

# Speech from the throne: February 25, 2020

The second session of the 30th legislature opened with a Speech from the Throne delivered by Her Honour, Lois Mitchell, CM, AOE, LLD, Lieutenant Governor of Alberta.



Mr. Speaker, honourable members of the Legislative Assembly, fellow Albertans;

I speak to you as Alberta's vice-regal representative of Our Sovereign Lady, Queen Elizabeth II.

It is my duty to open the Second Session of the Thirtieth Legislature with the

legislative programme of Her Majesty's Government.

I begin by acknowledging someone here today whose ancestry vividly illustrates the origins of our province and our people.

In the late 1700s, a young Englishman named James Curtis Bird arrived in Rupert's Land as an employee of the Hudson's Bay Company.

He rose to become Chief Factor of Edmonton House, and located the post on the North Saskatchewan River Valley flats not far from where we are gathered today.

The settlement that grew up around it is now a metropolis of 1.3 million, this great capital city.

James Bird married a Cree woman named Mary Oo-Menahomisk.

Their children included James, a trader, interpreter and frontiersman who lived among the Blackfoot in southern Alberta and married a Peigan woman named Sarah Bull's Heart.

His brother William married a Metis woman named Venus Hay, a union that produced 12 children, including William Jr., who farmed on the river flats just east of here, and in the 1870s built a mill after which the city's beautiful Mill Creek Ravine Park is named.

Many thousands of Albertans can trace their ancestry to these Cree-Blackfoot-Anglo origins, including our special guest today, Roy Bird from Sherwood Park.

Roy is the proud great, great grandson of James Curtis and Mary, and is President of the Northern Alberta Pioneers and Descendants Association.

Thank you, Roy, for sharing your story that says so much about who we are and where we came from.

Stories like these from Alberta's rich history remind us how far we have come together, of the great things we have achieved, and of the potential stretching out before us: a river of infinite possibilities as broad and deep as the mighty North Saskatchewan that nurtured Indigenous communities here for millennia.

In our one hundred and sixteenth year as a province, Alberta faces some of the biggest challenges we have ever met.

But our history proves that Albertans are tough, resilient people. Together, we will overcome these challenges. Together, we will grow and prosper.

Doing so will require that my government take strong measures to renew our economy, bring order to our finances, and secure a fair deal for Alberta.

Getting Alberta back to work is my government's central priority.

My government will introduce a comprehensive, long-term Blueprint for Jobs.

It will focus on restoring investor confidence by making Alberta the freest, fastest-moving and lowest-taxed province.

With the Job Creation Tax Cut, we already have the lowest tax rate on job creators in Canada, and are on track to achieve one of the lowest rates on the continent.

This, plus cutting unnecessary red tape by at least one third, is restoring our competitive edge to make Alberta a magnet for investment and job creation.

My government will introduce several bills making it easier, faster and less expensive for businesses, community groups, and governments to deliver

services and create jobs.

My government will also continue implementing its Skills for Jobs Agenda, to prepare Albertans for fulfilling future careers.

We need more young people to recognize that there is a parity of esteem between experiential and academic learning, and between trades and professions.

Young people like Cecile Buckmeier, who is with us today.

A strong-willed, independent-minded Albertan, Cecile rejected outdated advice and chose trades training after high school.

She is now a successful autobody tradesperson, an instructor at the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology, the Skills Canada 2015 Alumni of the Year, and a medalist for Canada at the World Skills Competition.

Thank you, Cecile, for inspiring a new generation to pursue excellence through the trades.

As part of the Blueprint for Jobs, my government will unveil the 2020 Capital Plan, committing \$6.4 billion to strengthen our infrastructure while creating jobs.

My government will continue to advance the diversification of our economy, catalyzing job creation and growth in energy; agriculture; forestry; advanced technology, including artificial intelligence and medical technology; aviation and aerospace; finance and fintech; tourism and other industries.

Key to our success in all of these areas will be the social and economic mobility of our people.

Through initiatives like the Indigenous Opportunities Corporation, my government will partner with Indigenous communities to create unprecedented opportunities for investment, jobs, and prosperity.

