

reflecting the increasing diversity within the constituency over the past several decades.

As a proud born-and-raised Calgarian and Albertan myself I am perhaps a hybrid of what makes our community, Alberta, and Canada great. While my mother was a third-generation Irish-Canadian of humble roots born in Parry Sound, Ontario, her sense of adventure and selflessness led her as an RN to Thailand to establish their first-ever public health program, representing the United Nations World Health Organization. There she met my father, a Polish-born Jew raised in Shanghai and a refugee from the communist regimes of Stalin and Mao, also in a faraway land, representing MGM movies in the most exotic of locales during the era of *The King and I*. And where did they choose to raise a family? Alberta. I am blessed that their choice back in 1957 has become part of my life story. Yes, my parents were two of those people from all around the world who shared a dream of a better life mentioned in the throne speech, and I and my family and, indeed, I believe, all of us here are part of that living legacy.

3:00

I have lived in war-torn Nigeria as an impressionable child, travelled extensively around the world during a two-decade-long career in the international airline business, and fed a lifelong appetite for wanderlust, but Alberta remains my haven, my safe place, and the best place in the world to make a living, to build a life, and to call home.

During my humble life I've been honoured with the privilege of serving the community in many ways. With deep involvement in Alberta's Asian communities since the early 1980s I've been blessed to have made many lifelong friends, and I'm humbled to be considered honorary Chinese by my peers in that community. Being part of bringing dragon boat racing to Alberta in 1992 was one of my proudest moments.

While I've been deeply involved in embracing cultural diversity through such organizations and events as the Chinatown Street Festival in Calgary, the Hong Kong-Canada Business Association, which is a national and provincial organization, Hong Kong days, and more recently GlobalFest, I've also had the privilege of deep engagement with community groups and the nonprofit sector, including the Kids Cancer Care Foundation, Trico Centre for Family Wellness, Trico Charitable Foundation, Habitat for Humanity, and many more, too numerous to mention. These opportunities have deeply influenced who I am and the values I uphold and defend every day.

I've also been blessed to have spent a decade in Alberta's housing sector. This has provided me with an opportunity to embrace the importance of affordable and appropriate housing for all Albertans. This key issue will be a personal priority for me in working with this Legislature, collaborating with the public, private, and nonprofit sectors to bring creativity and innovation to reduce barriers faced by many Albertans, both long-time residents and newcomers of all ages, in addressing housing affordability.

But why public service at this stage of my career in life? Not only is it time for me to give back but also for me to follow my passion for people, for our province, and to do all that I can do to ensure that Alberta and Canada can seize our rightful position on the national and global stage. From the distant memories of model parliament at Western Canada high school to studying political science and economics at the University of Calgary, some dreams never fade.

For me the core values and principles of the party and people I now serve and represent remain little changed from the vision I took away as a 13-year-old pounding in lawn signs for Peter Lougheed in 1971. To me Alberta is, rather simplistically, all about three

things: entrepreneurial spirit, for which Alberta is renowned as a national leader and where those with a predisposition for risk can bring forth great societal wealth; a prairie work ethic, a true tribute to our pioneers and province builders from all walks of life; and building an inclusive society but, truly, more than that: embracing and celebrating diversity in all its forms.

I'm a passionate proponent for and will remain a fierce defender of the Alberta advantage, recognizing that the legacy of what this means to Albertans varies from city to city, town to town, and hamlet to hamlet but that it does have a powerful and distinct meaning to every Albertan. Whether they were born and raised on the land or whether they came from across our country or from around the world, they have chosen our great province as a place to build a life and to live their dreams, with the benefits of the Alberta advantage as their beacon.

But let us be mindful that we are stewards of this legacy and that ego, dogmatic ideology, and blind ambition have no place in the formula for our future and for our future success as individuals, as a people, or as a province. One of the most admirable traits for any individual or community is indeed a simple characteristic: humility. We must work together collectively as passionate Albertans, but we must listen to and respect the views of others while defending their right to hold differing opinions. That is what our forefathers fought for and what we must respect and honour their sacrifice for. We must ensure our legacy is not one of irresponsible, unsustainable behaviour, sacrificing generations of wealth and resources for our own enrichment, while also ensuring that we do not leave a trail of debt and burden for future Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, ladies and gentlemen, hon. members, guests, and fellow Albertans, we have been entrusted with the power and ability to do great things, but with that power comes great responsibility. Let us honour that as we live, learn, prosper, and grow together as the 29th Legislative Assembly of this great province.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any questions and comments?

