

Province recognizes environmentalist's work

From The Edmonton Journal

April 21, 2008

EDMONTON - Longtime Alberta environmental advocate Martha Kostuch often didn't see eye to eye with the government, but the province is recognizing her work with the creation of a bursary for a new certificate course in consensus building.

Kostuch, 58, who is suffering from a terminal disease, is too ill to attend a luncheon honouring her work Tuesday at the Shaw Conference Centre, but she's pleased to receive the recognition, her son, Mark Kostuch said today.

"I know she's really proud of it," he said from his mother's home near Rocky Mountain House. "I think it's great. It helps other people achieve their goals."

Alberta Environment said today that during 30 years as an environmental advocate, Kostuch has made a significant impact on how environmental management policy is developed.

"I think Martha was someone, while being outspoken and certainly not being afraid to take on the government, also recognized the need to work with stakeholders, work with industry and work with government to find solutions," said Environment Minister Rob Renner. "I am told she was a true leader."

Kostuch has served as a member of the board of directors of the Clean Air Strategic Alliance (CASA), an organization of industry, government and environmental representatives that makes recommendations to the province on ways to curb emissions. CASA has been credited with dramatically reducing the deliberate flaring and venting of natural gas in the oilpatch.

Kostuch, a veterinarian who came to Alberta from Minnesota in 1975, has worked with numerous other organizations including the Alberta Wilderness Association, Prairie Acid Rain Coalition and Friends of the Oldman River.

Alberta Environment spokeswoman Kim Capstick said Kostuch will be honoured before 650 participants at a government-sponsored environment conference on Earth Day.

"We wanted to make sure we had the opportunity to announce her legacy program while she was here to see it."

Details of the program are still being worked out, but the bursary will be awarded next fall and on an annual basis through the Alberta Arbitration and Mediation Society to applicants from non-governmental organizations.

The size of the bursary, which will be funded by the Alberta government, hasn't yet been determined, Capstick said.

Pembina Institute policy analyst Mary Griffiths said she is delighted that her friend is being honoured for her dedication to protecting the environment.

"I think this is absolutely marvelous and no one could deserve it more," she said. "It is most appropriate because she has always acted as a mentor to others."

Griffiths said Kostuch, who was also recently named for an Alberta Emerald Foundation special achievement award, devoted a lot of time to briefing ministers as well as MLAs from both the opposition and government benches.

"She didn't come to Alberta as an environmentalist, but became aware of the need to address air pollution," said Griffiths. "She soon got involved in protecting water as well."

<http://www.canada.com/edmontonjournal/news/story.html?id=9d64d605-c4eb-4828-b92d-4a9fc6a320a1&k=20113>

Alberta bursary celebrates legacy of environmental advocate

From The Energy News.com

April 21, 2008

Dr. Martha Kostuch recognized for her ability in stakeholder collaboration

Edmonton - Albertans who want to improve their ability to reach consensus with other stakeholders will benefit from a new certificate program and bursary honouring the career of Dr. Martha Kostuch.

During her 30-year career as an environmental advocate, Dr. Kostuch has made a significant impact on how environmental management policy is developed in Alberta, advocating for effective collaboration among stakeholders.

"Dr. Kostuch's passion and dedication to the environment have made a real difference," said Rob Renner, Minister of the Environment. "She is a tremendous role model and has earned respect around the world and from all sectors. Her work has influenced a shift towards shared governance, recognizing that there is a shared responsibility for all sectors to act as good stewards of the environment."

Launching in the fall, the certificate program will build on Dr. Kostuch's efforts to use a multi-stakeholder, consensus-building process to improve Alberta's environment. The program will be offered by the Alberta Arbitration and Mediation Society, who will also administer the bursary. Representatives from non-government organizations will be eligible to apply for the bursary. Funding will be provided by the Alberta government.

Dr. Kostuch came to Alberta in 1975 from Minnesota, taking over a veterinary practice in Rocky Mountain House. She quickly became a recognized advocate on environmental issues, working with numerous organizations such as the Alberta Wilderness Association, Prairie Acid Rain Coalition and Friends of the Oldman River. She built her reputation by bringing various stakeholders together to find solutions to the environmental issues facing Alberta.

She was instrumental in shaping the approach and model used by the Clean Air

Strategic Alliance, which has been a blueprint for government to follow when creating other multi-stakeholder organizations like the Alberta Water Council. Most recently, she worked to ensure that Albertans and environmental non-government organizations were involved in shaping Alberta's Oil Sands Multistakeholder Report.

