

# **Alberta Association of Architects Annual General Meeting**

**Banff, AB**

**Friday, April 16, 2010**

***Check against delivery***

Good afternoon.

Thank you for inviting me today.

I am pleased to bring greetings on behalf of Premier Ed Stelmach and the Government of Alberta.

Our buildings define us as a province.

I have always been fascinated and amazed with architecture and engineering.

As Minister, I have attended the openings of several schools.

I've toured the Edmonton Remand Centre that's under construction, and the new Calgary Courts Centre.

The work I have seen has given me an incredible appreciation for the structures that cluster and dot our vast Alberta landscape.

While I admire the structures themselves, I also recognize and appreciate the value of the purpose they serve, and the needs they meet and fulfill.

As a former Minister of Infrastructure, our Premier, Ed Stelmach, is also highly aware of the importance of what you do.

In fact, one of four points of our Premier's vision for our province is to build the most advanced infrastructure in North America.

Thanks to your knowledge and talent we will make this vision a reality.

Architects in Alberta have played a key role in creating this province's infrastructure.

You are the reason we can even aspire to this goal.

You bring our buildings to life.

Our Premier's vision depends on you.

We are partners in building this province.

And a partnership is something that you work on.

We know you are committed to excellence in your designs....

And we commit to working with you.

We want to build health facilities that support our health system.

We want to build schools that inspire students and teachers.

And we want to build cultural facilities that show us the diversity, talent and strength of Albertans.

Sir Winston Churchill once said:

"We Shape our Buildings; Thereafter, they Shape us."

It is up to you to determine our built environment.

And we depend on you to make our Premier's vision a reality.

Let me say it again - our Premier's vision is to have the most advanced infrastructure in North America.

This means infrastructure that is innovative, infrastructure that is sustainable and infrastructure that is progressive.

It means our infrastructure will support the needs of Albertans and the growth of our economy.

What does this vision mean to government?

First of all, it means we need to continue to strategically invest in infrastructure.

I have always said that Alberta is the best place in the world to live, and I continue to proudly stand by that statement.

Through careful planning, Alberta is in the best financial position of all the provinces.

When the recession hit, jurisdictions throughout Canada recognized that improving and creating new infrastructure was the best way to keep the economy going.

Because of our Premier's foresight, Alberta already had a long-term, 20-year strategic capital plan.

This plan has kept us focused on projects on the go – and ready to go.

And unlike other jurisdictions, Alberta was and is in a position to continue investment in our infrastructure.

Due to careful planning, we saved \$17 billion in our Sustainability Fund.

And I want to point out that – our Sustainability Fund and our Heritage Fund are completely separate.

Our Heritage Fund helps us save for the future.

And while we are certainly looking to the future, our Sustainability Fund is providing us with cash reserves we can use now.

We are using those cash reserves strategically, so that Alberta is rising out of this recession stronger and faster than any other jurisdiction in North America.

Our 3-Year Capital Plan supports more than 20 billion dollars in projects, including more than 7 billion dollars this year alone.

While we do need to be careful with our dollars, and we are, investing in our infrastructure during a downturn is a smart long-term strategy.

Not only is our investment building and maintaining facilities that meet the needs of our growing population by providing children with safe learning environments, giving families access to needed services like health care, and supporting our seniors through high quality continuing care...

We are also keeping Albertans working.

While the Premier is committed to keeping our capital plan on track to ensure continued investment in public infrastructure.

The look, feel and functionality of the schools and the hospitals and the museums that define us and inspire us.... is up to you.

Building the most advanced infrastructure in North America also means a commitment to the environment.

And, thanks to the work you do, Alberta leads by example.

You are designing top-quality, energy efficient buildings.

In fact, Alberta is becoming a national leader in the number of projects that are achieving LEED Silver certification.

And we often reach LEED Gold.

With your help, we want to continue to be at the international forefront of sustainable building.

By building responsibly today, we will preserve our environment for tomorrow.

We owe this to our future generations.

Having the most advanced infrastructure in North America also means having accessible buildings.

People of all different abilities need to be able to use, and enjoy, our public infrastructure.

We count on you to help us design our public buildings to be used by ALL Albertans.

This may be our goal... but it is your vision and expertise that will help remove the physical barriers to services that could otherwise exist.

To build the most advanced infrastructure in North America, government also needs to ensure that we are aligned with you.

Even though I believe we already have the most competitive jurisdiction in Canada....we are always looking for new ways to retain our competitive edge.

But let me say to you...we are only as good as the information we get from you.

You need to tell us how we can better meet your needs.

We depend on this feedback to ensure we have the right tools and processes in place to help us work together.

As a government, we know we must evolve our processes to keep up with you.... and support you.

This means using the technologies you are using so that we can better collaborate with you.

For example, my staff and groups such as yourselves tell me about the need to use Building Information Modeling and Integrated Design Process.

These tools foster project alliance and collaboration between us.

We know the importance of using the same tools you do.

We will continue to learn how to use these, *and other* tools so that we can work better with you and so that we can advance in the same direction.... together.

Alberta is a place of great beauty and diversity.

Our infrastructure should communicate our pride and the strengths and values that we share.

We have found that many countries that pride themselves on their buildings... also have governments that set the context for excellence in design.

While we could look around the world for best practices in design excellence, I believe what we are looking for is here.

Alberta is a place of innovation, excellence, creativity, strength, and beauty.

However, this is also a place of practicality.

When Albertans build, we build well, and we build to last.

You know what works for Alberta.

For Albertans.

We want to look to you to set out a vision for design excellence.

This is important to do because it will formalize our commitment to Albertans... to build well, to build to last and to build to inspire.

In this room – there is a huge body of knowledge, expertise and experience.

I have asked my department to work with your association and other key stakeholders to create a vision statement for design excellence.

Please know, that we are only as good as the information we get from you.

It is important that we have this discussion... this collaboration.... about design excellence.

It is an investment in the future of Alberta.

It will help Albertans understand your work... and how it benefits them each and every day.

And it will help us achieve the premier's vision for the most advanced infrastructure in North America.

Your designs represent Albertans: their values, their strength.

You create the infrastructure that best supports our people, our economy and fosters future growth.

Your talents bring us acclaim, and give us pride.

As a government, we are committed to working with you to build the public infrastructure Albertans need.

By working together, I have no doubt that we can, and will, build the most advanced infrastructure in North America.

Our Premier's vision is in your capable hands.

Thank you.