The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my absolute pleasure to stand today as the elected representative for the people of St. Albert. I'm equally proud to rise today and share some information about this wonderful community. The beautiful city of St. Albert is also known as the Botanical Arts City. It is the second largest city in the Edmonton capital region and shares its wonderful home with more than 63,000 proud citizens.

Many of you will know that St. Albert was originally settled as a Métis community and was founded in 1861 by Father Albert Lacombe. St. Albert boasts a large, thriving francophone community, which adds to the unique community feel. In fact, it may surprise you to know that roughly 10 per cent of St. Albertans can actually speak French today.

The people of St. Albert are proud of their community, and so they should be. In 2014 St. Albert was named the best place to live in Canada by *MoneySense* magazine, and just a few weeks ago St. Albert was named the best place in Canada to raise a family by that same magazine. Few in St. Albert were surprised by this recognition because they realize how fortunate they are to call St. Albert home.

St. Albert is home to the world-renowned International Children's Festival, that runs for five days each spring and entertains over 55,000 children of all ages. Albertans come from all over the region to enjoy this event and share in the welcoming community and arts. As well, the St. Albert outdoor farmer's market is the largest of its

kind in western Canada, with over 250 local vendors offering homegrown, homemade, and home-baked goods for thousands who shop there.

I can't talk about St. Albert without paying respect to the honourable and extraordinary Lois Hole. I know the entire community of St. Albert was bursting with pride when Lois Hole was named Alberta's 15th Lieutenant Governor in 1999. This successful businesswoman, writer, gifted gardener, and mother of two was a tireless advocate for public education, and she was a tireless community activist. She was the driving force behind the Lois Hole hospital for women, for which thousands of Alberta's women are grateful. Lois Hole once joked that schoolteachers should earn as much as NHL players. Not a bad idea.

She was an inclusive woman, kind, and always ready to lend a hand to anyone who asked and even some who didn't. This kind, practical, and loving woman, affectionately called "everyone's grandmother," was an amazing ambassador for the city of St. Albert. One of my favourite pieces of public art in St. Albert is a statue honouring her. It's a depiction of her kneeling down in front of a small child and both looking at each other lovingly. Knowing what I do of her, I think this statue and this piece of art is very appropriate. The Lois Hole hospital for women houses a banner that bears this now famous quote from its namesake: my hope is that when people come to this new hospital and see my name, they're going to have a little extra hope, that real, uplifting hope that things will turn out okay. She was a breathtaking woman.

As in all communities, the growth and joy that is experienced now is always preceded by opportunities to learn and grow. Five decades ago two residential schools for indigenous children operated in St. Albert. The two physical structures burned down long ago, but the scars remain. St. Albert can be proud of its commitment to forge and nurture relationships with the aboriginal community members by moving beyond just speaking about truth and reconciliation to living reconciliation.

As is the case throughout Alberta, unfortunately, St. Albert is also home to many women, men, and children who struggle daily due to poverty and its results. Poverty was once thought to be contained in the inner core of big cities but is now receiving wider recognition throughout the province.

3:10

Two weeks ago I was able to spend some time at the St. Albert food bank. I was astonished to hear from the staff and volunteers at the food bank that over 600 individuals and families regularly use the food bank to feed themselves and their families. Over the last 12 months food bank usage has steadily increased and shows no sign of slowing down. As you might expect, economic uncertainties and related job losses have contributed to increased food bank reliance. But that is not the biggest contributor to the increased reliance on the St. Albert food bank. Domestic violence is the single largest cause of reliance on the food bank, and I want to thank the Premier for her initiative in the creation of the women's issues ministry to help those already taxed agencies addressing these needs.

I, like so many, was thankful to hear our new government's commitment to addressing violence against women in the Speech from the Throne. The people of St. Albert clearly recognize the need for education, action, and prevention related to domestic violence. The SAIF Society, which stands for Stop Abuse in Families Society, is a community-based organization that has, since it began in 1989, offered support to individuals and families that experience domestic violence.