<http://www.theenergynews.com/news/article.php?storyid=2843&newstype=gov>

Martha Kostuch, who took environmental fight to Supreme Court, dies at 58

From The Canadian Press

EDMONTON — Martha Kostuch, whose determination to block construction of an Alberta dam led to a landmark Supreme Court ruling that protects the environment, has died at 58.

"An entire organization of 100 people couldn't have a record of accomplishment like Martha had," said Green Party Leader Elizabeth May, who has known Kostuch for decades.

"She was just extraordinary - no garbage, no nonsense, no ego. She just did the work."

Kostuch, who died Tuesday from a neurological disorder, was one of the leaders in a long and bitter fight against the Oldman River dam project in southern Alberta in the 1990s. Critics argued the dam would destroy the area's fragile grasslands ecosystem and said its effects on the landscape should be taken into account.

The dam went ahead, but the fight resulted in a Supreme Court ruling that said environmental protection was a federal and provincial responsibility.

Since then, no large projects have been allowed to go ahead in Canada without an environmental impact assessment.

"Her perseverance on the Oldman dam case ... you don't take a case to the Supreme Court of Canada that just doesn't occupy your life and take over everything," said May.

"She was absolutely indefatigable. You could not get her to give up. She was persistent and stalwart when others would have decided, well, this is just too much trouble."

Kostuch also battled against controversial coal and sour-gas projects and eventually won support from then-premier Ralph Klein in easing conflicts between farmers and ranchers and the energy industry.

Alberta Environment Minister Rob Renner says there's no question Kostuch could be a harsh critic, but she also earned respect in government ranks.

"She pushed the envelope, sometimes beyond the comfort level," Renner said Wednesday. "But at the end of the day, Alberta and Albertans are richer for it."

Renner credits Kostuch with helping to create the Clean Air Strategic Alliance - a coalition of environmentalists, energy firms, government, business leaders and farmers that helped frame some of the province's emissions policies.

"Alberta is much better for the legacy and the work that Martha Kostuch left behind."

The Canadian Environmental Network honoured Kostuch last fall with a national lifetime achievement award.

Susan Tanner, the network's executive director, called Kostuch a "national treasure" who was often asked for advice by Environment Canada and other federal departments.

"She spent most of her life working on these issues," she said. "She learned about them and wasn't shy about expressing her opinion.

"And that's not very common, actually."

Christyann Olson, executive director of the Alberta Wilderness Association, said Kostuch became an expert in "consensus-based decision making," and her work on the alliance helped join groups that traditionally might have not worked together.

"She was finding a way to make it work so we could move forward."

Kostuch was a "feisty, fine woman" who never hesitated to speak her mind, added Olson.

"When she recognized things weren't right, she would fight very hard, tirelessly, to make sure that there was a change and that things would be better for all of us."

May agreed that Kostuch was known and respected by many national organizations, and was often called on to help other provinces.

"Within environmental organizations from coast to coast to coast, Martha was someone that people knew and respected and would go to for advice."

Kostuch, who worked as a veterinarian, came to Alberta from Minnesota more than three decades ago. She considered her greatest achievements to be the Oldman River dam fight and her efforts to preserve the Kootenay Plains in western Alberta as an ecological reserve.

More recently she had been pushing the province's Conservative government to consider the social impacts of oilsands projects.

Alberta Liberal Leader Kevin Taft called her an environmental champion, while NDP Leader Brian Mason said Kostuch stood up to "some very big players" in Alberta and never flinched.

Earlier this week, the Alberta government announced a bursary in her honour. Kostuch, who had revealed last year that she suffered from multiple systems atrophy - for which there is no cure - was too ill to travel to Edmonton to attend the awards luncheon.

Though weak, Kostuch spoke several months ago at a farewell celebration held by the Wilderness Association.

"I don't expect to live much longer," she said. "Being involved in these environmental activities is part of what makes my life worthwhile."

Olson said Kostuch issued a challenge for everyone to fight on.

"She said she didn't want people leaving money to anybody for her. She wanted us to get out and do things."

<http://canadianpress.google.com/article/ALEqM5hOY8ycgkBF3ozbzX6TMmw7qcgrVQ>

Alberta's environmental 'mentor' dies - Martha Kostuch succumbs to Parkinson's-like disease at 58

From The Edmonton Journal

April 24, 2008

EDMONTON - Alberta's environment community lost its "prime mentor" Wednesday with the death of activist Martha Kostuch.

