



SPEECH

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BUDGET 2013 ADDRESS

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HONOURABLE
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Check Against Delivery

Thank you Mr. Speaker.

It is my privilege today to present the Government of Alberta's proposed budget for the fiscal year 2013-14.

This has been a highly anticipated budget, probably the most anticipated one in some time.

We are facing a number of sizeable challenges. Our current fiscal situation means we are tasked with making some necessary decisions and some tough but thoughtful choices.

The essence of **Budget 2013** is Responsible Change. Indeed, there is no question that today we have reached a turning point for Alberta.

I like to think of it as a "lookout point". It's the perfect place to look out into the distance and clearly see the opportunity on the horizon...while recognizing the dangers of being too close to the edge.

Budget 2013 is a watershed moment. It finds us embarking on a new era in Alberta; one that finds the balance between delivering for Albertans today...and looking down the road to ensure success for Albertans 20 years from now.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta has grown to be the great economy it is today – the economic engine of Canada – in part, because of the hard work undertaken 20 years ago.

Nearly two decades ago, in 1994, the government under Premier Klein delivered an aggressive budget that changed the direction of this province.

Like the government of today, that government was tasked with taking action in the face of growing concerns about deficits and debt.

It wasn't easy...and not every decision was popular with everyone.

But those decisions helped to eliminate the province's operating debt, transform the public service, and set a new direction for Alberta, one that continues to breed success for our province today, 20 years later.

We can go back 20 years prior to that, to 1973, to see how events of the day would shape Alberta for the next two, three and four decades.

It was 1973 when the world oil crisis sent energy prices skyrocketing—from \$3 a barrel to \$15 to \$40 by the end of the decade. This was the boom that put Alberta's oil sands on the map, and created untold wealth and unprecedented growth in the province.

Premier Peter Lougheed and his team, of which I'm proud to say my father, Doc Horner, was a member, knew that this would create tremendous opportunity amongst the challenges of growth.

The fortunes and the foresight of that generation's government are among the reasons Alberta continues to be home to all the tremendous infrastructure, financial assets and opportunity that we must preserve...today and into the future.

And so here we are ...40 years later...in an Alberta that was built on the measured and thoughtful decisions and the inspired vision of Progressive Conservative governments that came before us.

With Budget 2013, it's our turn.

And this government is carving out a new path that will lead us to where we need to be...20 years from now.

Mr. Speaker, is rooted in the realities of today while focusing on the road ahead.

This budget builds on Alberta's strengths, our strong economy and our ability to stand tall in the wake of turbulence.

It creates an action plan to address volatile non-renewable resource revenue and the tremendous impact these revenues have on the budget.

This budget is the building block for future budgets—and for the future of the province.

As you will hear today, Budget 2013 is sharply focused on three priorities:

- o Building Alberta...by investing in families and communities, including the new roads, schools and health facilities we need.
- o Living within our Means...by challenging every dollar government spends; and
- o Ensuring Our Resources Get to Market...that's food, technology and, especially today—oil and gas—so our resources—which belong to the people of Alberta—get the highest price possible.

We will accomplish these goals by continuing to deliver the Responsible Change Albertans expect—addressing today’s challenges while bringing security and prosperity for a new generation of Albertans in the decades ahead.

Alberta’s Story

But first, let’s begin with today. On March 7, 2013, what does Alberta look like? We certainly have our strengths—a fact we should all celebrate.

In terms of economic indicators, Alberta continues to be a key driver of the Canadian economy.

In 2012, our province led the country in both economic growth – more than doubling that of the rest of the country – and employment growth – consistently leading all other provinces in the number of jobs created over the year.

In 2013, our economy is expected to continue to expand, but at a more moderate and sustainable pace over the medium term.

Alberta continues to have one of the most competitive business tax environments in North America...and that’s enticing a growing number of businesses to come to our province to open up shop.

Our tax regime is inviting. Alberta offers low income tax rates.

We have no provincial capital taxes or taxes on financial institutions.

We have no payroll taxes, no sales tax...

...and a publicly-funded health care system that is the envy of everyone.

Our Premier has been clear, concise and consistent: there will be no new taxes, no tax increases, no sales tax.

Period.

