



Province of Alberta

The 28th Legislature
Second Session

Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, March 4, 2014

Issue 2

The Honourable Gene Zwozdesky, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 28th Legislature

Second Session

Zwozdesky, Hon. Gene, Edmonton-Mill Creek (PC), Speaker
Rogers, George, Leduc-Beaumont (PC), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees
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Blakeman, Laurie, Edmonton-Centre (AL),
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DeLong, Alana, Calgary-Bow (PC)
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New Democrat Opposition Whip
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Forsyth, Heather, Calgary-Fish Creek (W)
Fox, Rodney M., Lacombe-Ponoka (W)
Fraser, Hon. Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)
Fritz, Yvonne, Calgary-Cross (PC)
Goudreau, Hector G., Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley (PC)
Griffiths, Hon. Doug, Battle River-Wainwright (PC)
Hale, Jason W., Strathmore-Brooks (W)
Hancock, Hon. Dave, QC, Edmonton-Whitemud (PC)
Hehr, Kent, Calgary-Buffalo (AL)
Horne, Hon. Fred, Edmonton-Rutherford (PC)
Horner, Hon. Doug, Spruce Grove-St. Albert (PC)
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Jansen, Hon. Sandra, Calgary-North West (PC)
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McDonald, Everett, Grande Prairie-Smoky (PC)
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Pedersen, Blake, Medicine Hat (W)
Quadri, Sohail, Edmonton-Mill Woods (PC)
Quest, Hon. Dave, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (PC)
Redford, Hon. Alison M., QC, Calgary-Elbow (PC),
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Rodney, Hon. Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC)
Rowe, Bruce, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (W)
Sandhu, Peter, Edmonton-Manning (PC)
Sarich, Janice, Edmonton-Decore (PC)
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Smith, Danielle, Highwood (W),
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Webber, Len, Calgary-Foothills (PC)
Wilson, Jeff, Calgary-Shaw (W),
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader
Woo-Paw, Hon. Teresa, Calgary-Northern Hills (PC)
Xiao, David H., Edmonton-McClung (PC)
Young, Steve, Edmonton-Riverview (PC)

Party standings:

Progressive Conservative: 60

Wildrose: 17

Alberta Liberal: 5

New Democrat: 4

Independent: 1

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Robert H. Reynolds, QC, Law Clerk/ Director of Interparliamentary Relations	Fiona Vance, Sessional Parliamentary Counsel	Brian G. Hodgson, Sergeant-at-Arms
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		Gordon H. Munk, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
		Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>

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Doug Horner	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
Ken Hughes	Minister of Municipal Affairs
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Teresa Woo-Paw	Associate Minister – International and Intergovernmental Relations

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Deputy Chair: Mr. Fox

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Eggen	Quadri
Hehr	Rogers
Kubinec	Rowe
Lemke	Sarich
Luan	Stier
McDonald	

Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

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Deputy Chair: Mrs. Jablonski

Amery	Khan
Barnes	Sandhu
Dorward	Sherman
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Select Special Ethics Commissioner Search Committee

Chair: Mr. Rogers

Deputy Chair: Mr. Quadri

Blakeman	Leskiw
Eggen	McDonald
Goudreau	Saskiw
Lemke	

Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Chair: Ms Olesen

Deputy Chair: Mrs. Forsyth

Cusanelli	McAllister
DeLong	Notley
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Jablonski	Swann
Jeneroux	VanderBurg
Leskiw	

Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

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Bikman	Leskiw
Blakeman	Quadri
Brown	Wilson
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Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

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Johnson, L.	Towle
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Brown	Olesen
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Casey	Pedersen
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Khan	VanderBurg
Luan	Wilson
Notley	Young
Olesen	

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

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Amery	Luan
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Bikman	Hale
Bilous	Johnson, L.
Blakeman	Webber
Brown	Xiao
Calahasen	Young
Casey	

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, March 4, 2014

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Hon. members, let us pray. On this day I would ask all members of Alberta's Legislative Assembly as well as all others present here and those who are situated elsewhere and may be observing or listening to these proceedings to join with us together in a minute of silence and personal prayer as we reflect upon the lives of Canadian police officers and military personnel lost in service to their country, to their province, or their community. In a moment of silence let us remember them all. May their souls rest in eternal peace, and may a nation be eternally grateful for their service. God bless them and their families. Amen.

