet service is vital to maintaining Alberta’s competitive advantage. Government is working to complete the final mile to bring broadband access to every Alberta home.

**Educating the workforce of tomorrow**

Of all Alberta’s natural resources, none is more valuable than our people. It is our ethical citizenship, engaged thinking, and entrepreneurial spirit that have made Alberta prosperous today – and which are the foundation of tomorrow’s promise. These are the qualities our education system must instill in our children as they grow into young adults, enabling them and our province to reach their full potential.

Alberta’s education system leads the world today. But we must not become complacent – our system must evolve if we are to continue to be leaders tomorrow. This means continuing to build capacity for local decision-making and fostering broader community engagement.

Your government will continue to implement a vision for an inclusive education system that supports students with special needs. We will equip the education system to offer students more flexible, engaging and personalized learning. And we will continue to build the teaching profession: recruiting, preparing and supporting the best and the brightest in becoming and remaining teachers.

*Becoming a Hub of Creative Thinking*

Through Campus Alberta and Alberta Innovates, we will continue to show the world how our province is becoming a hub of creative thinking, where innovation turns ideas into reality, and where research moves from the lab to the marketplace. We will continue to beckon the world’s best researchers, innovators, entrepreneurs and investors to join us in areas of strength, such as energy and the environment, biotechnology and bio-industries, and health research. And we will continue to foster ever stronger global partnerships to build new markets for traditional and emerging sectors, as well as innovations not yet imagined.

*Investing in Our Workforce*

To build a strong future, Alberta needs a skilled workforce. While unemployment remains an issue for thousands of Albertans, we know that in the future, it will become increasingly difficult to find skilled people. Demographic change means that we will soon see more workers retiring than entering the workforce. Given the growing demand for workers and the limited available supply, we expect that Alberta will be short 77,000 workers over the coming decade.

To help prepare for this situation, government will update the 2006 Building and Educating Tomorrow’s Workforce strategy to adjust to current labour market needs. An important component of this strategy will continue to be ensuring jobs for Albertans before looking beyond our borders. Mature workers who choose to stay in the workforce must be supported. And groups that are under-represented in the workforce, such as Aboriginal Albertans, people with disabilities, immigrants and young people, must be given every opportunity to contribute their skills and help our province grow.

Alberta workplaces are even more productive when they are safe. Work on government’s ten-point plan on occupational health and safety will continue, with additional efforts in transparency, education, and enforcement. Alberta’s workplace injury rate has been declining steadily for nearly twenty years, but there is still room to improve. We want all Albertans to come home safely from work every day.

**Balancing development and conservation**

Albertans know that economic development and environmental protection are not a trade-off. We can, and must, have both. And just as we plan for economic development, we must also plan for a healthy environment.

No longer can we look at single elements of the landscape in isolation. We must recognize the cumulative impact of all development within a region. And we are working to ensure these activities are being coordinated to have the least impact on our land, air and water, and all the species that use them.

Similarly, we recognize and value the longstanding rights of landowners, who have been forces for both economic development and ecosystem conservation in our province. Partnership with landowners is critical to our success.

Good planning will provide for responsible growth in our province, especially where there are competing interests on a finite land base. That’s why your government has created the Land-use Framework. It is not intended to stop growth but to provide for coordinated planning and protect the environment.

*Planning for a Healthy Environment*

Alberta also continues to develop regional plans based on our province’s watersheds to manage growing economic, environmental, residential and recreational demands on our province’s land base.

This year, after further consultation, we expect to complete the first regional plan for the Lower Athabasca area in northeast Alberta, which includes the oil sands. Among its objectives, the plan will identify conservation areas, required in part to support a new policy to manage recovery and stabilization of woodland caribou.

Government is taking steps to ensure that legislation to support the development of regional plans fully respects landowner rights.

*World-class Monitoring of the Oil Sands*

Alberta’s oil sands continue to be a topic of global conversation. Your government is working to share information about our clean energy efforts with our neighbours across Canada and around the world. We are changing perceptions of how we are managing one of the world’s largest proven oil reserves. And we remain committed to demonstrating that Alberta is a leader in responsible energy production and environmental stewardship.

