

Friends,

Fellow New Democrats,

Fellow Albertans.

Let's begin by acknowledging we are gathered on the traditional territory of Treaty 6.

And by acknowledging the Metis people of Alberta, who share a deep connection to this land.

Well, I don't know about you, but for me...

This space, all of you, brings back memories.

Three and a half years ago.

Remember that night?

We made a little bit of history, didn't we?

Just a little bit.

Here's a crazy idea:

Let's do it again!

Just like that night three years ago, standing here, I see the generations who have brought us to this point...

generations of fighters.

From the moms and dads, grandmas and grandpas, fighting for the future.

To the kids who are our future.

There are people here who have been around so long they door-knocked with my dad...

Or at the very least, let him sleep on their couch.

And there's lots of new people here, including people who left the Tories to join a real Big Tent Party!

And friends, among us there are titans – Ray Martin, Raj Pannu, Brian Mason...

And our entire team of MLAs, fired up and ready!

To my family,

I wouldn't be standing here if it wasn't for your love and support.

Lou, you are my rock.

If only rocks could do dishes.

But hey, when K.D. Lang walks into the room, you fan-girl with the best of them...

And I wouldn't have it any other way.

To my kids,

You are the very best of me, what grounds me, drives me and inspires me.

You keep me really, really humble.

I'm so proud of who you both are.

I love you all so much.

Friends,

On that night three and a half years ago, Albertans put an end to 44 years of one-party rule.

...one-party rule by a regime that had lost its way...

...that took people for granted...

...that saw power as their entitlement, not as a privilege.

Instead, Albertans put their trust in us.

I am sure some folks – perhaps many – were a little unsure about their decision that evening.

After all, we had become accustomed to government run by entitled politicians and insiders, all in very nice suits.

And, friends -- don't take this the wrong way -- we don't look like that at all.

Except maybe Irfan Sabir. Or as I like to call him, the member for Harry Rosen.

No, the caucus Albertans sent to the Legislature is a glorious mix of people from all walks of life.

Students, community activists, social workers, small business people, civic leaders, shop stewards, academics, farmers, nurses, teachers.

..and, yes, some lawyers, too.

We looked different in another way as well.

In Alberta's history, there's never been so many women elected!

And this group of everyday Albertans was hired to do a very big job.

44 years of one-party rule left Alberta with a huge number of challenges.

Years of neglect, left us with a big infrastructure deficit.

Our politics had been diminished by Sky-Palaces, lakes of fire, drama, scandal, and big money.

Public health care and education were wracked by instability.

And our economy – Canada’s engine – was hit by an oil price collapse that was costing tens of thousands of jobs, tearing at the fabric of our communities, and bleeding billions from the Treasury.

Friends...we couldn’t ask for better timing.

And so, on that night, standing at this podium, looking out at the celebration, I knew the job ahead would test us all.

I felt the weight of the enormous responsibility.

And to be perfectly honest, deep down I wondered if we'd be able to shoulder the weight.

But I learned something:

Our MLAs are amazing!

I could not be more lucky to work with such a dedicated, thoughtful, honourable group of people.

These people are in it for Albertans, not personal ambitions.

I mean, come on, early in 2015, running as an Alberta New Democrat – the fourth party in the legislature – wasn't exactly a career building move.

But here's the thing:

What I learned from this group...

Aside from their great humour, their tenacity, their commitment to the people they represent...

And their tremendous dance moves...

Which I know we saw over the last couple nights...

What I learned from our team is that a government that comes from everyday Alberta...

works for everyday Alberta!

And boy did we ever go to work.

The Conservatives threw a fit when we decided that the Legislature should start debate at 9 am...

...Apparently they are not morning people...

But friends, there was no time to waste.

Albertans were hurting and they needed their government to stay focussed, put in the hours, and fight for them.

And that's just what we did – that's just what we continue to do.

I will try not to read you a list...

Though if a list is what you're after, check out the one on Lou's Facebook page.

And my staff are all now horrified that I directed anyone to Lou's Facebook.