St. Albert is truly a beautiful city, both in appearance and in spirit. It's a fine example of what an inclusive city and government can

achieve. Inclusivity is not simply a word sprinkled in local policy but is a way of life there.

For the last 14 years I have worked as the executive director for the Lo-Se-Ca Foundation of St. Albert. This nonprofit organization supports people with disabilities so that they're able to live and work in their communities. During my 14 years there I was able to see first-hand how the community of St. Albert worked with local leaders and activists to promote inclusion. Local government and community leaders sought out assistance from residents with disabilities and advocacy groups in order to create inclusive employment policies and practices and accessible and affordable transportation and housing. What this community got right is that it is imperative to include people in decision-making when those decisions impact their lives.

In 2013 I was fortunate enough to participate in something that forever changed my life. I was part of a group of 19 that travelled to Tanzania. The group was made up of Lo-Se-Ca Foundation staff members, people with disabilities, and some of their family members. For over a year we fund raised and trained together so that we could climb Kilimanjaro in order to raise money for a small charitable group in rural Tanzania that worked with children with disabilities. Only two people who set out to climb the mighty Kilimanjaro had to turn back before reaching the summit. During this gruelling five-day trek I learned that it is the journey that matters most. I learned that anything is possible if you believe it is, and I learned that every person is capable of great things if they are supported, valued, and included.

We left our final camp for the summit just after midnight on the last day. At almost 20,000 feet the air is thin and quite cold. The exhaustion and smell after days of endless trekking is physically and mentally draining. Approximately eight hours after leaving camp, we arrived at the rim of the crater and knew that we only had about an hour of trekking left. At this point I had literally run out of energy and couldn't fathom taking one more step, let alone trek for another hour. At that precise moment a young man, who happens to have a developmental disability, took me by the arm and told me that we would walk the rest of way together. We did walk the rest of the way together, and we did reach the summit together, and I was the one that was most vulnerable that day.

Together all of us have much to do to restore power in decision-making and inclusion for the people of Alberta. I believe that over the last few years we've lost our way and focus by choosing not to really hear and consult with the people of Alberta, not just those who have big voices and powerful voices but all people. Community consultation is not simply a stand-alone exercise but the building of nurturing relationships. We can't create policy without listening, listening to the people whose lives are impacted by the policy.

Through my work and in my personal life I've witnessed the dangers of well-meaning policy created without real community consultation and impact assessment. Recently slight adjustments in budget line items to support people with developmental disabilities literally put thousands of men and women at risk. Current changes to housing safety standards for people with developmental disabilities have inadvertently put people with disabilities who want to live independently in their communities at risk of losing that very housing. The intent was good, and the result is not.

Similarly, the labels we assign to people can innocently chip away at their dignity. The language we use to describe people in our community is important. I am grateful that this new government, on both sides, has chosen not to refer to people with disabilities as our most vulnerable but as people first, people who need and deserve our support.

My brother, like so many others, struggled his entire life with an illness, a disability, schizophrenia. My brother had a great deal to offer his community when he had access to help and the support he needed. However, when necessary mental health care supports were not available, he fell through the cracks, like many people. Even the most loving and supportive families cannot rescue people from cracks that can become deep canyons. My brother was one of the many who believed that ending his life was his only solution. Every time I hear about another family losing a child or a loved one to suicide, I'm physically reminded of the acute pain of loss and the necessity to ensure that mental health supports are available to people whose very lives depend on them.

I'm honoured to sit in this Assembly, with the vast collection of life experiences and individual goals, which are as diverse as the very people we were elected to represent. Now more than ever it is vital that we find a way to work together to meet the collective needs of all Albertans. Hope is a powerful thing. Albertans are hopeful when they look at us assembled here. People are hopeful we will make decisions that will guide them into an inclusive future. People are hopeful that we will set aside party-first mentality and replace it with Alberta first.

Thank you for allowing me to share a little bit about St. Albert and myself.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Any questions or comments?