Please be seated.

Hon. members, as is our custom, we pay tribute on our first day to members and former members of this Assembly who have passed away since we last met. With our admiration and respect there is gratitude to the members of the families who shared the burdens of public office and public service. Today I would like to welcome members of the Abdurahman family who are present in the Speaker's gallery. I will ask each of them to rise as I call their names, and then perhaps we could recognize them all together once all have risen: Dr. Abdul Abdurahman, husband, from Edmonton; Miss Amanda Burnett, daughter, from Beaumont; Ross Abdurahman, son, from Edmonton; Vanessa Krysta, daughter, from Sherwood Park; Dean Krysta, son-in-law, from Sherwood Park; Dara Ann Irvine, granddaughter, from Edmonton; Christina Girringer, granddaughter, from Fort Saskatchewan; and Alexandra Irvine, granddaughter, from Edmonton.

Please know that our thoughts and prayers are with all of you, and thank you very, very much for coming today.

Mrs. Muriel Ross Abdurahman April 29, 1938, to December 22, 2013

The Speaker: Now I would ask all members to please rise as I deliver a tribute for Muriel Ross Abdurahman, who passed away on December 22, 2013. Mrs. Muriel Abdurahman served this Legislative Assembly of Alberta as the Member for Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan from June 15, 1993, until March 10, 1997. Trained as a nurse in her native Scotland, her commitment to community well-being led her to enter public service. Once settled in Fort Saskatchewan with her family, she was elected to town council for one term. She subsequently served as mayor for two terms and oversaw Fort Saskatchewan's incorporation as a city.

She then turned her attention to this Assembly, where she served for four years. Her intellect and experience made her a knowledgeable voice in this Legislature and elsewhere on issues such as finance, health, the environment, transportation, municipal affairs, and most of all she knitted it all together with one word, integrity. She emblazoned that phrase on all of us who had the pleasure of working with her.

In a moment of silent prayer, hon. members, I ask you to remember Mrs. Muriel Abdurahman as you may have known her. Rest eternal grant unto her, O Lord, and let light perpetual shine upon her. Amen.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Let us begin with some school groups. The hon. President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance.

Mr. Horner: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour and a privilege to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly a group of grade 9 junior high students from l'école Broxton Park school in Spruce Grove. These students did not have an opportunity to attend the Legislature when they were in grade 6, so it's kind of nice to see them here. As they're taking the federal government, they're comparing the differences between the federal government and the provincial government, and of course I helped them along with the differences on that one in the rotunda. They are accompanied by Ms Fran Korpela, their teacher. They are seated in the public gallery this afternoon. I would ask that they now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mrs. Leskiw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly 55 students from H.E. Bourgoin school and the Iron River school in my beautiful constituency of Bonnyville-Cold Lake. A warm welcome to some former colleagues of mine and to all the parents that accompanied these fabulous students here to Edmonton. They are seated in both galleries, and I would ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Xiao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a great pleasure for me to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly 51 students from Our Lady of the Prairies school in Edmonton-McClung and their teachers and parents Mr. Bill Swan, Mme Lisa Mercurio, Raphael Fortin, Gabrielle Liles, Miss Karla MacLennan, and Mrs. Darcia Westling. I ask the students and their chaperones to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you 30 members and parents from St. Angela elementary school. We have parent helpers Mrs. Theberge, Mrs. Davies, Mr. Skreden, and Mr. Henrik Larsen along with teachers Mrs. Perry and Mrs. Schoenberger. The class is also here for the whole week, so they're learning a lot about the Legislature. I'd ask them to stand, please, and receive the warm welcome of the Legislature.

The Speaker: Are there any other school groups?

