

Inauguration of the Carillon

Edmonton, AB

Tuesday, February 22, 2011

Check against delivery

Thank you and welcome, Premier, Speaker, Leader of the Opposition, and other leaders.

I am truly excited to be here on this significant day.

Like the bookmark you received, this day marks an important moment in time.

As another chapter unfolds, today marks the first day of spring session.

Today, after many years of silence, the carillon will once again ring through these halls and across the river valley.

It marks the first of many projects that will take place in preparation for the Alberta Legislature Building's 100th anniversary in 2012.

Let me take you back to when our story began.

It was a time of great optimism and hope for the people of Alberta as they pioneered the building of this province.

In the very first session of the Alberta Legislature, held in the McKay Avenue School, two groundbreaking decisions were made.

The first was to choose the location for Alberta's Legislature building on a site near old Fort Edmonton.

The second was to create an Act that would establish the University of Alberta.

The foundations were laid for Albertans to both learn from the pages of history and to chart the course for our future.

The opening chapter of our Legislature Building begins in 1912. Since then, many chapters have been written.

100 years ago, the original architects made a number of important decisions worthy of a building that would house the leaders of our province for generations to come.

Incorporated into the building is sandstone from Calgary, granite from Vancouver Island, marble from Quebec, and red mahogany from Belize.

The original plan for the dome was to use copper plating. An order wasn't placed in time so a decision had to be made quickly to use the available terracotta.

This makes our dome very unique to this country.

Recently, my staff and I were discussing the need to refurbish the dome.

That very day, a class of Grade 6 students from St. Albert were touring the building and I invited them to take part in the discussion.

I asked them if we should go back to the original plan of using copper plating.

I was surprised by their appreciation for the history and significance of the maintaining the original integrity of the building.

They were adamant in saying it would be unpatriotic to think about using another material.

These students helped frame the vision of this building for the next 100 years.

All Albertans are proud of this building.... and as we move towards its centennial, we will make sure it reflects that pride in the past and hopefulness into the future.

Many people may not know that there are flags in the rotunda to identify regiments of Alberta soldiers.

Over the next year, we will also create a dedication on these grounds so that all Albertans can honor the great sacrifice made by the men and women who have served our country.

Many people may also not know that there are palm trees in the dome of the Legislature donated by the State of California in 1932.

This year, we will re-open the Palm Room to Albertans so everyone can see how those seeds have grown with our province in this building, over the past 79 years.

For every good narrative, you need a strong setting. Our Legislature building is the setting of our story.

It is full of many fascinating characters.

If the walls could talk, many more stories could be told.

Speaking of story-tellers...

An institution in his own right, the current Speaker, the Honourable Ken Kowalski, has walked these halls for many years – first as an EA, then a DM, and since 1979, as an MLA.

Ken has helped make history in this building for over a third of its existence. In fact, I think he may have been a part of the original design team!

Today we find ourselves in the 99th year of this building's story.

And we will fill its pages with a number of special projects to prepare for its 100th.

These projects will both honor our past and prepare us for our future.

Our Premier said to me, when he first saw this building he was overcome by what a privilege it was to serve here.

It is a privilege because our ancestors helped build this province and the work we do here will help build it for our children and grandchildren.

This building and the people of Alberta represent the character of our province - a place of hope and opportunity.

And that is what I will think of whenever I hear the carillon play.

As I turn this next page, I can see that it is blank.

And I extend an invitation to you to help write the story.

None of us knows exactly what the future will bring.....what changes in technology, in society, in culture we will witness.

But I will say this: if our history is anything to go by, I can assure you it's going to be fascinating.

What a story it has been...and what a story it continues to be!

I am excited for the future of this building, the future of Alberta, and the future of Albertans.

Thank you.