



2007 Speech from the Throne
for an Alberta Liberal 'Team Taft' Government

*Delivered by
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Alberta*Liberal*

Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn't do than by the ones you did do.

So said Mark Twain.

Twenty years.

A lot can happen in twenty years.

That's the cliché: *Where will you be in 20 years?*

Everybody wants to know.

But it's *hard* to look 20 years into the future.

I don't have a crystal ball; no one does.

It's human nature to imagine a future where everything is pretty much the same. We may allow for a few small changes - *in twenty years I'll look at least... ten years older* - but that's about it.

We lose track of time. Scrambling to live in the *now*, we miss how much has changed.

But if we don't register where we are *today*... imagine thinking *back* 20 years.

Imagine "all the way back" to 1987.

Things we thought would last *forever* back then... have disappeared today.

Things we now take for granted as *always part of our lives*... many didn't even exist in '87.

Just 20 years ago, there was *no* internet, no World Wide Web. Personal Computers were still pretty exotic... and pretty slow.

We listened to records or cassettes; there were certainly no DVDs.

We shopped at Eaton's and Woodward's and knew we would forever.

There were no WalMarts in Canada, and Starbucks was not much more than one little coffee bean store in Seattle.

The Berlin Wall loomed over Western Europe; the Iron Curtain hung heavy.

The notion of China and India as world industrial powers was absurd.
And the last Boom in Alberta... (?) had gone... bust.

Twenty years ago, you could buy a repossessed house for a buck, and you couldn't *give* away office space in Calgary.

So, as we try to plan for a world twenty years from *today*... what do we see?

Well, nobody knows... *for sure*.

But there are experts.

And there are predictions.

And we'd better listen pretty hard.

Because in 1987 you could *read* about Digital Video coming... *someday*.

Hear rumblings about problems with Eaton's.

See reports about potential growth in China.

Not every prediction is right on the money.

But by the time the world reaches *consensus*... from a planning perspective, it's often a little too late.

The world abounds with hundreds, thousands of examples.

How well did Kodak and Fuji plan for digital cameras?

Did you know that in 1950 there were over 50 coal mines in the Red Deer Valley between Drumheller and today's site of Dinosaur Park?

By 1960 there were fewer than 20.

By 1970 there was... one. Much of the coal was still there, but the market had changed: The railways switched to diesel, and homes switched to natural gas.

Remember the words of Charles Darwin:

It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change.

As Leader of the Alberta Liberals, I have often said publicly that in the medium to long-term - the next 15-20 years and beyond - the issue that will overtake all others will be *climate change*.

We're not jumping on the bandwagon; like scientists, we've been on the record on climate change for years. And holdout by holdout, the ranks of the climate-change deniers have grown smaller and smaller, day by day.

Scientists got there first... but we expect scientists to be on the cutting edge.

Many people - and many people in *Alberta* - felt that until consensus is wider spread, that the message can and should be doubted.

And then just a couple of weeks ago...

After the *worldwide* science community said the time for discussion was over...

After Prime Minister Stephen Harper said it's no longer in doubt...

And years after the Alberta Liberals had demanded action to deal with the problem...

Came the words of Jeff Rubin, Chief Economist for CIBC World Markets.

Just weeks ago, Jeff Rubin, an *economist* whose job it is to recognize world economic trends *before* they take hold... had this to say, and I quote:

"Governments are waging a war on carbon"

Not "will be". "Are". And he didn't mean the government in Ottawa or the government in Edmonton. He meant governments around the world; in Washington and Tokyo, in London and Berlin, in Stockholm and Seoul.

We must wake up to the fact that Albertans are in a race against time to secure this province's future.

Because our financial security, the treasure that sets this province apart, is *hydrocarbons*.

Our economy is booming and we have unparalleled opportunity because we sit on one of the biggest, most accessible, secure and productive deposits of carbon in the world.

The threat?

Carbon, when it is used as a fuel - with today's technologies - releases carbon dioxide, the leading contributor to climate change.