If not, let's move on with other guests, starting with the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

1:40

Mr. Hughes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you on behalf of our colleague the hon. Minister of Education representatives from the town of Gibbons. I know that the hon. minister is really honoured to work with these outstanding constituents. He looks forward to meeting with them a little later today and discussing local issues and thanking them for the good work that they're doing on behalf of the community of Gibbons every day. I'd like to ask these individuals to please rise as I say their names and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly. I'm introducing that

Doug Horner, not this Doug Horner. This is Doug Horner, the mayor of Gibbons; Councillor Louise Bauder; Councillor Amber Harris; and Councillor Darren McCann.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, leader of the Liberal opposition.

Dr. Sherman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Marilyn Koren. She's an advocate for protecting children. Marilyn's granddaughter, Delonna Sullivan, was taken away by child services without an apprehension order and, tragically, died six days later. Marilyn and her daughter Jamie were successful in having a publication ban lifted through the Court of Queen's Bench. Marilyn is here to be a voice for Delonna and for every other child in our province and encourages us all to make our children our priority. I would like to ask Marilyn to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont, followed by Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Rogers: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly one of my constituents, Mr. Gordon Francis. Gordon is president and CEO of MD DataBank, an Alberta-based health care IT company that specializes in data assurance services for physicians and other custodians of health information. Gordon's experience spans more than 25 years and includes technology development in the aerospace, energy, and mining sectors. Gordon has spent the last 10 years in the health sector. Gordon is seated in the members' gallery, and I'd ask him to rise and receive the warm traditional welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake, followed by the Minister of Service Alberta.

Mrs. Leskiw: Thank you. It's a pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all the members of this Assembly three wonderful ladies: Olesia Luciw-Andryjowycz, president of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress Alberta Provincial Council; Daria Luciw, past president of the UCC; and Slavka Shulakewych, provincial co-ordinator of UCC. They are seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, and I ask them now to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Service Alberta, followed by Edmonton-Strathcona.

Mr. Griffiths: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to rise today to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly 20 new employees in the Department of Service Alberta. They're led by Tyler Jameson, the human resource services co-ordinator, and they're touring the Legislature as part of their orientation. Now, we know that we have incredible people working in every single department of this government, and Service Alberta is no different. I know these 20 individuals will be welcome additions to an already strong team in Service Alberta. I know they're spread between both galleries. I would ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, followed by Edmonton-Calder.

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I am pleased to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly my guest, Lori Sigurdson. Lori is the manager of professional affairs at the Alberta College of Social Workers, where she works on behalf of all provincial social workers to influence and improve government action on issues like child poverty, family violence, and homelessness. This evening Lori will be taking her commitment to these values to the next level when she also becomes the first candidate of any party to be officially nominated to run in the next provincial election. We look forward to having her join us here in the Legislature as the next NDP MLA for Edmonton-Riverview. I would now ask Lori to stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure if my group has an MLA in it somewhere as well. It's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you a group of 25 citizens from the town of Slave Lake. The guests are here today to send a strong message to this PC government that the crisis in health care in their community is very real and very unacceptable. I'll be tabling a petition with almost 3,000 signatures later today. If I could ask my guests to rise as I call their names and receive the warm traditional welcome of the Assembly: Scott Astle, Dion Villeneuve, Kristylynn Barton, Alma Conrad, Alenen Beaudet, Pat Kanzig, Mary Hulberg, Roberta Kozar, Kathy Klassen, Rita Hogan, Marilyn LaRivee, Maureen Mariampillai, Judy Nelson, and Sandra Azocar. If you could rise, please, and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Ministerial Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Events in Ukraine

Ms Redford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to address the current situation in Ukraine, a situation that has had a major impact around the world, including here in Alberta and particularly amongst our Ukrainian community of the entire province. The recent violence and the events over the weekend deeply sadden and concern us all. Our thoughts are with the people of Ukraine at this time. This uncertainty and the potential for conflict are quite scary indeed. To the extended families and loved ones of those who have been killed over the last few months, our hearts go out to you. We can all relate to the basic need to feel safe in our homes, our cities, our communities, and our country, to live in communities that uphold and support the rights to freedom, democracy, and the rule of law.

