

MAYOR IVESON
STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS
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Ambassador, ministers,
members-elect of the Legislative Assembly,
members of the consular corps,
fellow mayors, reeves and councillors,
Chief Morin, deputy ministers, fellow Edmontonians, friends ...

It's a privilege to once again have the opportunity to address you about the state of our city.

First off, let me say: wow, I had a lot of fun that day, making that video.

It will come as no surprise to many of you... this stuff is right in my wheelhouse.

In fact, it's why I ran for this job five and a half years ago. I've always had a passion for city building. Particularly when I look at my kids and think about their future.

I want them to grow up in an Edmonton that has a strong economy with lots of opportunity in lots of different industries.

And an Edmonton that, over the long term, is sustainable -- in all forms of that word. A place that's able to afford and keep providing important public services... and one where we have a healthy natural environment and superior quality of life.

That's what our new City Plan is all about. Thinking ahead about the kind of Edmonton we want to see take shape -- not just over a Mayor's term, but *over a generation*. And putting the plans in place that are necessary to get us there.

The kind of thing that, ideally, we should talk about during elections.

That's why, in retrospect, I think we made a very smart move with our "Ask About Edmonton" campaign during the recent provincial election.

Rather than trying to fight over the ambient noise in media channels and over the airwaves, our campaign put the conversation in the hands of voters. In the hands of Edmontonians.

We encouraged everyone: when candidates knock on your door, ask them about Edmonton. Ask them what they're going to do for our city. What are their party's plans?

I can say from personal experience... When you're a candidate running for office, it's a lot harder to avoid a tough question or tough conversation when you're face to face with a voter on their doorstep, asking for their support.

So, I want to thank Edmontonians who participated in our "Ask About Edmonton" campaign.

I hope you got some answers that satisfied you....Or, at the very least, that you managed to get some provincial candidates thinking about this city and its future.

Because it's not a place to be easily written off or ignored.

We've come a long way over the past number of years.

We've grown more confident about who we are as Edmontonians, and where we're headed.

Together we're building one of Canada's great cities.

One that's resilient no matter the price of oil or gas.

One where new ideas can take root and grow. Where entrepreneurs can eagerly carve out new spaces in the knowledge economy.

One where we're actively making moves to take advantage of a future that's *lower* in carbon and *higher* in technology.

And a city where we embrace diversity. With neighbourhoods that are lively and livable, where residents and businesses thrive.

A city that's ready to take on the future, because we've made some bold choices... and thought, planned and acted as a place that's home to more than a million people.

Together we have fixed our compass on building a twenty-first century city that is poised to help lead the way in Canada.

And we should be proud of how we've grown and what we've accomplished.

But while we have a lot to be proud about as Edmontonians, I also recognize there is cause for concern.

Anyone looking at the results of the provincial election can be forgiven for that eerie feeling of déjà-vu. Because we've seen this kind of electoral map before.

In the 1990s, except we were an island of red in a sea of blue. This time it's mostly an island of orange.

Over the last few weeks I've heard the fear that we're isolated. That we are under-represented at the provincial Cabinet table. Easily written off because we look like a "no man's land" that's solidly in Opposition territory.

And I understand those anxieties.

Because, let's face it: the last time this happened, Edmonton was gutted. While other parts of the province got attention, Edmonton bore the brunt of public service cuts.

Our local economy suffered because a lot of purchasing power got yanked out of it due to layoffs. We had lots of skilled people -- nurses, educators, even trades people -- leave the city and the province, as a result. We stagnated for a long time. And then we spent years catching up.

We came into the 2000s with a rather significant infrastructure deficit. We had roads and neighbourhoods in disrepair. Our transit system was going nowhere. We weren't building the things we needed to support economic growth.

Then when the boom came again and the government began to reinvest in health and education, lo and behold, we had skills shortages in the public and private sector. And because of this, it cost 40 or 50 percent more to build all the critical stuff we didn't build the first time.

So, I get why many Edmontonians are anxious about history repeating itself.

But a lot has changed in 25 years.

We aren't the same city we were back in the mid-90s.

We've grown, and we've matured.

We have welcomed thousands of people from across Canada and all over the world. They come for work and better opportunities. They're attracted by our great public schools and leading post-secondary institutions.