Alberta has created a panel of respected experts to make recommendations for developing a world-class monitoring, evaluation and reporting system for all environmental media – including air, land, water and biodiversity. The panel will report back to government by June 2011 with recommendations for a system Albertans can proudly hold up to international scrutiny.

Your government has built the foundation for this system with a transition over the past several years to cumulative effects management, which moves beyond examining developments on a project-by-project basis to look at the combined impacts of both existing and planned development on an entire region.

The oil sands area will serve as a pilot for the new monitoring system. We know our monitoring efforts must be robust, transparent and adaptable. Most of all, they must be credible. Building a reliable system for the future requires third-party review, validation and involvement. It’s what Albertans expect and what we intend to deliver.

*Watching Our Water Use*

Water is a precious resource that belongs to all Albertans. As our economy and population grow, Albertans will need a long-term plan to ensure wise use and conservation of water.

A groundwater mapping and inventory program is currently underway, in partnership with the Alberta Geological Survey. We are also working with land-use planners, watershed councils and stewardship groups to share knowledge, enhance resource protection and improve groundwater management.

*Climate Change and Clean Energy Technology*

Alberta is seizing the opportunity to be a global leader in clean-energy technology. Your government pioneered North America’s first regulatory system to reduce industrial greenhouse gas emissions, and it was designed to encourage innovation in our province. The system has achieved more than 17 million tonnes of reductions from business-as-usual to date, and has collected $186 million into the Climate Change and Emissions Management Fund. We will continue to invest millions of dollars from this fund into unique, transformative projects to produce cleaner energy from fossil fuels, improve energy efficiency, explore renewable energy strategies, and develop advanced carbon capture and storage technology in our province.

Alberta is also working with industry to develop four commercial-scale carbon capture and storage projects. Together, they will capture and store five million tonnes of carbon dioxide in underground formations by 2015. Alberta’s geology is well suited to this purpose – we have many formations that have held hydrocarbons safely for thousands of years.

Your government’s vision for a clean-energy future will create entirely new business markets in which Alberta-made, climate-friendly technology solutions are marketed around the world. Alberta will continue to work diligently on reducing greenhouse gas emissions in ways that produce tangible benefits for our province and its people, now and in the years ahead.

**Building Canada’s Best-performing Publicly Funded Health System**

Your government will continue building on the Premier’s vision of creating Canada’s best-performing publicly funded health system, right here in Alberta.

That vision means Albertans will have better access, shorter wait times, and safe, quality care when they need it. And it means we will adhere to the principles of the Canada Health Act.

*Becoming the Best*

Moving forward with the actions in Becoming the Best: Alberta’s 5-Year Health Action Plan will help us achieve that vision. The plan contains the most ambitious and comprehensive set of commitments to improve access to health care in Canada. It is supported with clear performance measures and five-year performance targets. It puts people first by addressing the health needs of patients, families and communities.

Under the Health Action Plan, another 1,000 continuing care spaces will be added this year to provide Alberta seniors with more choice and greater independence. We will add at least 5,300 continuing care spaces by 2015. This is the largest expansion of continuing care spaces ever planned in our province, and fittingly, it begins as the first of the Baby Boomers turn 65.

We will launch a co-ordinated provincial cancer strategy to reduce the incidence of cancer, increase access to cancer treatment across Alberta, and improve the quality of life for those living with the disease. The strategy will address immediate and future needs for prevention, detection and treatment of cancer, as well as workforce requirements.

As part of the Health Action Plan, we will also announce a comprehensive Addiction and Mental Health Strategy for the province. It will provide Albertans with timely access to addiction and mental health services and programs, and better integrate mental health and addiction services into the overall health system.

The health action plan is backstopped by the first-of-its-kind, five-year funding commitment for Alberta Health Services. That commitment, which includes a six-percent increase in health funding for 2011-12, provides stable, predictable funding to ensure the action plan’s commitments become reality. We have also earmarked $2.6 billion over three years to expand, upgrade, build and equip additional health care facilities.

*Implementing the New Alberta Health Act*

The new Alberta Health Actand the health charter currently being developed provide for all Albertans to have access to the services of primary care teams. As part of our commitment to strengthen primary health care, Albertans will have access to a primary care team and a basic suite of health care services on a timely basis. Over time, this initiative is expected to greatly shorten wait times and improve quality throughout all levels of the health care system.