Mr. Speaker, as an Albertan with Ukrainian ancestry yourself I have no doubt that these recent developments have resonated with you. Alberta is home to more than a quarter of a million Albertans of Ukrainian descent and a strong and vibrant Ukrainian community. I recognize that all Ukrainian Albertans have been affected by these events; in fact, all Albertans have, whether through their strong cultural ties or through relatives and friends who are experiencing this crisis first-hand. Many Albertans have friends and family living in Ukraine, and we have heard so many scary stories in the past few months. I can only imagine their worry that at any given moment the ones that they love could lose their homes, could face violence, and could lose their lives.

As the situation in Ukraine escalates, the government of Alberta will continue to strongly support the government of Canada and

the Ukrainian people in opposing all efforts to undermine democracy and freedom in Ukraine. Alberta also supports international condemnation of the military intervention in Ukraine over the weekend as well as the government of Canada's diplomatic efforts and proposed economic sanctions, the preferred method of assisting Ukraine. Alberta will continue to stand united with the government of Canada in support of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. It is my hope that through diplomacy and collaboration stability can be restored to Ukraine.

Yesterday the ministers of Culture and International and Intergovernmental Relations joined me in a meeting with the Advisory Council on Alberta-Ukraine Relations to discuss the ongoing situation. The Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake is chair of this council, Mr. Speaker, and will continue to lead the council's efforts to represent Alberta's Ukrainian community, as you have done in the past. This will also give us the opportunity to identify and strengthen and further the co-operation between the governments of Ukraine and Alberta. The government of Alberta has also been working to develop an aid package for Ukraine. This will include up to \$100,000 in matching funding to facilitate the provision of humanitarian aid to Ukraine through Alberta Culture's international development program with a foundation grant of \$25,000.

Here in Alberta we will continue to monitor the situation in Ukraine alongside the Advisory Council on Alberta-Ukraine Relations, as every other citizen of this province will. Mr. Speaker, it is events like this that remind us of how privileged we are to live where it is safe, in a democratic country like Canada. We stand in solidarity with the people of Ukraine, and we are hopeful that a peaceful resolution will be found soon.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The Leader of the Official Opposition.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today in solidarity with Ukrainian Albertans and all freedom-loving Ukrainians around the world. Our thoughts are with all of those, especially those who have lost their lives, who have fought so hard for peace, liberty, and democracy. It is our sincere hope that Russia will choose to withdraw their troops from the Crimean peninsula. Samantha Power, the American ambassador to the United Nations, expressed the view of the global community perfectly when she said this: "Russia has every right to wish that events . . . had turned out differently, but it does not have the right to express that . . . using military force."

1:50

Make no mistake, Mr. Speaker, it is not Russia that is the problem; it is their leadership. Vladimir Putin has said that he had to intervene in Ukraine to protect ethnic Russians and the Russian language. The fact is that almost every Ukrainian speaks Russian. The vast majority of their television channels, magazines, and books are in the Russian language. There continues to be no evidence of any threats to Russian citizens or ethnic Russians in the Crimean peninsula despite Russia's insistence. Again, to quote Ms Power: "Russian mobilization is a response to an imaginary threat." We've seen this all before. Russia continues to occupy vast sections of the republics of Georgia and Moldova.

As the Official Opposition we support our federal government's call on the Russian President to respect the will of the Ukrainian people, who have made it clear that they will not tolerate corruption and want their country to be a free and prosperous democracy. Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird recently wrote to

the Ukrainian people: "Canada has never been indifferent. Canada will never be indifferent. Our country will continue to stand with you in your time of difficulty, and we will walk with you step-by-step in your journey to democracy." We in the Wildrose Official Opposition couldn't agree more.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I invite all Albertans to the March 12 fundraiser for humanitarian aid to Ukraine at St. John's Cultural Centre in Edmonton. Canada is home to the world's largest Ukrainian community outside of Ukraine and Russia. It is our duty to stand with them during this time of crisis.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, I assume you're rising to seek consent to participate?