Because there’s no question that Alberta has an economic environment that continues to attract investors, and continues to draw more people—we are expected to grow to more than five million people in less than 20 years.

Our province is a place where we can continue building our economy, and continue building Alberta by making it sustainable.

While our strengths make us attractive, it's our challenges that make us even stronger.

It's no secret. We have our challenges: immediate, serious challenges that Budget 2013 speaks to.

For example, for the past 10 years, on average, we have increased spending by 7.3 per cent...

...and this year...ZERO...because it was the responsible thing to do...in light of our fiscal situation.

We are faced with declining resource revenues—thanks, primarily, to lower energy prices; the discounted price Alberta producers get for oil in our only market—the United States; and our current inability to get our products across the ocean and to new markets.

After last year's budget, some of our critics said we should have seen the drop in oil prices coming. Some said the Alberta government's forecast was too high.

If that was the case, then everyone's forecast was too high, including the opposition party.

Last year's budget contains a full page of forecasts from private sector economists, industry experts and banks, who were forecasting – at the time – that West Texas Intermediate oil would average \$100 a barrel in 2012.

The federal Conservative government, our neighbours in Saskatchewan and our government used that benchmark as the basis for our budget forecasts.

So too did our Opposition parties.

Alberta's forecast was actually slightly lower, just to be safe.

The WTI average turned out to be \$94, closer to what we predicted. But even with our lower forecast, that difference in price alone cost our province.

Going forward, we intend to change the way we forecast.

As John F. Kennedy once said...

...“Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future.”

This summer, the government will hold an energy forecasting summit. We will bring together experts from around the world to explore and share best practices and fresh ideas on forecasting.

And despite the surprise of the lower prices, we did see the market access problem on the horizon, and we did know it would impact our revenues.

It was a dramatic hit...the Bitumen Bubble means more than a \$6 billion drop in resource revenue from the Budget 2012 forecast.

And we expect even larger declines in the coming years.

Bitumen belongs to the people of Alberta.

Right now, this resource is selling for 30 per cent less than the comparable world price.

That's costing us \$4 billion in lost revenues this year and it's impacting our health care, education and services we all hold so dear.

This is precisely why opening new markets – across Canada and around the world – has become job one for our government.

The Premier has led the charge, pushing for a Canadian energy strategy that would allow all Canadians to make the most of the many energy resources with which our country has been blessed.

Just two weeks ago, the Premier met with the National Governors Association in Washington, D.C. —her fourth trip to the U.S. capital—to build support for the Keystone XL pipeline and to share Alberta's track record as a leader in responsible energy development.

And the Premier took Alberta's case directly to the American people...because it's a track record every Albertan should be proud of.

It's a track record of success in environmental leadership that this government had led—a record, dare I say, others in this House should pay close attention to.

The Premier and our colleagues in government have also been continuing to develop relationships with leaders in Asia and other growing economies to pave the way for entry into these new and lucrative markets.

That's the kind of hands-on leadership that's required to build new markets and get the fairest price for our resources, and I'm proud of the Premier for leading the charge.

Opening up new international markets for our products is not a new concept to Alberta governments.

Four decades ago, Premier Lougheed's team had a vision of expanding their access to new international opportunities.

In fact, I can quote my dad, who in this very room in February 27, 1973 said:

"...there are tremendous markets around this world for all things that we can produce, if we are able to market them effectively. That means we have to know how things are marketed in these various countries."

Just like the government under Premier Lougheed, our government under this Premier is committed to success in expanding market access.

Mr. Speaker, the budget I am presenting to you today represents the steps this government is taking to address our immediate fiscal challenges.

Budget 2013 will deliver the responsible change that Albertans expect.

It will show how we are not only reining in spending...but that we are also spending smarter.

That means focusing tax dollars on core programs, and directing our spending to where there is the greatest need.

The decisions in Budget 2013 are also rooted in the long term.

Just as choices made 20 and 40 years ago helped create economic success and quality of life for Albertans today, our decisions today are made with foresight and optimism...and a determination to become the province we want and need to be 20 years from now.

In 2033, we need to be a place that can meet the needs of a much larger number of Albertans. Certainly, our province will reap the benefits that come with new people, including higher housing starts, more consumer spending, and more tax revenue.

But what these new Albertans won't be bringing with them are schools, roads or hospitals.