Albertans will also continue to have a say in their health system. Our government will gather input on a Health Charter and the regulation to establish a Health Advocate, with a view to proclaiming the new act and appointing a Health Advocate later this year.

**Safe, Vibrant Communities**

Even during the economic downturn, Alberta has remained a place of safe, vibrant communities, where Albertans in most need are protected and cared for. Government will continue to ensure that programs and services are in place to support vulnerable and at-risk children, youth, families and seniors.

*Caring for Albertans most in need*

This session, legislation will be introduced to strengthen protection for victims of family violence, and to hold accountable those who violate protection orders. These amendments will make Alberta’s penalties for such violations among the strongest in Canada.

We will work with municipalities and service organizations on a coordinated approach to meet the needs of Alberta’s growing urban Aboriginal population.

While keeping costs down through a competitive tendering process, we will continue to partner with non-profit organizations, the private sector and municipalities, to further support the development of 11,000 affordable housing units by 2012. Another 500 homeless Albertans will receive supports, services and permanent housing to help them on the road to independence.

Although most Albertans and other Canadians are prudently saving for retirement, there is a significant minority who may not have enough savings to maintain their standard of living after retirement. The Alberta government will continue to be a leader in efforts to improve prospects for future retirees. Building on a concept first championed by our government, Alberta will work closely with federal, provincial and territorial governments this year to develop standards and legislation to allow for new types of registered pension plans for self-employed people and other workers who do not have workplace pension plans.

*Making Communities Stronger and Safer*

Your government knows that sustainable and accountable municipalities, where all Albertans can enjoy a high quality of life, are important to Alberta’s success. That’s why Alberta is committed to building the municipalities of the 21st century.

We remain committed to our partnership with municipalities on the Municipal Sustainability Initiative, a program that has supported more than 2,100 municipal infrastructure projects. And we remain committed to continuing the excellent work begun under the Alberta Safe Communities Initiative. Alberta’s Gang Reduction Strategy will be implemented to address one of the leading causes of violent crime in the province.

Your government will also introduce legislation that will allow police agencies to have greater access to information when conducting missing persons investigations.

The Alberta government remains committed to building a state-of-the-art public safety and law enforcement training centre in Fort Macleod. It will support Alberta’s new Law Enforcement Framework and ensure consistent standards of training and skills among law enforcement personnel from across the province. Construction of the training centre is expected to commence by summer 2012.

*Showcasing Our Province*

Ours is a province with an amazing story to tell. Through Alberta Arts Days, September 30 – October 2, 2011, we will continue to showcase – and celebrate – the rich diversity of arts, culture and heritage throughout our province.

Your government will continue its efforts to showcase Alberta as the place for television, motion picture and digital media productions, offering a unique mix of talent, scenery and the facilities to make movie magic.

**Conclusion**

Alberta has come through the recession better than just about anywhere else. While other jurisdictions were piling on debt, raising taxes or cutting programs, Alberta stayed true to its plan. Our operating budget is balanced, cherished public programs and services have been not only protected but strengthened, and we are continuing to build our infrastructure to enable future growth. But Albertans are not content to simply ride out the storm. We know that past success does not guarantee future prosperity. And like those who first built our province, we must continually strive to be more effective and innovative in everything we do.

We must boost the competitiveness of our economy, and work to develop new markets in Asia and elsewhere.

We must diversify our products and industries, while bolstering our foundations in energy, forestry, agriculture and tourism.

We must keep investing in infrastructure, and in the education of our people to find tomorrow’s innovations, and foster future economic growth.

We must be a leader in responsible energy production and environmental protection.

We must build a health care system that provides the care Albertans need, when and where they need it.

And we must continue to build safe, vibrant communities, where those who are most in need are supported, and where all Albertans can participate in the economic, social and cultural life of our province.

Finally, we must do these things while protecting the fiscal advantages Albertans have worked so hard to build.

This is your government’s plan for the way forward, out of recession and into recovery and beyond. It’s a plan that fulfills all the promise of our wonderful province, and recognizes the amazing potential that is yet to be realized. It’s a plan to build a better Alberta, for all Albertans.

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen, and may God bless you all.

God bless Alberta.

God bless Canada.

God save the Queen.