Kostuch, 58, revealed last fall that she had a terminal illness called multiple system atrophy. She described it as a rare, Parkinson's-like disease that could eventually rob her body of most of its basic functions, leaving her to starve and suffocate to death.

At the time, Kostuch matter-of-factly stated that she, not the disease, would determine the right time to die.

In that way, she quietly but firmly contributed to the "right to die" debate, and did it with conviction, which was the way she lived her life.

Mark Kostuch came up from his home in Idaho to spend the last month with his mother. He said she died in her sleep just before 7:30 a.m. Wednesday.

Earlier this week, the Alberta government announced it will set up a bursary in her name for a new course on consensus building. Kostuch will also receive a posthumous Special Achievement Award at the Emerald Awards ceremony on June 3.

Mark is not surprised his mother was held in such high regard by environmentalists, as well as people in government and industry.

"I watch TV shows and you see heroes, and they can never measure up to my mom," he said from her home outside of Rocky Mountain House. "She was my hero."

Mark said his mother raised him to be independent and taught him that anything is possible for people with heart.

"She has given me the strength to do anything I could ever want to do."

Born July 8, 1949, in Moose Lake, Minn., Kostuch grew up on a hobby farm with seven siblings.

She spent a lot of time outdoors, and her upbringing led her to study veterinary medicine.

In 1975, she and her husband, a small-animal vet who complemented her large-animal expertise, moved to Alberta.

They wanted to be near the mountains and Rocky Mountain House was one of those rare communities they found that could support both of their skill sets.

They raised four boys.

Kostuch and her husband eventually divorced, but she stayed bound to the community.

Shortly after her arrival in the area, Kostuch noticed reproductive and immunological problems among cattle. She traced them to emissions from the sour gas industry.

So Kostuch campaigned to reduce air pollution. Sulphur dioxide emissions are now 20 per cent of what they were when she first moved to the area. Animal health improved soon after the emissions dropped.

There were other significant victories: she helped halt a proposed hotel and golf course resort slated for an unspoiled site near the Cline River; she took the federal government to the Supreme Court over the Oldman Dam and forced it to improve environmental assessments and fisheries protection; and she was part of the Clean Air Strategic Alliance committee that recommended air pollution reductions that were adopted.

It seemed there was little Kostuch wouldn't tackle. And people knew it.

"There aren't many people in Canada of whom you could say something like, 'We'll sic Martha on you' and it instills the fear of God in them," said Kim Sanderson, a close friend. "With Martha, you didn't even need to use a last name."

Kostuch was a slight woman who stood five-feet, two-and-a-half-inches tall, but few could match her direct, forthright style and persistence.

"She never let people off the hook," said David Spink, a former Alberta Environment director of air and water approvals.

"You know how sometimes you'd say, 'Well, we'll have a look at it' and you pick it up and look at it for five minutes? Well, Martha would call you back and say, 'You said you'd have a look at it. Well, what did you look at? Did you look at this?' "

Kostuch used to call Spink often. And when she did, she always had good points, he said. "She always got me thinking, 'Is this the best way? Can we do things better?' She was almost like your conscience at times."

Eventually, they became good friends, though they disagreed on issues 80 per cent of the time.

"Whether she liked you or not did not depend on your environmental position, but on your character," Spink said.

He shared co-chair duties with Kostuch on the CASA electricity project committee that recommended air pollutant regulations. Industry, government and environmental groups were all at the table.

Kostuch was instrumental in getting agreement among environmentalists and was effective at moving industry at the appropriate times, Spink said.

"Industry would say, 'We can't do that.' And Martha would say, 'Well, let's see. Why can't you do that? I think you should be able to do this.' "

Spink said the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board used Kostuch to mediate in tough situations between landowners and companies.

Sanderson said Kostuch's various campaigns were often met with bitter resistance, and she faced plenty of insults. She didn't let it get in the way of her goals.

Somehow, she absorbed the negativity but radiated back compassion and understanding, Sanderson said.

Mary Griffiths, a senior policy analyst with the Pembina Institute, said Kostuch was famous for her diverse circle of friends, many of whom went on canoe trips with her.

"She had a hug for everyone. It was for everyone, industry, government or the environmental community. She believed in breaking down barriers."

Kostuch was also known as a habitual tree hugger. Her son, Mark, recalls her hugging trees when he was young.