Ms Blakeman: Indeed I am, Mr. Speaker. I'm hoping for the co-operation of my colleagues in the Legislative Assembly to allow the leaders of the Liberal opposition and the ND opposition to add their remarks.

The Speaker: Hon. members, a request has been received to allow participation by the leader of the Liberal opposition and the leader of the ND opposition, and by extension it goes out to you, independent member, as well, should you wish to participate.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Speaker: The leader of the Liberal opposition.

Dr. Sherman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, fellow members of the Assembly. The Alberta Liberals stand united with the Premier and the leaders of the opposition parties and each and every member of this Assembly in condemning the violence that's happening in Ukraine. Violence and terror are absolutely unacceptable in a peaceful world, where children and families are being punished for fighting for democracy and freedoms. As a democratic nation this is what our forefathers have struggled to protect, a safe world for our families and our children. We as a human race, as a global community, must stand with those who are suffering as they fight for the democracies that we fight to protect.

Mr. Speaker, the members of the Ukrainian community have helped transform not only this province or this country but, in fact, even this Legislature. You yourself – your family and your ancestors are from the Ukraine – and many members of this Assembly, a former Premier, former Liberal leader Laurence Decore helped transform this country, making sure that this was a multicultural and multilingual country. Members of the Ukrainian community in Alberta have been leaders in economics, academics, research, and all walks of life.

I stand alongside every member of this Assembly in solidarity, in fighting for protection of their family members back home. Mr. Speaker, I believe that if we as human beings focus on peace, love, and our shared humanity, we can make this a better world.

Thank you so much for the opportunity to stand up for our fellow human beings and brothers and sisters across the world. May God bless Ukraine. May God bless Alberta. May God bless Canada.

The Speaker: The hon. leader of the ND opposition.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to begin by thanking the Premier for raising this important issue in the Legislature and by expressing our support for the government's decision to match donations for humanitarian aid to help those who have been affected by the recent violence in Ukraine. Alberta's New Democrats believe that everyone has a right to safety, security, and democracy. The Alberta NDP calls for the

immediate withdrawal of foreign troops in Ukraine and an end to all foreign interference in Ukraine's internal affairs. Ukrainians must have the right to determine their own future peacefully and democratically. On behalf of the Alberta New Democrats I wish to express my concern for people of Ukrainian descent in Alberta who have family in Ukraine. Our hope is that they will remain safe and well. Finally, I extend the hopes of all Alberta New Democrats for a very bright and prosperous future for the Ukrainian people.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo? Not at this time. Thank you.

Statement by the Speaker

Rotation of Questions and Members' Statements

The Speaker: Hon. members, let us begin the process in just a moment. I want to indicate a couple of brief comments that affect the rotation. Before we proceed with the actual daily Routine and question period, I want to make this brief statement about that rotation and members' statements as well. This statement that I'm about to offer is further to the memo I sent to each of you on February 11, and included there were some attachments that pertained to projected sitting days and to the Oral Question Period rotation for this Second Session. There was a slight change required because of the change in caucus membership when the Member for Edmonton-Manning rejoined the government caucus in December of 2013.

The Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, who is the sole independent member, receives question 6 on day 4 of the Oral Question Period rotation. Accordingly, the member will have his first opportunity to ask a question next Monday, March 10, 2014. This will give that member one question every four days, which replicates what happened in the fall sitting of 2013, when each independent member received one question per sitting week. Furthermore, it mirrors what happened the last time there was only one independent member in this Assembly, during the fall sitting of the Fourth Session of the 27th Legislature, when the independent member at that time was given one question every four days.

Question 6 on day 1, which was asked by an independent member during the last sitting, will now revert to the Official Opposition. The PC caucus will receive one additional spot for one question on day 1.

Now, with respect to the rotation for members' statements, this has also been modified to provide for one statement for the independent member every three weeks. This is reflected on the projected sitting days calendar that I sent to you under the same aforementioned memo of February 11.

Bearing that in mind, let us proceed onward. We can start the clock.

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition. First question.