The Alberta we need to be...

...is one that will keep building our province by investing in families and communities, including the new roads, schools and the health facilities we need.

The Alberta we need to be...

...will be home to leaders in industry...industries that include among the most qualified workforces in the world.

The Alberta we need to be...

...will have a more diversified economy—one that relies less on non-renewable resource revenues and more on Alberta innovation.

Alberta innovation has, of course, been our strong point for more than a century.

Alberta continues to focus on its most important resource: its people.

That's why it's been so important for us to connect with that resource.

We've had many conversations with Albertans over the last year—during budget consultations, at the Dollars and Sense fiscal framework town halls, and at last month's Economic Summit.

The principles and values of the people of Alberta are the foundation for this document.

Albertans have told us they value health, education and infrastructure. They've told us they expect a budget that is responsible, balanced and facilitates economic growth.

Albertans are driving the responsible change that we are undergoing today –and tomorrow – as we become the province we need to be in the future.

Budget 2013

Budget 2013 marks a new direction for Alberta. The budget itself has a new structure, representing an important transition for this government.

I think the team of 1971—including my dad—would be proud of where Alberta is today... and our Premier's vision for the future.

And that's a future that includes tomorrow as well as 20 years from now.

Budget 2013 is guided by the *Fiscal Management Act*. This new act sets out clear fiscal rules and creates the requirement for an operational plan, a savings plan and a capital plan.

It will focus our finances on areas Albertans told us are important – like savings and priority services like health care and education – and ultimately reduce our reliance on non-renewable resource revenues.

It will ensure we live within our means and continue to be one of the most fiscally responsible jurisdictions in the world.

Budget 2013 represents a once-in-a-generation restructuring.

It brings a renewed fiscal framework that will help us to ensure success for Alberta now and meet the evolving needs of a growing Alberta in the long term.

Our plan includes:

- o An operational plan that protects core services but ensures we live within our means;
- o A savings plan that ensures we save in good and challenging times; and
- o A fully funded capital plan that will enable us to meet the needs of a province of five million people.

Savings plan

Mr. Speaker, our approach to Budget 2013 is not unlike how any responsible Albertan would approach their own household budget.

As a banker, I learned that valuable lesson: before you spend on anything, put some away to save first.

In Budget 2013, before we spend any of our revenue, we will first take money off the top to put into savings.

In fact, the new *Fiscal Management Act* legislates that we put money aside in good times and in bad.

Our forecast total revenue in 2013-14 is \$38.6 billion—that's a reduction from our original forecast of \$44 billion.

Before we do anything else with it, we are putting \$297 million into the Heritage Savings Trust Fund, our long-term savings account.

We are also keeping back \$238 million to pay the cost on our capital borrowing, part of our debt repayment plan.

Alberta's new savings policy will replenish the savings in the Contingency Account, which replaces the Sustainability Fund, and will also grow the province's longer term savings vehicles, including the Heritage Fund.

Under our plan, Alberta's savings will grow to over \$24 billion over the next three years.

Operational plan

As we grow our savings, we will continue to build the programs and services in the areas that Albertans have identified as priorities, including health, education, and supporting those Albertans who are most vulnerable.

Budget 2013's operating expense is forecast to be \$36.4 billion.

As I said, this is a zero per cent increase over the operating expense forecast for 2012-13.

In a time when population growth plus inflation is 4.3 per cent, we are significantly holding the line on spending and living within our means. There will be changes, but they will not be across-the-board reductions, where everyone gets a haircut.

Instead, we are embarking on important and necessary structural change in this government...with an eye to ensuring that Albertans continue to receive the outcomes they expect.

We will protect core services and provide for Albertans' priorities. This is at the heart of results-based budgeting, which I will speak more about in a moment.

First, I want to talk about what we're doing in specific program areas, beginning with Health.

Our government is increasing the ministry of Health's operational budget to \$17.1 billion, an increase of nearly \$500 million or three per cent. The increase reflects the priority that Albertans, and our government, place on building a strong and accessible health care system.

Alberta Health Services is receiving a three per cent increase in base operating funding for the delivery of health services across this province.

This is lower than the 4.5 per cent increase the health sector was expecting, but we believe AHS can provide better outcomes for better value by using its resources more effectively. AHS is also receiving \$393 million for operating costs of new health facilities.