Anyway, a few highlights.

With our first bill, we took big money out of politics!

Never again should our democracy be in the hands of a few wealthy insiders.

We stabilized funding for health care, killed the conservative health levy, and reversed cuts to schools...

cuts that would have left tens of thousands of kids in overcrowded classrooms.

We brought in a long-overdue Climate Leadership Plan that phases out coal pollution, puts a price on carbon and invests in energy efficiency and renewables.

As a result of that plan Alberta is now a continental renewable energy leader, with massive new investments and thousands of new jobs.

We worked to correct major historical wrongs, such as the lack of clean, safe, reliable drinking water on first nations in Alberta.

And just this past week, we made good on a promise generations of us have fought for:

An historic land settlement agreement with the Lubicon Lake Cree!

I first heard about the plight of the Lubicon Lake Band from my parents, decades ago, sitting around our kitchen table.

Generations of Indigenous peoples fought for this.

Generations of New Democrats stood with them.

Together, we got it done.

Friends,

We've also put people to work during the downturn, building badly-needed new infrastructure projects.

240 schools built or modernized.

A new cancer center in Calgary.

A new hospital is coming in South Edmonton...

...to name a few...

...including roads, bridges and transit across the province.

We took unprecedented steps to fight poverty by expanding the Alberta child family benefit helping hundreds of thousands of our most vulnerable families and kids.

We froze tuition, expanded student aid, and established a school nutrition program.

Today, 35,000 children are guaranteed a healthy meal every day at school.

Friends, to do these things, we got our spending priorities right.

We asked the wealthy to pay a little more.

We slashed salaries for some highly overpaid heads of government boards.

And we got rid of perks the Conservatives like to hand out to their friends, including golf club memberships.

Golf club memberships. Think about that. Really people?

They thought that was a good idea?

We took our labour laws out of the dark ages, giving workers the basic protections they need.

People like Amanda Jansen who was fired because she needed time off to care for a child with cancer.

Never again in Alberta.

And yes, we finally -- and without apology -- did something that had the opposition screaming...

...We raised the minimum wage to 15 dollars an hour!

Not surprisingly our opponents in the next election didn't like any of this – and still don't.

Tax cuts for the top 1 per cent are a good thing.

Minimum wage increases for working moms a bad thing.

They certainly do have an interesting view of the world.

Not long ago a UCP MLA – in fit of transparency – said “it's going to hurt” if the UCP gets elected.

I guess some of us got into politics to help people.

And others got into politics to hurt people.

But if that's your slogan...be my guest.

I suppose if the UCP platform was a product, the advertisement would come with one of those drug warnings:

“People beware, this product will privatize your health care, cut your kids' education, roll back your rights, and hand a big fat tax cut to the top 1 per cent....It will hurt you... For more info, call Jason Kenney.”

But hey, truth in advertising is never a bad thing.

In fact, one of the key consumer protections we brought in for people...

Is truth in advertising when you're buying a new or used car.

Pretty common sense stuff, right?

Well, not for everybody.

You may have seen this week that our opponent, Mr. Kenney, is promising to undo it all.

He got caught promising to gut protections for the family buying a minivan, in order to help fill the pockets of a few car lot owners.

And I say a few owners, because we have heard from others in that industry who think his plan is disgusting.

And it is!

Now, Mr. Kenney insists, over and over again, that he's not for sale.

But it sure sounds like he's willing to work out one heck of a lease!

Well I don't need to tell you that gutting protections for families and deliberately hurting people was not an option as we confronted the many challenges that faced us over the last three and a half years...

We did what Albertans do when they are dealt a tough hand.

We kept our focus on what matters...what matters to people.

We will not be bought off, and we will never back down.

Now, to be sure, there are lots of people still demanding we make deep cuts.

They say we can't afford to invest in our hospitals and our schools.

Let me address that head-on:

Albertans expect and deserve a plan to pay down the deficit and bring the budget to balance...

But they also expect and deserve one that does so while staying focused on the needs of people.

So, that's exactly what we are doing.