Opportunities for newcomers will be increased by providing faster credential recognition through the Fairness for Newcomers Action Plan, and by introducing the new Alberta Advantage Immigration Program that will attract entrepreneurs to start new businesses, and invest here.

Restoring investor confidence in Alberta's economy is essential. That is why my government will establish a new investment promotion agency with funds set aside in the 2019 budget to expand Alberta's profile in key capital markets around the world.

My government will also continue leading Canada in breaking down costly trade barriers.

This includes efforts to bring more provinces into the New West Partnership Trade Agreement, and leading by example on labour mobility by unilaterally recognizing other provinces' professional and trade qualifications, wherever feasible.

Alberta is now producing and shipping more energy products than at any point in our history. However, significantly expanding our access to established and new markets remains critical to our economic future, in part to reduce oil price differentials that diminish the great value of our natural resources. That is why my government will do everything within its power to ensure the completion of the Trans Mountain Expansion and Keystone XL pipelines, while supporting and pursuing other projects to ship Alberta energy to the world.

Growing efforts to landlock and phase out Alberta energy production will not succeed. My government recognizes that the global energy supply is moving

towards lower emitting sources, but that includes the oil and gas we will produce here in Alberta for decades to come. We will not surrender global energy markets to dictatorships that spread conflict and extremism around the world.

The Government of Alberta is prepared to do whatever it takes to develop our resources responsibly and get them to global markets to compete with and displace energy from some of the world's worst regimes.

In part that means working with industry to continue reducing the environmental impact of our energy. The Technology Innovation and Emissions Reduction Program will continue to invest in technology that makes Alberta the global leader in environmentally responsible non-renewable resource extraction. Alberta will continue working with the Government of Canada to obtain an equivalency agreement on new methane regulations that further reduce emissions, while minimizing the cost for industry. Through these and other policies, we will support the growing efforts of major Alberta energy producers to achieve the goal of net zero carbon emissions by 2050.

But that is not all. When regulatory uncertainty, hostility by the federal government, or pressure from special interest groups inhibits investment in Alberta resource development, my government will act. Like the government of the late Premier Lougheed, Alberta is prepared to invest directly and support companies and Indigenous groups, when necessary, to assure the future of responsible resource development.

Through these and other efforts to stimulate jobs and growth, my government will do everything it can to reduce unacceptably high levels of unemployment, and get people back to work.

My government's second key priority for the new session is getting our fiscal house in order, and ensuring that Albertans get full value for their tax dollars.

We are wasting two billion tax dollars this year on interest payments to bankers and bondholders, money that could be left in the hands of taxpayers, or spent on health care and education.

Without action, we will end up wasting billions more on debt interest payments, which means billions less on public services.

As the MacKinnon Panel confirmed, Alberta spends far more per person than other big provinces, but we often get poorer outcomes for that spending, from life expectancy and surgical wait times, to high school completion and university enrollment.

We cannot continue to spend more for less while going deeper into debt.

My government will work with the public service to contain costs and protect front-line services by carefully reducing overall spending by less than three percent.

This excludes the budgets for health care, Education, Community and Social Services, and Children's Services, where budgets are being maintained at or increased to record high levels.

Preserving a high-quality public health care system is essential. My government will move forward with implementation of its Surgical Wait Times Initiative and other reforms that put patients, not politics, at the centre of medicare. In doing so, Alberta will be informed by universal, publicly funded health care systems in Canada and Europe with the goals of increasing patient choice, reducing wait times, and improving health outcomes. Albertans will never have to pay out of pocket for medically necessary care.

Our overarching goal is to make life better for Albertans.

That's why my government will implement a renewed mental health and

addictions strategy, backed by an additional \$140 million in support.

Far too many Albertans have become trapped by addiction in recent years. Every one of them needs love and compassion. They also need access to treatment and recovery services, which is why the government is funding the creation of at least 4,000 additional treatment spaces.

With us today is a man whose life story embodies these truths.

Calgarian Samuel Stordy succumbed to opioid addiction as a teenager and overdosed many times.