The chair recognizes the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed an honour to have the opportunity to address this Assembly in response to the Speech from the Throne as MLA for the people of Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills. Congratulations on your election as Speaker of the House. I understand it is a very challenging role, and I look forward to working together with you and the rest of this Assembly to make this, the 29th Alberta Legislative Assembly, an effective and fair government for all Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself and the many communities I represent and some of the main issues that I will be addressing over the next few years. I was born and raised in the Two Hills area; more specifically, Duvernay, Alberta. My parents are Billie and Joyce Hanson. My wife, Donna, and I now live on a farm that we purchased from my grandparents' estate in and around the hamlet of Owlseye. Both my wife and I have spent most of our lives living within my constituency. Donna, the daughter of Florence and Joseph Labant, was raised in the Cork Hall area west of St. Paul, and we will be celebrating 34 years of marriage this August.

We are a very multicultural family, with English, Swedish, Ukrainian, and Irish heritage. With the marriage of our son Dean to Sara Dargis in 2011 and the marriage of our daughter Nikita to Adrian Pomerleau this September, we will be adding French to our family of united nations. True Canadians, I think you would agree. Our son Dean is entering his last year of medicine at the U of A, and his wife, Sara, is a practising veterinarian. Our daughter Nikita is an RN at the U of A hospital and is marrying Adrian, a carpenter. I should be well taken care of in my old age.

My grandfather Lesley Tennant was the blacksmith in Owlseye for many years and was married to Elsa Bergman. My children are the fourth generation to live on the property at Owlseye, the fifth if you include that my great-grandfather Lancelot Tennant also resided there for a time.

3:20

Owlseye was once a thriving community with three grain elevators, two stores, and two gas stations and was a hub for local farmers to get together at the community hall for celebrations. Now, like many small communities in Alberta, after the loss of the railroad branch lines we were reduced to just a few families.

My great-grandfather Swan Hanson was a successful farmer in both the Glendon and Fort Saskatchewan areas and was a true pioneer. Records show him settling here prior to 1905, while Alberta was still considered Rupert's Land. I have very strong ties to this area and am very proud to be here representing the people and communities of the Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills constituency.

I represent a number of very interesting and unique communities. This is one of the larger constituencies in the province and has a very diverse economy, including agriculture, oil and gas, tourism, and innovative technologies. We are also home to four First Nations: Beaver Lake, Heart Lake, Saddle Lake, and Whitefish Lake. We cover two treaty areas, treaties 6 and 8. There are also two Métis settlements, Kikino and Buffalo Lake, within my constituency. These communities add an incredible historic richness to our cultural diversity. I was very proud to have received my very first eagle feather at a recent graduation at Portage College in a ceremony conducted by Elder McGillivray. It was a very moving experience.

Our communities share a very long history in the province of Alberta, a few of them from before we even became a province in 1905. The Lac La Biche Mission was established in 1853, making it one of the oldest established communities in Alberta. Lac La Biche is a very vibrant community with a proud history and a strong base in tourism and agriculture as well as being a major hub for the oil and gas industry of northeastern Alberta.

There are a few small neighbouring communities in that area as well: Plamondon, Venice, and Hylo. I recently visited Venice for their annual Venice days and discovered they were celebrating 101 years of Italians settling in that area. This event is held the first Sunday in June, and I would recommend the fresh pasta dinner to anyone.

The people of Lac La Biche are, obviously, also very patient. Here it goes: they have waited for 10 years to get a proper dialysis unit in the hospital and have been putting up with a broken-down bus in the parking lot as a stopgap for the past four years. That's news to everyone, I bet. In that same hospital they have been patiently waiting for AHS to replace the therapeutic bathtub, that quit four years ago. A new one has not been installed despite the community raising funds for it and purchasing it three years ago. It's been sitting in a crate ever since. You will be hearing a lot about these issues in the upcoming months and years if need be. I will not let up until they're fixed.

Down in the southwest quadrant of my extensive constituency we have many smaller communities, mostly settled by Ukrainian immigrants in the early 1900s. There are a string of them running along highway 45 and the railroad: Willingdon, Hairy Hill, Two Hills, Beauvallon, Musidora, Myrnam, and Derwent. These mostly farming communities still maintain strong ties to their proud Ukrainian heritage.

In recent years the town of Two Hills and the surrounding area have seen an influx of Mennonite families, who have served to revitalize this community. The increase in population also comes with increased infrastructure demands. The Mennonite community has been promised a new school for some years now, and indeed construction was started two years ago. However, the project is fraught with difficulties that have made me conclude that the project should be scrapped and renewed in a safe location. Construction is