Addressing climate change has become a national mission for a rapidly increasing number of countries, and a corporate mission for a growing list of businesses. As a result, billions of dollars a year are being spent across Europe, Japan, the United States, and elsewhere... to find alternatives to carbon-based fuels.

Sooner or later those efforts will succeed. They're already succeeding.

But is there another threat to Alberta? Of course.

Alberta isn't *immune* to the effects of climate change. Far from it. In fact, Alberta faces a double jeopardy, as both the financial value of our energy resources... and the health of our land and water... are threatened.

When the Alberta Liberals ask hard questions in the Legislature about water planning, about the pine beetle, about climate change, we're refused honest and constructive answers.

But our glaciers *are* receding faster than ever recorded - the glaciers that feed our rivers, that help give us the water we drink.

The sky isn't falling, but the wind... now carries the mountain pine beetle. Our freezing winters used to make Alberta immune; now our forests are infested.

The world hasn't arrived at a carbon neutral economy yet. But eventually it will.

And when it does, where will Alberta be?

Will we be like Kodak... or Fuji, left on the sidelines? Or the coalmines of Drumheller?

Or is Alberta ready to adapt? Are Albertans ready to stare the future in its face and make it blink?

We *can* be ready... under a *different kind of government*; an Alberta Liberal government.

Unlike the current government, which is locked in the past, looking for excuses

NOT to adapt, frightened of change, an Alberta Liberal government accepts the science... and embraces the need for change, and the opportunities that come with it.

An Alberta Liberal government understands this is going to take the efforts of us all.

We understand: we cannot meet this challenge by pitting one sector against another... by speaking only of the costs and the problems and the reasons *not* to get on with the job.

If Alberta is to win this race, it is going to take the concerted effort...

Of individuals, and corporations, and labour, and government.

Of oil and gas companies, electric companies, farmers, universities and homeowners.

The time of divide-and-conquer is over; we have to work *together*.

How long do we have?

How long will it be before the world's war on carbon is won?

No one knows, but the prudent answer is: *twenty years*. And if twenty years seems far in the distance, remember; the starting line is right here, right now.

Twenty years to secure our fiscal future.

Twenty years to insure that we are not casualties of the world's war on carbon.

And... that we are not casualties of climate change itself. But we must start *now*.

To a politician, 20 years is a long time. But to the rest of us... it's on the horizon. And to those of us with kids, it feels like tomorrow.

Alberta needs direction... that unites people across all sectors of society, with a singular purpose; to a destination that unites issues into a singular agenda, so that actions can build, strength upon strength.

We have the time frame, and the reason for the journey.

We need a map... and the leadership to get us there.

Under an Alberta Liberal government, our destination will be clear and unwavering: to be a world leader in addressing climate change, in real and absolute terms.

Today, Canada is last among developed nations in addressing climate change, and Alberta is last among provinces. In twenty years we must be first, and a *leader*; not just in Canada, but in the world.

Let me speak for a moment directly to Alberta's petroleum sector, which understandably watches these debates with great anxiety. And I don't just mean the executive in downtown Calgary; I also mean the young woman on the survey crew near Medicine Hat... and the aboriginal entrepreneur hiring workers from his band in Ft. McKay.

Alberta's petroleum sector is nothing less than an astonishing success story. We're global, we're competitive, we're comprehensive, and we're fully integrated. Because of Alberta, Canada is to the world's petroleum industry what Germany is to the world's automobile industry. We are that important, that successful, that big.

From the shop in Edmonton where Jeanette's and my youngest son cuts steel for equipment made in Alberta and shipped around the world; to the executives who lead projects off the coasts of Asia and Africa; to the financiers who put the capital together, our industry is a global leader... headquartered, led, driven, engineered, staffed, designed, and constructed right here in Alberta.

For productivity, for expertise, for *leadership*, the world's petroleum industry turns to Alberta. There is no other sector in Canada - none - that has the same global product reach, the technological edge, the complete integration from research and development to product delivery... and every single step in between.

