

Graham Sucha, MLA, spoke on behalf of the Honourable Robert E. Wanner, MLA, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly at the Annual General Meeting of the Alberta Association of Former MLAs (October 25, 2016)

It is my pleasure to be here today to bring greetings on behalf of the Honourable Robert E. Wanner, 13th Speaker of Alberta's Legislative Assembly.

Welcome to the 2016 annual general meeting of the Alberta Association of Former MLAs. This year marks the 10th anniversary of the establishment of the Former Member Association in Alberta. Instituted in 2006, this Association was created to provide support for the parliamentary system of governance. While Members of Alberta's Legislative Assembly, each of you were dedicated to advocating on behalf of Albertans. Now as participants in the Alberta Association of Former MLAs you advocate for the democratic system, maintaining the values, ethics and camaraderie of our parliamentary institution. Thank you for your continued commitment to furthering parliamentary democracy in Alberta. It is admirable that you support the role of Members as parliamentarians.

As you all would remember, the Legislative Assembly Office is mandated with educating the public on the parliamentary system in Alberta. While Members, many of you would have been involved with the Legislative Assembly Office's education and outreach programs MLA for a Day and School at the Legislature.

I'm excited to share with you a new initiative called Mr. Speaker's Outreach. For many Albertans living outside of the capital region, experiencing the Legislature first-hand can be a challenge. Mr. Speaker's Outreach is a unique learning opportunity that brings the Legislature right to Alberta's youth in their hometowns. The program facilitates open and candid discussion and encourages active citizenship. The inaugural session was held in southeastern Alberta on October 11, and the Speaker hopes to bring the program to the northwest region early next year. Mr. Speaker's Outreach is the first program of its kind in Alberta.

As you know, every year thousands of students visit the Alberta Legislature, where they experience our legislative system at work. Following the public opening of the Edmonton Federal Building on July 1, 2015, the LAO expanded its visitor programming substantially, and the Legislature now boasts a Visitor Centre unlike any other across Canada.

The Legislative Assembly Visitor Centre highlights Alberta's vibrant parliamentary history and culture through interactive and engaging spaces. The centre features the Agora Interpretive Centre, the Pehonan Theatre, which offers a 4-D video experience; the Alberta Branded retail store and the Borealis Gallery, which is currently showing *Canada: Day 1*, an exhibit that explores the first steps, impressions and experiences of newcomers to Canada. *Canada: Day 1* is showing until December 4. If you haven't already, I would encourage you all to stop by the Visitor Centre.

I'd like to mention that the LAO has produced photo identification cards for members of the association's executive board. While not a security access card, the ID card will give you access to the visitor entrances of the Legislature Building and the Edmonton Federal Building during normal business hours, including sitting times for the Assembly and its committees.

In other business, at the September 26, 2016, meeting of the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services a motion was moved to direct LAO Human Resource Services to explore a supplemental retiree plan to provide options for coverage past 75 years and to expand out-of-country travel coverage that would operate at no additional cost to the LAO. More information on these items will be forthcoming.

In closing, I'd like to thank you, all, for volunteering your time. As I stand here before you, I am struck by the significant parliamentary knowledge and experience in this room. Together you possess significant parliamentary knowledge and experience, and I am grateful that you've chosen to remain active in promoting a knowledge of Alberta's parliamentary democracy to which you have all contributed.