

2007

Dr. Thaddeus Demong April 2 2007

It is a great pleasure for me today to draw to the attention of all Albertans through the Hon. members of this House the incredible works of Dr. Thaddeus Demong, a hero of mine and a constituent of mine in Calgary-Lougheed.

Thad was born and educated in Sarawak, Malaysia, on the island of Borneo. He's one of nine children of a tribal chief, and as a young man he was a top-tier Colombo plan student who fought hard to pursue studies in medicine at the University of Alberta.

Afterward Thad returned to Sarawak, where as a medical officer he promoted development of a new rural hospital and public health policies in TB control and sanitation.

Dr. Demong immigrated to Canada in 1974 and began an ophthalmology residency at the U of A. He went on to obtain a fellowship in corneal surgery and then established his extremely well-respected practice in Calgary. Thad has worked extensively in establishing the Lion's Eye Bank of southern Alberta for the procurement and timely distribution of corneal tissue and has been recognized for his work by the Lions Clubs International Foundation as a distinguished Melvin Jones fellow.

In addition to all of this, Thad has participated in the Canadian vision care program, which operates in developing countries such as Jamaica and in Dr. Demong's native Sarawak. Thad has also taught medical students and residents at the University of Kuala Lumpur.

Mr. Speaker, in 2005 I was honoured to offer Dr. Demong an Alberta centennial medallion, and last month he received the 2007 Immigrant of Distinction professional award from the Calgary Immigrant Aid Society.

Climate Change April 11, 2007

I know that many Albertans are well aware of the report delivered last week by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. The scientists that make up this United Nations group agree that climate change is real and requires action.

Alberta has been and will continue to be a leader in addressing climate change, but before true leadership can be demonstrated, a clear vision is required. Albertans are helping the government of Alberta create that vision through our climate change public consultation.

So far we've had five meetings across southern Alberta, and along with our Environment minister and our MLA for Calgary-Fort I was honoured to attend our meeting last night in Calgary.

Some of the comments included:

"Carbon dioxide has everything to do with climate change."

"It has nothing to do with it."

"We need absolute caps and intensity targets."

"We shouldn't even go there."

"Government must lead the charge and spend a lot of money."

"Government should stay out of it."

"It's the end of the world."

"It's a wonderful new beginning."

Although extreme statements were made at both ends of the spectrum, at the end of the day people seemed to agree on at least this: no matter to what degree human beings may affect global warming, we need to find the right balance between quality of life and environmental concerns.

Everyone has a role to play: government, industry, and individuals.

It's a global problem requiring a global solution at the local level.

We've received over a thousand responses to our online questionnaire on climate change in addition to the filled-out copies of the printed questionnaire. I encourage Albertans to be part of this consultation to help frame our next steps for a made-in-Alberta solution.

Climb and Run for Wilderness May 1 2007

On April 21, the Alberta Wilderness Association hosted their 16th annual climb and run for wilderness in Calgary. Over 800 intrepid runners and climbers conquered all 802 steps of the Calgary Tower.

Over \$150,000 was raised in Calgary's premier Earth Day event. That's over \$150,000 in support of conservation and education programs that help protect our natural heritage.

I do want to make special mention of one truly inspirational participant. Her name is Phyllis Hart. She was back for her 11th tower climb, 11th year in a row. Phyllis Hart continues to inspire us all. She is 92 years young.

It was a truly festival-like atmosphere, with musicians and face painters and wildlife mascots cheering the athletes on. I

In addition, 25 individuals and groups showcased their work at the Wild Alberta Expo.

Join me in recognizing Christyann Olson and everyone at the Alberta Wilderness Association as they work on their own and with government to ensure that we continue to strive to find the correct balance between environment and economy.

Mental Health Week May 8 2007

May 7 to 13 has been proclaimed national Mental Health Week in Canada.

Mental health is a crucial component of our overall health and is an essential resource for living. It influences how we feel, how we perceive, how we think, communicate, and understand. Without good mental health people are not able to reach their full potential or play an active role in society.

Mental health issues are wide ranging, from enhancing our emotional well-being and treating and preventing severe mental illness to the prevention of suicide.

The government of Alberta has played a role and will continue to play a role in ensuring the delivery of mental health services in this province. Strengthening treatment of mental illness in the community supports Premier Stelmach's plan to improve Albertans' quality of life.

Mental illness has a profound impact on our society. It affects individuals of all ages, all cultures, and all educational and income levels.

In Canada mental illness affects 1 in 5 people and strikes early in life, with the highest prevalence in youth ages 15 to 24. A million Canadians live with a severe or persistent mental illness.

In addition, approximately 8 per cent of adults will experience major depression at some point in their lives.

Almost one-half of those who feel they have suffered from depression or anxiety have never gone to see a doctor about this problem. Stigma or discrimination attached to mental illness presents a serious barrier in today's society.

But the good news is that mental illness can be treated.

The Alberta government is committed to advancing mental health in the province. It's part of the focus on overall wellness, to promote and improve individual and community health. The Alberta Mental Health Board advances mental health in Alberta through a number of initiatives, including advocacy, policy advice, working with the regional health authorities and stakeholders.

In raising awareness of Mental Health Week, the Alberta Mental Health Board in co-operation with several partners published an online book at amhb.ab.ca.

4-D Human Atlas Project May 29 2007

Last week Dr. Christoph Sensen and his team in Calgary unveiled a stunning new application of a technology which will benefit people around the world and will continue to move our province to the forefront of the international technology landscape.

The 4-D human atlas project is a federal/provincial collaboration which is actually three provincial success stories in one.

KasterStener Publications, a Red Deer company, and the WEPA team, based at the U of C, have employed the computer programming language Java 3D, which was created by a Calgarian, James Gosling, to convert anatomical and graphic details in ways that clinicians have only dreamed about.

Not only are the images in 3-D; they are also life sized and on four screens. The detail is 10 times clearer than any other system on Earth, and the images are customized to each individual's unique DNA. Then the fourth dimension is added, and the resultant demonstration of what happens to each body system and between each system when exposed to pharmaceuticals, illicit drugs, and disease over time will change the way we conduct research.

Just as critical is the ability to evaluate treatment options in conditions like Alzheimer's, diabetes, and cancer, and there are amazing surgical applications as well. For example, doctors can actually practice open-heart surgery on a patient without ever even touching them.

This incredible project is evidence of what can be done in this province when government, industry, and academic interests collaborate for the advancement of science and technology as we work together to improve the quality of life for Albertans.

Farm Safety June 12 2007

Today I rise to remember the life of Kevan Chandler. Almost a year ago, June 18, 2006, Mr.Chandler was killed while working at a feedlot in southern Alberta.

His death was tragic. It was unacceptable and has had lasting effects for his family.

All Albertans deserve the security of knowing that their loved ones will return home to friends and family at the end of the day no matter what they do for a living.

Let us dedicate ourselves to prevention. This is perhaps the single most important thing we can do because legislation alone cannot eliminate workplace or farm injuries or fatalities.

Getting good, valuable information out to producers and families and farmers about safety practices is key to eliminating injuries and fatalities. That's the goal of the government's farm safety program: to address farm safety awareness and workplace safety best practices. The more we can raise awareness of workplace and farm safety, the more people will return home unharmed.

Alberta is striving for a culture of health and safety that is commonplace regardless of where people work or what they do for a living. I encourage all members of this Legislature and all Albertans to do their part in helping to create this culture.