The fundamental end-product is Carbon. *But our real export is know-how.*

So... to the petroleum industry I say, work with us. We will seize this opportunity to collaborate. The carbon assets that you rely on are the carbon assets that make the people of Alberta prosperous. Let's harness the ingenuity, the creativity, the leadership that brought us to this point... to get us to the next; to drive us to the world-wide goal of a carbon neutral economy with all the energy we can muster. With the astonishing skills and expertise this province possesses, we will succeed. We must: we have no choice.

Industry leaders have told me they are ready, willing, and able. It is the current government that is holding things back.

The University of Calgary recently reported that oil and gas accounts for 50% of Alberta's economy. Fifty percent! *Half* the jobs, *half* of government revenue, *half* our personal wealth... from the petroleum sector.

So... taking a hands-off approach to a "world at war with carbon" ... is not an option. Too much is at stake. We have to work together; we have to respond to change: petroleum producers, labour unions, universities and interest groups.

Because the threat doesn't come from action; it comes from *in*action.

And because we are, all of us, everyone of us... Albertans, and in this together.

Now, ladies and gentlemen, this is our alternate speech from the throne, so here are some specifics:

Let me deal with the most tortured and unpleasant subject first: relations between Alberta and Ottawa. Folks, it is time to get past the sabre rattling. Of course Alberta's natural resources belong to the people of Alberta, and any threat to that will be intensely fought by an Alberta Liberal government, no matter which federal party is in power.

That's why we need *leadership* here *now*.

Because... the climate change issue is being driven not by Ottawa, but by Europe and Japan, by Washington and California. It is not Ottawa that will leave Alberta behind; it is the world.

The world will leave us behind... will leave Alberta and Canada behind... if we do not adapt, face the threat together, and *together* meet the challenges and embrace the opportunities. Let us break bread, as citizens of one great country.

With an ever-tightening twenty-year deadline to address climate change... there is no time to waste.

An Alberta Liberal government will move immediately on several fronts:

First, we'll aggressively implement a strategy to capture carbon dioxide emissions from major sources and sequester them deep underground. It's now technically feasible, and a financial framework will be worked out with

industry. *Five years*, and we will be up and running. Five years, and we can begin making an absolute reduction in CO2 emissions.

Second, we'll implement an aggressive greening of the electricity sector: within *ten* years, enough power will be generated from wind and other zero emissions sources... to power the equivalent of every home and farm in the province.

Third, an Alberta Liberal government will transform the natural gas rebate program to a self-sustaining home retrofit program. This will help Albertans pay for that new energy efficient furnace or energy efficient windows. Albertans will win with lower energy costs, and we all win by decreasing emissions. Why subsidize waste when we can reduce the use?

Fourth, we'll immediately establish a Premier's Strategic Council on Carbon Emissions and Climate Change with representatives from *all* sectors, to engineer Alberta's drive to become a world leader in reducing carbon emissions.

And fifth, we'll develop a long-term province-wide transportation strategy with a focus on public transit and rail, including a route for high-speed rail connecting Edmonton, Red Deer and Calgary. It's time our airports, light-rail transit, railways and roads worked together. Efficiency saves energy. The rest of the world is heading there—why not Alberta?

These are the first steps to a sustainable environment under an Alberta Liberal government.

But there is more to sustainability.

An Alberta Liberal government will also secure a sustainable *financial* future.

Our province has been flourishing, with the government running huge surpluses funded by non-renewable resource revenue. But the key word is *Non-renewable*. The current government has no strategy and no plan for managing those surpluses; it's a fiscal policy of stumble and drift.

In the last 25 years the current government has spent over 93% of all the petroleum royalties it has received. Not invested; *spent*. That's on top of taxes, folks. And it is not sustainable.

An Alberta Liberal government would be committed to converting Alberta's non-renewable wealth into a *permanent* source of prosperity.

So when the legislature is finally back in session, the Alberta Liberal caucus will introduce our flagship bill, the *Funding Alberta's Future Act*, under my personal sponsorship as Leader.