"When your mom goes out and hugs a tree when you have your friends over, it's embarrassing."

He's long past that now. "Everyone in my family is hugging a tree right now."

Griffiths said Kostuch's commitment to the environment was so strong she was still attending meetings in April. It was at a meeting of the Alberta Environmental Network that she first met her friend almost 20 years ago.

Kostuch was always talking about what had worked for her in her various environmental struggles, not in a bragging manner, just to maximize the effectiveness of the movement, Griffiths said.

There will be no filling that gap now.

"We have lost our prime mentor, someone who led by experience and knowledge, who was driven by her passion for improving the quality of air and water in Alberta."

Kostuch has asked that people not give money to charity on her behalf but instead do what they can to help the environment, whether they change a light bulb, recycle more, or just hug a tree.

AT A GLANCE

Some of Martha Kostuch's accomplishments include:

- Lifetime Achievement Award, 2007, from the Canadian Environmental Network.
- Alberta Wilderness Defenders Award, 2004, from the Alberta Wilderness Association.
- Douglas Pimlott Award, 2003, from the Canadian Nature Federation.
- Alberta Emerald Award, 1992, from the Alberta Emerald Foundation for Environmental Excellence.
- Archie Hogg Award, 1983 and 1987, from the Alberta Fish and Game Association.

<http://www.canada.com/edmontonjournal/story.html?id=6419af17-df1d-461a-92e6-815a21d50ed4&k=76603>

Environmentalists lose 'prime mentor' Kostuch - Celebrated activist asks mourners to just hug a tree

From The Calgary Herald

April 24, 2008

Alberta's environment community lost its "prime mentor" Wednesday with the death of Rocky Mountain House activist Martha Kostuch.

Kostuch, 58, revealed last fall that she had a terminal illness called multiple system atrophy. She described it as a rare, Parkinson's-like disease that could eventually rob her of her body's most basic functions, leaving her to starve and suffocate to death.

At the time, Kostuch matter-of-factly stated she would determine the right time to die, not the disease.

In this way, she quietly but firmly contributed to the "right to die" debate. She did it with conviction, which was the way she lived her life.

One of her sons, Mark Kostuch, came from his home in Idaho to spend the last month with her. He said his mother passed away peacefully in her sleep just before 7:30 a.m. Wednesday.

Earlier this week, the Alberta government announced it was setting up a bursary in her name for a new course on consensus-building. Kostuch will also receive a posthumous Special Achievement Award at the Emerald Awards ceremony on June 3.

Mark is not surprised his mother is held in such high regard by people in government, industry and environment circles. "I watch TV shows and you see heroes and they can never measure up to my mom," he said quietly from her home outside of Rocky Mountain House. "She was my hero."

Mark said his mother raised him to be independent. And she taught him that anything is possible for anybody as long as they have the heart to do it.

"She has given me the strength to do anything I could ever want to do."

Born on July 8, 1949, in Moose Lake, Minn., Kostuch grew up on a hobby farm with seven siblings, spending a lot of time outdoors and eventually studying veterinary medicine.

In 1975, she and her husband, also a veterinarian, moved to Alberta because they wanted to be near the mountains. They raised four boys, two of whom were adopted. They eventually divorced, but Kostuch stayed bound to the community.

Shortly after arrival, Kostuch noticed reproductive and immunological problems among cattle. She traced them to emissions from the sour gas industry.

So Kostuch campaigned to reduce the air pollution. Now, sulphur dioxide emissions are 20 per cent of what they were. Animal health improved soon after the emissions dropped.

There were other significant victories: she halted a proposed hotel and golf course resort slated for an unspoiled site near the Cline River; she took the federal government to the Supreme Court over the Oldman Dam and forced them to improve their environmental assessments and fisheries protection; and she was part of the Clean Air Strategic Alliance committee that recommended air pollution reductions that were adopted.

"There aren't many people in Canada of whom you could say something like, 'We'll sic Martha on you,' and it instils the fear of God in them," said Kim Sanderson, a close friend of Kostuch. "With Martha, you didn't even need to use a last name."

Mary Griffiths, a senior policy analyst with the Pembina Institute, said Kostuch was famous for her diverse circle of friends. "She had a hug for everyone. It was for everyone -- industry, government or the environmental community. She believed in breaking down barriers."

Kostuch was also known as a habitual tree hugger. Her son Mark remembers her hugging trees throughout his youth.