He did not get his life back until he undertook treatment and started down the path to recovery.

Samuel now works as a youth addiction counselor. He is living proof that treatment works and recovery is possible.

Congratulations, Samuel. Thank you for being an inspiration.

My government will introduce legislation to protect the vulnerable by enhancing public safety.

This includes an act to protect survivors of human trafficking, part of our action plan to fight human trafficking and combat the scourge of this modern form of slavery.

My government will amend the *Vital Statistics Act* to prevent convicted sexual offenders from covering their tracks by legally changing their names.

My government will table bills to toughen sanctions against impaired driving, and to protect minors from risks associated with vaping.

Amendments will be proposed to the *Victims of Crime Act* to strengthen

financial benefits for victims.

At the heart of the Alberta Advantage is our strong, pluralistic public education system.

That is why my government will introduce a choice in education act, to re-affirm that parents have primary responsibility for their children's education. This law will be the first in Canada to incorporate the language of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, stating that "parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children."

My government will also implement recommendations of the Curriculum Review Committee, including its call for a refocus on teaching core competencies, depoliticizing the curriculum, and standardized testing.

To further make life better for Albertans, my government will undertake significant reforms to strengthen democracy in Alberta, including the tabling of:

- A citizen initiative act that will allow Albertans to put important issues to a referendum;
- A recall act, allowing constituents to remove their MLAs, municipal councillors, mayors, and school board trustees from office between elections;
- Bills to enact fixed dates for provincial elections and provincial budgets;
- Statutory provisions to get big money out of Alberta politics by introducing donor contribution limits to so-called political action committees, while prohibiting party-affiliated groups from circumventing donation limits;
- Amendments banning foreign money from Alberta politics by making it illegal for foreign entities to contribute to third party advertisers; and
- Amendments to the *Alberta Taxpayer Protection Act* requiring a

referendum before a consumer carbon tax can be imposed.

Finally, my government will do everything within its power to stand up for our province and get a Fair Deal for Alberta.

Thank you to the members of the Fair Deal panel, and the tens of thousands of Albertans who attended their town halls or contributed to their deliberations.

Sadly, the panel's work was made more difficult by the sudden passing of one of its members, Jason Goodstriker.

Chief Goodstriker was a proud leader of the Blackfoot people, an Alberta patriot who dedicated himself to the preservation of Indigenous culture, and to helping First Nations become partners in prosperity through resource development.

But most importantly, he was a loving father, and husband to Tiffany, who is with us today.

Thank you, Tiffany, for sharing your husband with Alberta.

My government will table legislation to advance our province's objectives for a Fair Deal within the Canadian federation.

These will include:

- An act to protect critical infrastructure, to address the illegal blockades we have seen across Canada, to increase the penalties for blocking roads, railways, and other infrastructure, and to clarify that in Alberta, police do not have to wait for a warrant to act in the face of illegal activity and uphold the rule of law.
- Amendments to the *Constitutional Referendum Act* to clarify the referendum process and allow for the holding of referendums not related

to constitutional issues.

- Amendments to the *Alberta Senate Elections Act* to update the election rules for the next Senate election in conjunction with the municipal elections in the fall of 2021.
- Legislation to replace the federal parole board with a provincial parole board in charge of parole eligibility and terms for provincial prisoners.

Following the report of the Fair Deal Panel, other bills may be tabled to give effect to its recommendations

This summarizes my government's legislative programme for the Second Session of the Thirtieth Legislature.

It is an ambitious, practical programme that will stimulate investment, job creation and growth, and get Alberta back to work.

It will achieve fiscal responsibility, strengthen our democracy, and protect the vulnerable.

And it will arm Alberta with more of the tools our province needs to stand up for our right to a Fair Deal within the Canadian federation.

Members of the Legislative Assembly, thank you for all your efforts on behalf of your constituents.

I invite you to exercise your utmost wisdom as you chart the future course of our beloved province.

And may the blessings of Almighty God rest upon your counsels as you work to keep Alberta strong and free.

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- News: [Throne speech promises blueprint for jobs](#) (February 25, 2020)
- Video: [Watch the throne speech](#)