And our economy has changed too. We've learned about the importance of adding value to our products - from petrochemicals to food processing.

And at the same time, we're carving out leadership in the *new* economy. Especially in the areas of artificial intelligence and machine learning, and big data and analytics.

As an example, we recently welcomed a new investment from Improbable Games, a tech startup from the UK led by local entrepreneur Aaryn Flynn. Improbable is building a new studio office in our downtown that's expected to employ dozens of people working on technology that will fundamentally change how video games are made and enjoyed.

Home-grown companies are also rising up around our city's strength in AI and machine learning. Two years ago, Cory and Nicole Janssen formed AltaML, which helps companies leverage the power of AI and machine learning to improve their operations and solve problems. Basically, they sought to take the incredible potential

of machine learning and put it to work in real-world applications. In less than two years, AltaML has grown from two to 50 employees. And if you talk to the Janssens, they'll tell you they've barely scratched the surface in terms of the opportunities that are out there.

Our city's cluster of assets in health care and health research are also serving as a real strategic advantage in developing jobs of the future. On Friday, in fact, I'll be announcing a new partnership between our Health City initiative and a global health company. This announcement demonstrates how investing in health innovation in our city encourages private investment, promotes the attraction of talent, and leads to job creation and better wellness for our citizens.

All of this is to say: we're a far more resilient city now, compared to 25 years ago.

Edmontonians have demonstrated an adaptability that would put Darwin to shame.

Wherever it comes from, there's a hardiness to Edmontonians. We find a way to push forward and figure things out, despite the odds and despite whatever hand we're dealt.

You see this in the way our private sector firms do business, and in our nonprofit sector... People just roll up their sleeves and figure out how they're going to work together to solve a challenge. Even if that means working with people who are unexpected or unlikely partners.

We bring that same approach to City Hall.

During the past five and a half years as Mayor, I've dealt with the governments of two Prime Ministers and four - now five - different Premiers. From all across the political spectrum.

In fact, within my first few months of first being elected Mayor, I was off to Ottawa advocating for transit funding with members of Mr. Harper's Cabinet – including Mr. Kenney.

We went there clear in our purpose, but honestly not sure what to expect.... And we came home with a cheque for a new LRT expansion – the Southeast Valley Line.

This was despite the prevailing view that Alberta - and Edmonton in particular - wasn't exactly the place where you'd put your first infrastructure dollar when you're looking at the federal electoral map.

Yet we made our case. We demonstrated how our ambitions would help broader national objectives. We signalled a willingness to partner strategically. And we *found* a willing partner.

And we'll keep doing that.

Because our priority is making sure Edmonton has the necessary ingredients in place to thrive for generations to come. Having the necessary infrastructure and housing. Building climate resilience and regional prosperity, hand in hand.... So that those kids at Lynnwood School, and all of our children and grandchildren, don't have to leave Edmonton – or Alberta – to find opportunities or a high quality of life.

These are our interests. And we're prepared to work with anyone who can share and support those interests.

The only real question is whether they're prepared to work with us.

I was encouraged to hear Premier Kenney say that “Edmonton will continue to be deeply important” to the government.

I think I speak for all Edmontonians when I say, we’re going to hold him to that.

Because Edmonton’s success is integral to Alberta’s success.

Despite how the seat distributions fell on election night, make no mistake – Edmontonians are just as concerned as the rest of the province about Alberta’s long-term economic future.

The economy. Jobs. Pipelines.

We understand those are the priorities. They’re ours too.

We share the goal of building more pipeline capacity to tidewater.

I’ve been a vocal supporter of the TransMountain expansion since day one. It’s an essential project for Alberta, for Canada... And for Edmonton. Let’s not forget, one end of that pipeline is here in the Metro Region. It has huge significance for industry and families in this part of the province. And that’s a message I bring with me, whether I’m meeting in Ottawa or Vancouver.

We also share the goals of bringing the economy back to life, and seeing more robust private sector job creation. We know we can achieve these goals in a way that improves our overall resilience and locks down prosperity over the long term.

Our local economy is already fairly diverse in terms of the different industries you find here. But it’s still quite dependent on energy.