We did away with the old government's waste and excess.

Cut millions.

Did away with glaring redundancies.

And ended the ridiculous perks the old government set up for their friends.

As of today, with our economy coming back up...

our deficit is coming down way faster than forecast.

Last quarter it was a billion dollars ahead of schedule...

and our budget is on-track to be balanced, just as we said it would be.

So to those who say we need to sacrifice our kids' education, sacrifice the health of patients in hospitals, and blow up more hospitals while we're at it...

I say this:

The record is clear.

You can choose to help people...

Choose to protect jobs...

Choose to build hospitals and cancer centres...

And still grow the economy for the benefit of workers, patients and families.

In fact, let's go further.

This is how you grow the economy.

We... must... do... these things.

Now, it's true: not every Albertan is feeling the recovery at their own kitchen table.

There's more work to do, but we've come a long, long way since the depths of the worst recession in a generation.

That's one of the key reasons we are fighting to build a new pipeline...

...a fight that has dominated the headlines over these last few months.

And for a very good reason.

We are selling Canada's most valuable commodity at a discount to one customer at one price.

And with the huge and punishing differential we see today....

...it costs our economy close to 80 million dollars a day.

Now, as you might have noticed, I never tire of telling people how dumb this is.

These resources belong to us.

They are produced to some of the highest environmental standards in the world, under an emissions cap that our government established.

They help support all the things everyday people need to live good lives.

It is irresponsible in the extreme to sell these resources at a discount to the US...

...just so they can turn them into upgraded products, reap the benefits and use the money to build private prisons and border walls.

So let me say this about the fight to build a pipeline to those who want to stand in our way.

Ready for it?

We're not stopping.

I have been from one end of this country to the other pressing the case for pipeline access.

Next week I am headed to Kamloops to speak to a Steelworkers Convention, and soon after I will be going back east to speak with workers, investors and political leaders of all stripes.

Because when I see an obstacle, I don't see a reason to turn around.

I see something to climb over.

It's a little secret I learned from the strong women I grew up around in rural Alberta.

But friends, as important as the pipeline fight is to our future, there is another factor at play here.

In Alberta, we simply don't get enough value out of our energy products.

Don't get me wrong:

More takeaway capacity is essential, but in the long-term we need to get more value.

As of today, we ship too much raw product to other countries, letting others do the upgrading...

Letting others create the jobs...

and letting others get the benefits.

New Democrats have been saying it for decades.

We all know it.

We need to do more with our resources, and do it here in Alberta.

We need to keep more value, here in Alberta.

We need to create more jobs, here in Alberta.

Now, to be sure, in the last three years, our government has made progress.

Take petrochemicals.

Back when the PCs actually were a big tent party, Premier Lougheed helped build petrochemical plants.

Then the new crop of conservatives ended all that.

What was the result?

Well, to put it mildly: Louisiana and Texas have been allowed to take our jobs and take our investments for over a decade.

To put it not so mildly: the old government sat around and dithered while Louisiana and Texas ate our lunch!

We're fixing that.

Thanks to a new program we brought in...

A new petrochemical plant is underway just north of here that will produce plastics in the Industrial Heartland.

Over the life of its construction, this project will support more than 13,000 jobs and generate hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue.

And there's another plant with a final investment decision coming in a matter of weeks.

That plant will create more jobs – thousands more.

Both plants will enable Albertans to make materials in-demand across the world...

And generate billions in economic activity for the benefit of all Albertans.

But that's not all we're doing.

Last spring, we launched another major energy diversification plan.

It will tap into billions of dollars of investment interest, with another round of our petrochemical program.

It will attract billions more, by doing more to develop our natural gas feedstock.

And, it will get more value out of our resources, and more capacity out of existing pipelines, with a program to get construction going on partial upgrading.

We ran on diversification, promising Albertans we'd get more value out of our resources.

We're not done yet.

There's more to do to seize the opportunity in front of us.

And so I believe the time has come for Albertans to seize the initiative...

to take more control of our own economic destiny...

and to supercharge energy upgrading in Alberta.