"When your mom goes out and hugs a tree when you have your friends over, it's embarrassing," he said.

He's long past that now. "Everyone in my family is hugging a tree right now."

Kostuch asked that people not give money to charity on her behalf, but instead do what they can to help the environment -- change a light bulb, recycle more or just hug a tree.

<http://www.canada.com/calgaryherald/news/story.html?id=6935ae6e-f9c1-438f-b44c-869887596f4f>

Mourning Martha Kostuch

From The Edmonton Journal

April 25, 2008

Martha Kostuch's protracted struggle against a Parkinson's-like disease ended peacefully Wednesday at her home near Rocky Mountain House.

Alberta, Canada -- in fact, the planet itself, given her efforts -- is the poorer for the loss. It is poignant and sadly appropriate that the 58-year-old environmental activist passed away mere hours past Earth Day, 2008. Long before being green was fashionable, the Minnesota hobby farm girl, who moved to Alberta in 1975, was fighting the good fight in her adopted backyard.

An early crusade involved drawing attention to and demanding redress over the toxic effects of nearby sour gas wells on local livestock. She won that one, and today, sulphur dioxide levels are indeed vastly reduced in that realm. Even in losing battles, such as her federal Supreme Court challenge to the Oldman River dam, her efforts levered increased fishery protection and improved environmental assessments.

A five-foot-two dynamo whose steely gaze and polite, if in-your-face midwestern delivery gave many a well-heeled opponent pause, Kostuch was anything but the stereotypical screeching, humourless green warrior.

In fact, while taking nothing away from her quantifiable victories as a persistent steward for the air, land and water, it was her special human touch many will remember first.

In a figurative and literal environmental landscape peopled by passionate advocates on all sides, Kostuch managed the rare ability to gain the respect of most. It will not only be

fellow travellers who will mourn her loss this week, but also government and industry operatives she encountered, often on the other side of an issue.

In the end, then, here was an immigrant to Alberta who embodied by word and deed the very hallmark of this place. Unpretentious, gutsy, tethered to the land and its people, Martha Kostuch was an original.

The only thing that might be more difficult than finding the proper way to officially honour her memory is actually discovering the many voices necessary to replace her singular, plaintive cry.

<http://www.canada.com/edmontonjournal/news/opinion/story.html?id=176179ee-697e-4c53-aa3f-fde08956fd43>

Alberta green activist dies - Martha Kostuch fought to preserve province's pristine wilderness

From The Edmonton Sun

Longtime Alberta environmental activist Martha Kostuch has died at the age of 58.

Kostuch had fought for decades to preserve Alberta's pristine wilderness from development and had recently urged the government to take time to figure out the social impacts of oilsands projects before pushing forward.

She had said that one of her greatest achievements had been helping to fight the Oldman River dam in southern Alberta.

The dam was completed, but the Supreme Court issued a ruling saying large projects in Canada could not go ahead without environmental impact assessments.

Kostuch, who worked as a veterinarian, came to Alberta from Minnesota more than three decades ago.

She has been recognized by various environmental groups for her work and won a national lifetime achievement award from the Canadian Environmental Network.

<http://www.edmontonsun.com/News/Alberta/2008/04/24/pf-5371046.html>

Environmentalist Martha Kostuch dies

From The Edmonton Journal

April 23, 2008

EDMONTON - Longtime environmentalist Martha Kostuch has died.

The announcement was made at an environment conference in Edmonton this morning. It was at a session on the Clean Air Strategic Alliance, of which she was a key member.

The Alberta government said this week that it was setting up a bursary in her name for a new course on consensus-building.

Kostuch, 58, was too ill to attend a luncheon honouring her work earlier this week at the Shaw Conference Centre, but she was pleased to receive the recognition, said her son, Mark Kostuch.

"I know she's really proud of it," he said Monday from his mother's home near Rocky Mountain House. "I think it's great. It helps other people achieve their goals."

Kostuch, a veterinarian who came to Alberta from Minnesota in 1975, worked with numerous other organizations, including the Alberta Wilderness Association, Prairie Acid Rain Coalition and Friends of the Oldman River.

<http://www.canada.com/calgaryherald/news/story.html?id=4d680175-d2e0-427b-9576-776712d37637&k=81143>

Environmentalist Martha Kostuch dies

From CBCnews.ca

April 23, 2008

Martha Kostuch, a longtime Alberta environmentalist who battled tirelessly to protect the province's air, water and wildlife habitat from the effects of industrial development, has died.

