

Mr. Rodney: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This past weekend John Kucera of Calgary skied his way into the history books. He became the first Canadian man to win the downhill gold medal at the world alpine championships in Val d'Isère, France. John started second and crossed the finish line after a breathtaking and nearly flawless two minutes, seven and one one-hundredth seconds. He then had to wait patiently while each of the world's best downhillers tried and failed to beat his time.

Kucera's tight line down the mountain was the difference between him and his closest competitor, who was only .04 seconds behind.

John was born in Calgary to parents who had recently immigrated from the Czech Republic. In order to fund his skiing, they took out a second mortgage on their home, and was it ever worth it. The young Kucera made his World Cup debut at age 20 on home snow in Lake Louise in November 2004, and just two years later at the very same location he won his first World Cup GS.

John's most recent win comes exactly one year before the opening of the Vancouver-Whistler Olympics and the games' first medal event, coincidentally the men's downhill. The path to the podium starts in this province, Mr. Speaker. Our Alberta government has committed nearly a hundred million dollars to renew Olympic legacy facilities at Canada Olympic Park and the Canmore Nordic Centre.

Funding also supports the building of Canada's first centre of sports excellence, and Canada's Sports Hall of Fame will soon call the city of Calgary home, with the government of Alberta as an integral partner. Because of these provincial projects and efforts like those of John Kucera, I believe that Canadians will win Olympic gold on Canadian soil for the first time next year.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.