Premier's Travel to South Africa

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There's no sense beating around the bush here. I'll be blunt and short. There's one question that Albertans are asking the Premier, and I hear it everywhere I go. I'm sure all 87 of us are hearing the same thing, so here it is.

Will the Premier reimburse taxpayers for her \$45,000 South Africa trip? Yes or no?

Ms Redford: Well, Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the question. This has certainly been an issue that has been in the news, and it's one of the reasons that I went out to Albertans and said that I was concerned about what that final number was. It's why I apologized to Albertans. I took responsibility for that.

You know, this was a trip where the Prime Minister of Canada asked me to attend as part of government business, a Canadian delegation. I did participate in that trip. I did come back for a cabinet swearing-in. Mr. Speaker, I take full responsibility. We have taken steps to ensure that these sorts of situations don't happen again, and that's what I've said to Albertans.

Ms Smith: The problem is, Mr. Speaker, that the Premier of Nova Scotia went for \$1,000.

This government continues to claim that they are living within their means, but when the Premier herself spends more on a single trip than thousands of hard-working Albertans earn in a single year, it is impossible to take those claims seriously. The Premier's credibility is in tatters and with it the credibility of the government on fiscal issues. Again to the Premier: doesn't she see that her actions and her words simply don't line up?

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, in fact, that is the reason that when this issue first came up, I did go out and speak to Albertans. I was very forthright with Albertans. There is no doubt that this is a number that troubles me as well. It was certainly part of the work that I did as the Premier of this province.

Mr. Speaker, we will continue to do the work that Albertans have asked us to do. We had a throne speech yesterday and have a budget on Thursday that will demonstrate clearly to Albertans that the fiscal framework that is in place in this province is going to allow for continued success. That is the work that this government will continue to do.

2:00

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, that's not leadership, and Albertans deserve better.

In criticizing the Premier's South Africa trip expenses, the Member for Edmonton-Riverview gave voice to thousands of frustrated Albertans when he said that they were inconsistent with Alberta values. He was right. Albertans don't abuse their privileges; Albertans don't take what doesn't belong to them; and when Albertans screw up, they admit it, they fix it, and they do it without being told. Again to the Premier: why does she continue to be so offside with the values of everyday hard-working Albertans?

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, you know, as I said, I thank the hon. member for the question. I clearly stood up in front of Albertans, said that I screwed up, and did take responsibility. I certainly hope that that is something that Albertans understand. I will say that I have had many Albertans ask me that question as well. I've been forthright with respect to that. We've certainly taken steps with respect to moving forward to ensure that we continue to be accountable to Albertans. We have an expense policy in place and complete transparency with respect to these costs, which is one of the reasons that we are able today to talk about this issue. We were honest, we were straightforward, and I took responsibility.

The Speaker: Thank you.

On the second main question, the hon. opposition leader.

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, taking responsibility means paying the money back.

The government has a travel, meal, and hospitality expense policy that the Premier should probably get familiar with. It spells out in pretty clear terms what kinds of expenses are legitimate to claim on behalf of taxpayers and what kinds aren't. The Premier's South Africa trip clearly doesn't make the grade. So let me ask the Premier a simple question. When did the Treasury Board give the Premier and her staff a blanket exemption from the government's own travel policy?

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, I went to South Africa because the Prime Minister of Canada asked me to go. That, in my mind, is government business. There are many different functions that many of us in this House, whether we're members or members of the government, undertake as a result of our responsibilities and our duties. Certainly this was one of those. It was a very tight time frame. You'll know that we do have policies and procedures in place with respect to this. We continue to abide by those. It's why I spoke to Albertans about this, and it's why I apologized to them.

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, the policy states that if an official travels at a cost, that has to be "direct, practical or cost-effective." That's what the policy says. They're only entitled to reimbursement on that amount. Anything over and above that is the sole and personal responsibility of the individual. In the example of the Premier's South Africa trip she could have travelled to Ottawa for a few thousand dollars. Instead, she spent \$45,000, a difference of \$40,000. To the Premier: why did she violate her government's own travel policy?