Starting in 2014, all Albertans will have access to comprehensive drug and supplementary health benefit coverage. Currently 20 per cent of Albertans have no such coverage.

With the new Seniors Property Tax Deferral Program we are focusing our funding on the greatest need. This program will ensure that seniors will be able to keep more money in their pockets by deferring taxes until they sell their home.

This budget will also provide increased access to primary health care through Family Care Clinics and Primary Care Networks.

It will see Albertans paying less for generic drugs. And it includes early childhood development initiatives that will improve maternal and infant health.

The Premier has been clear that despite the difficult budget, we will continue to support our most vulnerable Albertans.

While the operational expense for Human Services does see a \$9-million reduction from the 2012-13 forecast, at nearly \$4.3 billion, we continue to focus on positive outcomes for vulnerable Albertans and maintain funding in priority areas.

Through responsible spending, funding will increase slightly for supports for persons with disabilities, child care, child intervention, family support for children with disabilities, homelessness and the Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped program.

Funding for the ten-year plan to end homelessness will also increase slightly, enabling it to provide outreach support services and help house about 1,800 homeless Albertans this year, as well as fund over 3,200 spaces in emergency/transitional shelters.

And as part of government's focus on early childhood development, we will provide \$89 million in 2013-14 for early intervention and fetal alcohol spectrum disorder initiatives.

We are changing how we do business.

Employment training and income supports will see a reduction...and caseloads for Alberta Works are expected to decline as Alberta's economy and job prospects continue to improve.

We are suspending indefinitely the Summer Temporary Employment Program, and we will work with our non-profits to address their unique needs.

We will be sharpening our focus on long-term career development and connecting Albertans with sustainable employment.

Budget 2013 will focus our education spending where it matters most—on the classroom, putting students first.

Education's budget, including capital, increases by \$204 million from the 2012-13 forecast. Despite the current economic challenges, we are maintaining base instruction funding for school boards at 2012 levels.

To do so, we had to make some tough, but responsible decisions. To this end, we are suspending funding to the Alberta Initiative for School Improvement.

To ensure we lessen the impact on those with the greatest need, we are increasing inclusion funding. This gives school boards the flexibility to support the unique needs of every learner. We are also increasing our support for the small class size initiative.

We are looking to spend smarter. We want to ensure we are focusing on core areas that support the vision of Inspiring Education.

Post-secondary education remains a key priority area for our province, and we will continue to support post-secondary students.

Alberta will continue to provide more money in scholarships to deserving students than all other provinces combined, with 38,000 students sharing in over \$71 million.

As well, Alberta's publicly funded post-secondary institutions will receive over \$2 billion in base operating grants in 2013-14. We maintain our position as one of the highest rates of per capita funding in Canada to post-secondary institutions.

But to truly lead in education and innovation we need to more closely align university research funding with the government's economic diversification agenda.

To help achieve this dynamic new direction, institutions will be given mandate letters defining their roles and government's expectation for a more unified post-secondary system. Alberta Innovates corporations will also receive mandate letters.

Alberta has an international reputation for producing world-class research in important fields like health, food safety, environment and energy. The Alberta government is committed to finding ways to deliver that research to market.

That's why we are continuing our work to more closely align publicly funded post-secondary education, research and innovation in our province.

We will strengthen the connection of Alberta's post-secondary institutions, called Campus Alberta, with our research and innovation body – Alberta Innovates.

We want post-secondary institutions, businesses and government to share resources, experts and ideas to solve complex problems while, at the same time, diversifying and strengthening Alberta's economy.

We are developing a new umbrella organization dedicated to unleashing more robust collaboration throughout Alberta's post-secondary education, research, innovation and technology commercialization system, as we diversify and evolve Alberta's economy.

Through this new Institute, the Alberta government can strategically focus its research agenda and financial resources in areas where they will have the greatest impact and benefit for Albertans. The areas include energy and the environment, health, agriculture and food, and water.

The creation of this institute will work toward achieving the Premier's vision of where we want to be years from now.

The Premier has continued to make it clear: we will not be balancing the budget on the backs of municipalities.