You all here, and folks watching from home, you're hearing this first.

In the coming weeks, I will lay out the details of a major new energy diversification effort.

Our aim is simple:

Albertans work too hard extracting these resources to just to give it all away.

The spirit of our province is entrepreneurial.

Everything we've done, we've done it ourselves.

And if nobody else is going to help us get more value for our resources...

Then we'll take the bull by the horns...

and we'll get it done right here in Alberta.

Friends, we can do this.

We must do this.

And it is choices like this that will be on the ballot in the next election.

A choice for how we build Alberta for the future...

And a choice for whom that future is built.

Is it built for everyday Albertans – workers and families?

Or is it built for those at the top – elite political insiders and the wealthiest 1%?

Should the people you elect fight for themselves or fight for you?

Are we building a province for the many or the few?

I'm in it for the many – for everybody – and I'm fighting for you!

Because friends, if we've learned anything over these last few years...

...it's that Alberta can overcome the biggest obstacles thrown at us if we look out for one another.

Think of how far we have come in three years.

Today in Alberta, we are creating jobs, not shedding them – 90 thousand last year with the fastest growing economy in the country – last year, this year, and next year.

Today in Alberta, our services are stronger because we resisted the calls to cut, to privatize, and to move the wealthiest to the front of the line.

Today in Alberta, the classrooms our kids learn in aren't being sacrificed to pay for another CEOs tax cut.

Today in Alberta, patients in our hospitals know when they hit that call button, a nurse is just down the hall, not in the unemployment line.

Today in Alberta, a young person who is Lesbian, Gay, Bi, Transgender, Queer, Two-spirited, or however they identify, they can form a GSA without fear.

Today in Alberta, people of all ages can go to college and university knowing that the government is helping them realize their dreams by keeping the cost of education within reach for ordinary families.

Today in Alberta, it doesn't matter who you love, where you worship, or the colour of your skin. Only character matters. And when racism rears its head, we stand up to it.

Today in Alberta, we know that a recovery that doesn't bring everyone along is no recovery at all.

That we are all in this together.

Neighbours, friends, Albertans...

One province.

A shared future.

Made brighter because you have a government that's finally in it for you...

...fighting for you!

Friends,

Let me conclude with these thoughts.

In Alberta, the future is not found it's made.

We stand on the shoulders of giants, women and men who have built one of the world's great societies.

On our journey, there have been many obstacles.

But we persevere, always.

And we have carved out the province we love...the province where I was born, raised a family and now serve as Premier.

For me – as for so many others – it has not always been easy.

But I count myself among the luckiest people alive.

The people of Alberta asked me – asked our team – to do a job when it counted most.

The collapse in oil prices dealt Albertans a very tough hand.

Soon after one of the worst natural disaster in Canadian history almost burnt one of our greatest cities to the ground...

...and the fight to build a pipeline and for the respect we deserve in our Confederation has been as tough as any of us has encountered.

But through it all, the sun never set on the Alberta dream.

We're just too stubborn for that.

We did what Albertans always do when things get tough.

We did what the job called for.

Together, we fought back the recession by helping our neighbours, not leaving them behind.

Because in Alberta, everyone matters, not just the privileged few.

Together, we joined as one to lend a hand to people who lost everything they owned.

And together we stood – and stand as Albertans...

economic leaders...

energy leaders...

climate leaders.

Building stronger schools, stronger hospitals, more affordable living...

...and good jobs for working people.

And through it all, Albertans acted with integrity and with purpose.

I am honoured by the trust Albertans put in me – in all of us.

And I am prouder still of the work we've done.

But friends that job is not done.

This century can be – it will be – Alberta's century if our conviction remains...

...that we can achieve more working together than we can alone...

...that we are our sister's keeper...

...and that the politics of hope always trumps the politics of division and anger.

This is my conviction.

This is why I am not done fighting.

We have only just begun.

Oh, and by the way, my name is Rachel Notley, and I am running again to be your Premier.

Thank you.