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, as Albertans know, all of these events happened in a very short period of time. [interjection] Well, it was a short period of time. There is certainly a policy that we have in place in our office with respect to estimating costs of missions before we attend those missions. Because of the timeliness of this, it was very difficult to do that. As I said to Albertans, I was surprised by that number. That was something that I was disappointed in, and it's why I stood up and took responsibility for that.

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, the policy goes on to state: "taxpayer dollars are to be used prudently and responsibly." Obviously the South Africa trip expenses were nothing of the sort. We've heard the Premier several times now claim responsibility and say sorry, but she continues to do nothing to demonstrate her remorse. Again to the Premier: doesn't she realize that her stubborn refusal to repay this bill is the ultimate contempt for taxpayers?

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, as soon as these numbers were brought to my attention, I went out and said to Albertans that I was disappointed by the numbers. I said that I took responsibility. I apologized to Albertans. We will ensure that that never happens again. We've taken steps with respect to requesting the Auditor General to review out-of-province travel on government claims, and we've also taken steps to ask the President of Treasury Board to review our expense policy in the context of RFPs for accommodation, for travel. These are steps that Albertans can have confidence in.

Mr. Anderson: Mr. Speaker, you and I are parents, as is the Premier, and I think we've all had the opportunity with our children to teach them that when you take something that doesn't belong to you, you give it back after you say sorry. Premier, you took at least \$45,000 that did not belong to you, and you spent it on a trip that should have cost you about a thousand dollars. You

did so not for the benefit of Albertans; you did so to pamper yourself. Will you do the right and honourable thing and pay back the money?

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, every single day we make decisions in this House that honour the trust that Albertans have put in us as a government. There is no doubt that that was a time when it was very difficult and very quick to make the decision to attend that trip. You'll know that on the Friday we changed cabinet. On the next Friday we were going to swear in cabinet. There were a number of logistics that were involved in that trip. But aside from all that I said to Albertans that I did take responsibility, that I was sorry. We have put steps in place to ensure that this does not happen again, and we'll abide by those.

Mr. Anderson: Taking responsibility means paying back the money, Mr. Speaker.

You may remember the infamous no-meet committee prior to the last election. Only after public outrage did the Premier finally order her caucus members to pay back the money they had received. So, Premier, some might say that you're practising a double standard here, ordering your caucus to pay back money that didn't really belong to them but refusing to pay back your own \$45,000 flight of fancy. Premier, why will you not take responsibility, not only say you're sorry but pay back the money?

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, I will remind the House that this was a Canadian delegation to a state funeral for someone who mattered to the world, and that was business that I undertook on behalf of Albertans as the Premier of this province. I do not disagree with the opposition, with my colleague from Edmonton-Riverview, and with some people in Alberta who have said to me that that was a very high number for two people to travel to South Africa. I don't disagree with that. I've acknowledged that. I've taken responsibility for it. We've put steps in place to review those policies, and we'll stand by those.

Mr. Anderson: You can't take something that's not yours and then apologize and then not give it back. That's not how the world works, Premier. You're embarrassing yourself, and you're embarrassing your caucus with this and rightfully so.

Albertans are saying that if you can't competently manage a million dollar travel budget, how can we have any faith in you to manage a multibillion dollar Education or Health budget? How can we? Premier, don't blame the Wildrose or the media or your staff for the problems here. Will you do the right thing and pay back the money?

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, we have clearly said that this was an unfortunate circumstance. I personally wish that it hadn't happened. It did, and we will now move on and continue to do what Albertans did. If the hon. member has any doubt about whether or not this government can manage the economy and the budget of this province, just wait until tomorrow.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, leader of the Liberal opposition.

Dr. Sherman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The only person who looks good in the Travelgate affair is the Premier of Nova Scotia, a fiscally responsible Liberal, who managed to get to South Africa and back for less than a thousand dollars. Everyone knows that this Premier, on the other hand, who claims her government is committed to living within its means, billed Albertans \$45,000 for essentially the same trip. To the Premier. You've apologized.

You've acknowledged you made a mistake. But Albertans don't want your words, Premier. Just pay the money back. They expect action. Will you please pay the money back?