With the ministry of Municipal Affairs budget at \$1.4 billion, we remain clearly committed to municipalities. Our municipal investments are strategic and drive positive transformation. They are not based on the price of oil today, but with the next 20 years in mind.

By maintaining Municipal Sustainability Initiative funding at nearly \$900 million in 2013-14, we are demonstrating our commitment to municipalities and the continued importance of investing in local infrastructure for the long-term future of our province.

Today's fiscal situation is an opportunity for government to spend smarter as it supports Alberta's municipalities. And we'll be doing that in several ways.

Among them, we will be shifting money into grants that encourage municipal collaboration and we'll be making smart use of existing resources and consider P3 opportunities to invest in affordable housing.

Through Budget 2013, we will continue to work for safe and secure communities, and an innovative and accessible justice system.

Funding for police, prosecutors and judges is being maintained. We've increased funding for the provincial policing contract, which will mean more RCMP officers on the job in Alberta.

In 2013-14, we will also be adding two new judges.

And we will continue to support important programs for Albertans, including the Victims of Crime Fund and Legal Aid.

We are also working to ensure Albertans can continue to access justice services by making them more sustainable, effective and efficient.

This work will include streamlining how fines are paid, increasing the claim limit in small claims court, and integrating programs and services that help Albertans with court-related processes.

Energy continues to be a driver of Alberta's economy, and with Budget 2013, we will continue to ensure Alberta is a leader in responsible energy development.

For example, approvals for all oil, gas, oil sands and coal projects will be processed through a single energy regulator.

This “one-stop-shop” will enforce legislation related to our energy resources, such as land and water acts. If you break the rules, the Alberta Energy Regulator will have more tools to hold you accountable, including larger fines.

The province will also continue to honour its commitments to current bioenergy and carbon capture and storage projects.

We are committed to projects that have the right combination of technology, financing and overall benefit to Albertans.

These projects effectively reduce greenhouse gas emissions and encourage private sector investment.

Agriculture is Alberta’s largest renewable industry. It is a proud part of our heritage and it will play an even greater role in our province’s future.

Budget 2013 is changing the way we invest in agriculture. We are focusing dollars on programs and initiatives that will grow our industry, and ensure it’s sustainable and internationally competitive.

With the federal government scaling back income support programs for producers...and with the elimination of the Farm Fuel Distribution Allowance portion of the Alberta Farm Fuel Benefit Program, we can focus on research and innovation, on food safety, and on building the value-added side of our industry and opening new markets and new opportunities for our producers.

We will continue to invest in our rural communities ... and our farmers will continue to be fully exempt from provincial fuel taxes to ensure they remain competitive with producers in other prairie provinces.

The ability to do more with less is essential.

While the operating budget for Environment and Sustainable Resource Development is \$516 million, it is a decrease of \$22 million, but we are spending smarter with the funds we have.

For example, we’re allocating \$2.2 million to Asian market access for our forest products. Expanding market access for Alberta’s natural resources and products is one of this government’s top priorities.

We are saving \$2 million by creating the Integrated Resource Management Planning Division, which allocates staff from within the ministry to develop the Land-use Framework plan.

This move reduces the need for contractors and will result in increased efficiencies. And it won't impact the timing of the current projected land-use plan development.

As we address fiscal challenges, Budget 2013 provides us an opportunity to make government more effective by reshaping our organization.

Public sector compensation makes up roughly half of our spending every year.

And the fact is, Alberta has the highest paid physicians, post-secondary faculty and teachers in Canada. And only Saskatchewan pays more to the top earning registered nurses.

In light of this and our fiscal reality, Budget 2013 makes no provision for increased public sector compensation costs.

Our government has shown leadership on this issue. Last month, we introduced a three-year wage freeze for all government managers.

We're also planning to reduce the size of management by 10 per cent over the same three years - that's almost 500 positions. We want the right people, in the right positions, doing the right work.

We are also embarking on a review of Alberta's public sector pension plans to ensure the sustainability of these plans.

The pension boards are reviewing four major public sector plans—the Local Authorities Pension Plan, the Public Service Pension Plan, the Management Employees Pension Plan, and the Special Forces Pension Plan.

This review will ensure these plans remain part of a competitive compensation package for the public service, while protecting taxpayers' interests.

Reports will be provided to me by the end of this month.