Edmontonians are proud of the role we've played – and continue to play – in servicing, supporting and innovating in oil and gas. We're not looking to cut our throats by tossing our energy sector overboard and saying, "We don't want that anymore, we want these industries over here instead." To us it's not an either-or choice.

We want our energy sector to succeed and we want all of our other industries to be able to thrive, no matter the price of oil.

That's what drives a lot of our direction and the approach to economic development we're taking.

What we're building here is not just a stronger and more resilient Edmonton unto itself. We're building the cornerstone for a stronger and more resilient Alberta.

Because we understand the stakes are high not only for us as Edmontonians, but as Albertans.

If the provincial government is prepared to stand shoulder to shoulder with us as a partner, we can bring about greater prosperity for Edmontonians and greater prosperity for Alberta.

So, what does that partnership look like?

Well, for starters, it means making good on existing commitments.

As I said on election night, I am thankful the government's election platform included a commitment to Edmonton's new infrastructure deal. A deal that makes us a true partner in Alberta's ups - and downs.

This deal is essential for supporting our city's population growth - and our economic growth.

With those infrastructure commitments we'll be able to follow through on projects like the next phase of improvements to Terwillegar and Whitemud Drive – so that families in the southwest have better commutes. This will mean a better quality of life for people, which in turn will help mean better productivity in our economy.

We will be able to build the Lewis Farms Rec Centre and Library, a facility that west end residents have been patiently waiting for - a building that will create community, promote wellness and provide learning opportunities for every age and ability.

The existing provincial commitments for LRT are also essential for supporting our economic growth and getting ahead of crippling congestion on our roads.

Those commitments are going to help us take advantage of matching federal dollars, so we can build the West LRT, and make some really solid headway building out the LRT network into the broader Metro Region.

Provincial partnership also means supporting some of the key building blocks of Edmonton's future economy.

Our post-secondary institutions, for example.

As home to many of Alberta's major post-secondaries, including the province's flagship university and the nation's biggest polytechnic, we are a huge source of skilled talent for the provincial economy.

These are the young minds that are going to help bring about new discoveries and innovations. They're the ones who are going to help propel our economy forward, and help make our industries more competitive in the global marketplace.

Keeping our post-secondary institutions strong and stable is necessary for building tomorrow's economy.

Our health assets in this city are another key building block.

Having Alberta Health Services gives us a competitive advantage in industries around health technology and innovation.

As Canada's largest province-wide fully integrated health system, it offers researchers and innovators a unique platform to explore new protocols and procedures at scale. Not to mention the largest and most diverse data set in North America.

These advantages are helping spur the rise of Alberta companies that are developing revolutionary products and technologies in areas like cancer detection and organ transplantation. Solutions that are in demand worldwide. Developed here, in Edmonton.

That trajectory can be helped along by maintaining investment in the system, and the considerable research assets we have in this city.

I think it's also worth noting that our health assets aren't just serving Edmontonians. They represent a Centre of Excellence that's relied upon by Albertans across the whole northern part of the province. We have people come into the city for cancer treatment, dialysis, and all kinds of other procedures.

These things I've referenced -- infrastructure and transit, our education assets, our health assets.... These are major enablers in building Alberta's economy of today, and the economy of tomorrow.

They represent key competitive advantages we have. They're part of our unique horsepower.

Undermine those advantages... and you hobble our horsepower.

And this could hamper not only Edmonton's trajectory, but the economic recovery of Alberta as a whole.

Because the fact is, these enablers are helping us shape a city that's attractive to the next generation of workers and creators and investors and families. We know that the upcoming generation is more mobile than ever. They're more globally aware than ever. They've got unique views and preferences about the kind of place they want to live and work and put down roots.

Now, we can either take note of that, and respond to that, and position ourselves to take advantage of that. Or we can wave it off, put our heads in the sand, refuse the change and hope for the best.

I have always been in favour of the former approach.

And it's paying off for our city.

Recently there was a new report jointly issued by a not-for-profit called YouthfulCities and RBC that ranked cities around the globe based on how "youthful" they are.

Together, they surveyed 30,000 youth worldwide and asked what's most important to them in a city – and using this data, they ranked cities based on key indicators like affordability, education, employment and entrepreneurship.