Based on extensive research, and reflecting policy we released last fall to widespread acclaim, our bill will direct the government to set aside thirty percent of all non-renewable resource revenues each year. The largest portion will go to the Heritage Trust Fund.

In twenty years the Alberta government would earn more from the Heritage Fund than from energy royalties. And if the Conservatives vote it down... remember that. Remember who voted against your future, and your children's future. And remember who was on your side.

Because with that bill, for the first time in its history... the Alberta government could have *sustainable* finances.

No more roller coaster rides. No more boom and bust.

Just... quality public services, and permanently competitive taxes.

This same Act would secure the future of our most valuable resource: our people. How? *Education*.

This legislation will propose unprecedented endowment funds for post-secondary institutions... to pave the way for Alberta's post-secondary institutions to take their place among the best on the planet.

Arts and Culture? A real endowment to guarantee that our artists stay here where they belong, with an immediate doubling of funding for the Alberta Foundation for the Arts.

And we're not done there...

As part of the same plan for financial sustainability, the Alberta Liberal caucus would address the province's infrastructure debt head-on.

Highway 63 to Ft. McMurray, schools in Edmonton, hospitals in Calgary & Grande Prairie. We've done the math and the finances are there; the political will... well, if it's not there yet, with your help, perhaps it will be, and very very soon.

And because it is so important to address the here and now, to touch people in their lives TODAY, the Alberta Liberal caucus will bring in a series of bills to improve everyday life for Albertans, *immediately*.

Because regional municipal planning and development are in such disarray, our shadow minister for Municipal Affairs and Housing, Dave Taylor, will introduce our Sustainable Communities Act.

Because we need to insure an ongoing supply of water, this spring, our Shadow Minister for the Environment, David Swann, will introduce legislation to strengthen management of Alberta's water resources.

Because Albertans are tired of being held hostage to groups like utility marketers, and need help with things like landlord and tenant conflicts, Mo Elsalhy, our Shadow Minister for Justice and the Solicitor-General, will introduce the Consumer Advocate Act, to bring in real help.

Because so many Alberta families are caught in a province ranked near the bottom for child care, Weslyn Mather, our shadow minister for Children's Services, will introduce the Child Care Accountability and Accessibility Act, to establish targets for the creation of new child care spaces.

Because parents in Alberta are sick of soaring school fees for everything from books to computers, Jack Flaherty, our Shadow Minister for Education, will introduce the Restriction on School Fees and Fundraising Act, ensuring that *public* education is properly funded from *public* sources.

Because the gaming industry in Alberta is multiplying into so many corners of our lives, Maurice Tougas will sponsor a bill to establish an all-party committee to review every aspect of gaming in Alberta, from the role of volunteers to social problems to best management practices.

Because the citizens of any democracy have a right to know what their government is doing, Bharat Agnihotri will sponsor a bill to reverse the Conservative's shocking laws that hide the results of internal audits for fifteen years after completion. What are the Conservative's so afraid of?

And because the best way to sustain our health care system is to protect the health of Albertans, Laurie Blakeman, our shadow minister for Health and Wellness, will introduce a bill requiring health impact assessments of major government initiatives, much as we already do environmental and social impact assessments.

These, ladies and gentlemen, are the legislative highlights for the Alberta Liberal caucus.

It is ambitious, because Alberta is an ambitious province. It reaches for the stars, because Albertans reach for the stars. It lays the foundation for a sustainable, prosperous, and compassionate province, because Albertans are

demanding a sustainable, prosperous and compassionate future.

We have been cautioned by the current government to expect a “light legislative agenda” from them this spring. They don’t have many ideas, and don’t have much energy to enact them. They certainly don’t have a focus.

And I expect most of *our* bills will be voted down by our Conservative opposition, who hold a majority of seats.

And if our bills *are* voted down... please: remember *who* voted and *how* they voted. This is *your* province; not theirs.

And when it’s time to choose the *next* government of Alberta, let your memory serve.

Because the way things are now... is *not* good enough. Not good enough for Alberta, and not good enough for the Alberta Liberals.