Responsible change means making thoughtful decisions to ensure our organizational structures are effective, efficient and delivering the right outcomes.

This is at the heart of the results-based budgeting process. The process is already underway, and the review will look at some 800 government programs and services, including those provided by government agencies.

We are looking to ensure we are effective at delivering the outcomes that Albertans expect. And this work is accelerating. All reviews are now expected to be complete in May 2014 – one year earlier than the original timeline.

Capital plan

We are also looking at the outcomes that a much larger number of Albertans will be expecting over the next two decades.

Right now, our province is growing by almost 100,000 people each year. In about 17 years, Alberta's population is forecast to reach more than five million people—that's the equivalent of adding a city the size of Calgary to the province.

This tremendous growth will have a significant impact on our province, on our public infrastructure, and on the way we as a government work to meet the needs of this much larger population.

This is one of the main reasons Budget 2013 is changing Alberta's path forward. Given today's fiscal challenges, and given the challenges ahead as the province grows and changes, we can no longer proceed with "business as usual".

Of course, with every challenge comes an opportunity to do things better.

But we need to be prepared.

Albertans have told us they want infrastructure in place to meet their needs today and the needs of their growing communities tomorrow.

We know that investing in roads, schools and hospitals—both in good times and in challenging ones—is critical to our quality of life. We also know that there is both a financial and a social cost to deferring capital projects until we have cash on hand.

That's why Budget 2013 includes a fully funded Capital Plan; one that allows this government to continue building Alberta for future generations.

Over the last 15 years, Alberta has invested over \$72 billion in infrastructure.

Our capital plan spending will average \$5 billion per year over the next three years, including \$5.2 billion in 2013-14.

Financial experts, business leaders, academics and Albertans have told us we should borrow for capital when it makes good financial sense. And right now...it does make good financial sense.

And they also told us the importance of having a plan to pay back the debt.

Interest rates are at historic lows. And on top of that, Alberta's Triple A credit rating means we have access to the lowest possible borrowing costs.

Budget 2013's fully-funded capital plan will be supported by a responsible borrowing strategy to finance infrastructure projects.

It includes a plan for borrowing that sets limits on the debt, and a plan for paying down the debt.

And our priority is to protect Alberta's Triple A credit rating and grow our net asset position – a testament to our fiscal responsibility.

We must continue to make prudent choices, as we have done with a comprehensive review of approved capital projects. Some projects were cancelled, and others were deferred beyond 2016.

Last August, we announced that the Alberta Public Safety Law Enforcement Training Centre in Fort Macleod was cancelled.

It's also been determined that the TransAlta Project Pioneer and Swan Hills Synfuels carbon capture and storage projects are not economical at this time and the provincial funding for these projects is no longer included in the Capital Plan.

However, even though the 2013-16 Capital Plan is lower than in recent years, we're continuing to build Alberta...and the plan includes some significant additions.

For example, the capital plan includes \$503 million over the next three years, and more than \$2 billion over five years, for 50 new schools and 70 school modernizations, as our Premier committed to.

The capital plan has also allocated \$282 million over the next three years, and over \$650 million over five years, for new post-secondary facilities at the Northern Alberta Institute of

Technology, NorQuest College, the University of Calgary, Lethbridge College and Mount Royal University.

As well, \$60 million is being provided over the next three years as part of the premier's commitment to complete multi-disciplinary family care clinics.

Conclusion

Just like governments before us, this government is adjusting to current realities. We also recognize that some of the issues we are dealing with today are not the same as past governments have had to deal with 10, 20 and 40 years ago.

Mr. Speaker, Budget 2013 includes some tough decisions that won't be popular with all Albertans today, but they ensure we are focused on delivering the right outcomes for the people who need them most.

And this budget also ensures that Alberta continues to have the best financial situation in Canada. We will be in a net asset position of \$44 billion by 2016.

Budget 2013 is a blueprint for Responsible Change, enabling us to achieve this government's plan of:

- o Building Alberta;
- o Living within our Means; and
- o Ensuring Our Resources Get to Market.

This budget resets our compass and opens up new possibilities for charting exciting new paths...

...empowering us to become the province that we need to be.

It is both an honour and a privilege to present Budget 2013 to the Assembly today, and I look forward to supporting this budget.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.