Kostuch, 58, died Wednesday morning, said friend and fellow environmental activist Myles Kitigawa of the Toxic Watch Society.

"I can't think of a single person who has been able to literally shape the face of environmental protection in the whole country the way Martha was able to with some of her groundbreaking legal work," Kitigawa told CBC News.

Just this week, the provincial government announced it was setting up a bursary to mark her 30 years as an environmental leader.

Kostuch, who had been suffering from a terminal illness, was too ill to travel from her home in Rocky Mountain House, Alta., west of Red Deer, to attend the luncheon in Edmonton to announce the bursary.

Environment Minister Rob Renner praised Kostuch's ability to work with the government on programs like the Clean Air Strategic Alliance, even though she was a vocal critic of other provincial initiatives.

"She was a true leader when it comes to environmental causes, not only a leader from the perspective of getting the attention of government, but she really pioneered the collaborative approach to problem-solving."

Kostuch, a veterinarian, first moved to Alberta in the 1970s and was one of only a handful of environmentalists.

One of her earliest causes was to fight plans by the provincial government to build a dam across the Oldman River, in southern Alberta, in the early 1990s. The project went ahead, but Kostuch and others forced changes in the project to protect fish and wildlife habitat.

<http://www.cbc.ca/canada/calgary/story/2008/04/23/kostuch-dies.html?ref=rss>

Activist Martha Kostuch, who fought to preserve Alberta wilderness, dies at 58 (Alta-Activist-Dies)

From Oil Week.com

April 23, 2008

EDMONTON _ A respected Alberta environmentalist who fought for decades to preserve the province's clean air, water and wilderness areas has died at age 58 from a neurological disorder.

Martha Kostuch, who lived in the rugged farm country east of the Rocky Mountain foothills, was one of the leaders in a long and bitter fight against the Oldman River dam project in southern Alberta in the 1990s.

Opponents to the dam argued that it would destroy the area's fragile grasslands ecosystem and that the project's effects on the landscape should be taken into account.

The fight didn't stop the dam, but it resulted in a landmark Supreme Court ruling. Since then, no large projects have been allowed to go ahead in Canada without an environmental impact assessment.

Kostuch also battled against controversial coal and sour gas projects and eventually won support from then-premier Ralph Klein in easing conflicts between farmers and ranchers and the energy industry.

Alberta Environment Minister Rob Renner says there's no question that Kostuch was a harsh critic at times, but she also earned respect in government ranks.

"She pushed the envelope, sometimes beyond the comfort level," Renner said Wednesday. "But at the end of the day, Alberta and Albertans are richer for it."

Renner credits Kostuch with helping the Clean Air Strategic Alliance _ a coalition of environmentalists, energy firms, government, business leaders and farmers that helped frame some of Alberta's emissions policies.

"Alberta is much better for the legacy and the work that Martha Kostuch left behind."

Kostuch was honoured last fall with a national lifetime achievement award from the Canadian Environmental Network. She received a plaque at a ceremony in Ottawa earlier this month for her three-decade commitment to the environment.

"These are my peers in the environmental movement across Canada, so it's very nice to be recognized by them," she said.

Kostuch also said at the time that she considered her greatest achievements to include the Oldman River dam fight and helping to preserve the Kootenay Plains in western Alberta as an ecological reserve.

More recently, she had been pushing Alberta's Progressive Conservative government to take more time to consider the social impacts of oilsands projects before pushing forward.

Members of the legislature paused Wednesday and paid tribute to her in the assembly. Outside the chamber, politicians from all parties spoke highly of Kostuch.

Alberta Liberal Leader Kevin Taft called her an environmental champion.

"She was a symbol of people who stood up, no matter what the odds, and fought for a better environment," said Taft. "She had a lot of opponents, but at the end of the day I think everyone respected her."

NDP Leader Brian Mason said Kostuch stood up to "some very big players" in Alberta and never flinched.

"I think she is someone who really, truly made a difference."

Earlier this week, the Alberta government announced a new bursary to mark her 30 years as an environmental leader. But Kostuch was too ill to travel from her home in Rocky Mountain House to attend the awards luncheon in Edmonton.

Kostuch, who worked as a veterinarian, came to Alberta from Minnesota more than three decades ago.

Last year, she revealed that she was ill for several years with multiple systems atrophy, for which there is no cure.

<http://www.oilweek.com/news.asp?ID=15574>