Amongst 21 cities in Canada, Edmonton came out on top. Overall, we're the best Canadian city for youth to work.

We performed solidly on affordability. Of particular note, we came out as the top city for “most affordable transport”.

We came fifth on affordable education. That measure looks at average undergraduate student debt and the average post-secondary tuition cost.

And one where I think we should take particular pride... Our city placed third in government attitude to entrepreneurship, which makes it – and I quote from the report – “a great option for youth looking for an entrepreneurial environment”.

Let's put all of that in perspective.

On a quantifiable index... backed by one of the country's largest banks... Edmonton is the **best place in Canada** for youth to work...Based on the attributes that youth worldwide are looking at when they're deciding where they want to put down roots and invest and pursue their careers and ambitions.

Not Vancouver. Not Montreal. Not Kitchener-Waterloo. Not Toronto.

Here. Edmonton.

Our city is emerging – empirically – as a preferred destination for that next generation of innovators and thinkers and job creators.

So when people wonder why Edmonton is taking a different tack than other places... Why we seem fixated on better transit, and densification, and building a different kind of urban living that's more people-focused – and not just vehicle-focused....

This is why. Because we're not thinking and planning and building for the 1990s.

Like the exercise we saw those students at Lynnwood School undertaking.... We are thinking and planning for the next generation.

Thinking about a time when there will be two million people calling this city home, needing places to live and trying to get around efficiently. Planning for the kinds of neighbourhoods and transportation options that people will want and need. And laying down the foundation for a future Edmonton that can attract top-notch talent, offer incredible opportunities and provide a high quality of life for our residents.

I'll say it again: we are building a twenty-first century city that is poised to help lead the way in Canada.... And be a cornerstone in the revitalized Alberta economy.

And I think it's important to note, we're not doing it alone.

Back to that "island of orange in a sea of blue"....

When you look at the election results, you'd be forgiven for thinking we've stepped back in time to the dynamic where Edmontonians are in this enclave, isolated from their neighbours in surrounding municipalities.

But that's another way that things are different from 25 years ago. Our communities are actually working together and thinking as a region as never before. We have a level of collaboration that would shock the Tory government of the 1990s.

This is partly because of an attitude shift.

But it's also in response to the reality that our local economies have become more intertwined. And what's been formed over time is a regional juggernaut – one that can't be easily dismissed or ignored.

In 2018, Metro Edmonton generated *100 billion dollars* towards Alberta's GDP. That's almost a third of Alberta's economy.

We're home to one-third of Alberta's population, and we have one-third of all employment in the province.

In fact, one could argue that our region has held up the province during the downturn and recession. And we have led the way in its fragile recovery.

Between 2017 and 2018 the Edmonton region generated almost 44 percent of all net new jobs in Alberta. Jobs that were largely full-time and high-paying.

We are absolutely integral to the province's future.

No matter how you look at it, you can't escape the reality...

A successful Metro Edmonton makes for a successful Alberta.

That's the major message I am carrying to this new provincial government.

And I ask Edmontonians to send that message as well.

The provincial politicians come knocking on our doors every four years, but that's not the only time we have to talk to them.

So, I encourage everyone to keep asking about Edmonton.

Remind your MLAs and new Ministers a successful Edmonton makes for a successful Alberta. Ask them about their plans for partnership with our city. Hold accountable them to the commitments they've made.

One of the unique things about our province is that we have two large urban centres of the same weight class, with complementary strengths. On par with each other in terms of size and heft, albeit with different complexions.

As a province we can go in two different directions.

We can do what so many others have done: treat one city as the economic capital and the other as a political afterthought. Divide the two cities and pit them against each other.

Or... we can decide to chart a new course, starting today: leverage the complementary strengths of both Metro Edmonton and Calgary, and build a globally competitive Alberta.

I sure know which approach I'd like to see. Because the province that figures out how to leverage the power of its big cities will emerge as the winner in this country. And we are *all about* that.

So, on behalf of Edmontonians, I say to our government representatives: *thank you for being here today*. We look forward to seeing more of you. We are here as an open and willing partner.

And I look forward to many more productive conversations with all of you about how we can work together.... And how Edmonton can continue to lead the way in building a stronger Alberta.

Thank you.