The days of the rudderless, autopilot, Tax & Spend, drift and stumble Conservatives have to be over.

Must be.

And for those Albertans who will say the Alberta Liberals’ Team Taft, is TOO ambitious, I say to them; coasting on our natural wealth might have been fine at one time, but in today’s world it is not. If we are to choose between the status quo and the way things could be, I choose ambition.

The future of our province is in your hands. Like the financial planner answering the question, “*Can I afford to invest?*” with “*Can you afford NOT to?*”

Can we afford to plan 20 years out? Can we afford NOT to?

Did Ireland go from a thousand years as the poor cousin of Europe, to the wealthiest per capita nation on Earth, by coasting? Has Singapore risen from colonial backwater to global centre by shying away from challenges?

Has South Korea gone from an economy on par with Afghanistan in 1960, to one of the world’s industrial giants today, without a clear sense of direction? Has Dubai gone from a dusty desert fiefdom to the hottest financial and tourist centre in Asia by waiting for others to take the lead?

Did Alberta get where it is today by resting on its laurels?

If we do not move forward, we will be left in the dust.

Jeanette and I were recently stuck in the San Francisco airport for a nine-hour layover. So we got off the plane... and in minutes we were on rapid rail transit to downtown. 30 minutes and 3 bucks later, we stepped off in Union Square in the heart of San Francisco.

In that 30 minute trip, I studied a tourist map of the Bay area.

There were two of the world's major universities, Berkeley and Stanford.

There was Silicon Valley.

North were Sonoma and Napa Valley.

East, the Oakland Coliseum.

Three major airports. And all interconnected.

The downtown, the parks, the bridges, the public transit.

These folks had taken all the pieces of a great city, a great region... and put them all together. No crystal balls; just some determined far-sightedness... had transformed all the separate bits into one of the greatest North American planning triumphs. It's not *perfect*; it *is* impressive.

Alberta has many of the same pieces, but.... We have *yet* to put them together.

We have the *makings* of some of the world's great educational institutions in the U of A, U of C, NAIT, SAIT and others, but we're not there yet. We don't have Napa and Sonoma, but we do have Jasper and Banff. We don't have Silicon Valley... but remember; little more than a generation ago... *neither did they*.

And if the world is changing, and we're prepared to adapt, maybe we can be home to some future Silicon Valley equivalent. I'm not talking just about transportation; I'm talking about creativity and foresight in *every* facet of inspired planning.

If we don't figure out where the world is headed, in 20 years we can forget about San Francisco; we're going to be more like Detroit.

Remember: the world we're building today...?

In 20 years, we hand it fully over to our kids.

And what will that world look like?

What will *Alberta* look like?

What will be the legacy we leave our children?

Our kids. Mine. Yours. Is right now... really the best we can do? Really?

We have to find a way to sustain our way of life... and to do that, we have to dream, we have to plan, we have to act, and we have to manage. We have to be wise... and we have to pay ourselves first. We have to be innovative, and determined.

As I was working on what I would say to you today, our office received 20 letters - unsolicited letters - from the Grade 5 class at Keheewin School in Edmonton. Each student wrote of their own concerns about climate change and global warming.

One wrote *"even though I'm just a kid please take my letter seriously."* Another wrote *"What can I do about this? Well, not much, but if we band together, we can do a lot more than you or me, or anyone else ever imagined."* I was struck by the emotion and conviction these kids conveyed, and also by the truth of a very simple message: together we can do amazing things...together we can make a difference. And we *can* make a difference, just like Kyla, Conor, Devon and their entire class are telling us.

They are why we have to act, and act immediately, and act decisively. Our children are asking us to save their future so that they can enjoy our beautiful lands, and drink clean water, and breathe fresh air when they grow up. What better reason could we have?

The Alberta Liberals believe this is our mission, our most important mission, and we have the vision and the will to make it happen. To bring a new kind of government to this province.

So, to the Grade 5 class at Keheewin School, and to all Alberta, we say to you... message received, loud and clear.

Thank you very much.

END OF SPEECH