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, I cannot disagree with what the hon. member has said with respect to the fact that this was a large amount of money. That is why, as soon as I realized how much it was, I said to Albertans that I agreed with that comment. I took responsibility for this. Even though it was the business of the government of Alberta and I travelled as Premier on a Canadian delegation, it was more money than we expected it to be. There were some circumstances related to that, and I certainly take full responsibility. I have apologized to Albertans, and I hope that Albertans will accept that apology.

2:10

Dr. Sherman: Mr. Speaker, nobody disputes that the Premier and any MLA have reasonable duties they must perform. There is an old saying that when you find yourself in a hole, stop digging. The Premier seems to have forgotten that when a similar expense scandal erupted, she forced members of her own caucus to take up a collection to reimburse taxpayers for the no-pay committee fiasco. To the Premier: when it comes to returning wasted taxpayer dollars, why is there one standard of rules for your caucus members and another standard of rules for you? Why, Premier?

Ms Redford: Now, Mr. Speaker, I know that the hon. member wants to draw a comparison between these two circumstances, but they were actually entirely different circumstances. I travelled to South Africa, I attended a state funeral as the Premier of this province at the request of the Prime Minister, and I returned. As I have said, while this was an unfortunate amount of money, which I fully acknowledge and I've taken responsibility for, I don't think anyone will dispute that I actually went on the trip.

Dr. Sherman: Mr. Speaker, the Premier is right. These are different circumstances. The MLAs were forced to be on the committee; the Premier had an option to take a cheaper flight. This government is ruthless when it comes to clawing back money from AISH recipients, the assured income for the severely handicapped, and single mothers on welfare. It even goes as far as sending collection agencies after them. Yet there seems to be no end to the government's sense of entitlement or the amount of money it will spend to make itself comfortable. To the Premier: why the double standard?

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, we run a \$40 billion corporation that matters an awful lot to the people of Alberta and to the economy of this country. I remember at the last election listening to Albertans talk about the fact that they were proud that Alberta had a role on the Canadian stage and the international stage. It's one of the reasons that we continue to do the work that we do, and there is no doubt that there are expenses associated with that. I have clearly said that this amount of money was not an acceptable amount. I've apologized to Albertans, and I believe that as we do that, we should be able to move forward.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, leader of the ND opposition.

Government Policies

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is the best of times; it is the worst of times. In this PC government's tale of two

Albertas the Premier jets around the world in first class while Alberta families must make do with less. Legislated wage freezes, pension rollbacks, and cuts to programs for vulnerable Albertans are the thin gruel offered by this PC government to Alberta families. Why does the Premier expect Alberta families to make sacrifice after sacrifice while she and her friends live high on the hog at the taxpayers' expense?

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the fact that the hon. member understands the work that we all do as members of this Legislature, the work that we do as elected politicians, the work that we do as cabinet ministers, and the work that I do as Premier. There is no doubt that as we do that work, there are expenses associated with that. One of the things that has been troubling to me, and I said it to Albertans – I've written today to the Auditor General on this, and I'm quite happy to table that letter – is that we must take a look at how those expenses are costed and what they are. It's why I went out and said to Albertans that I took responsibility, and I apologized for something that I wish hadn't happened.

The Speaker: The hon. leader. First supplemental.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The one thing I don't understand is the Premier's double standard. Why won't this Premier recognize that her exorbitant use of public funds for travel, excessive security, use of government aircraft, and staff severances is an unfair and unjust contrast to frozen wages and reduced pensions for public employees in our province?

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member wants to ask me questions with respect to this circumstance, that's fine, but it is entirely inappropriate for this hon. member to mislead the House with respect to AUPE negotiations or pension reform. It is not appropriate to suggest for any reason that the great work that our Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board has done with respect to pension reform will not be helpful to public servants in the future. Let's remember that as we saw last week, our better offer to AUPE involved wage increases for four years.

The Speaker: Point of order from Edmonton-Strathcona has been noted at 2:16.

Final supplemental, hon. leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, zero plus zero plus zero doesn't add up to an increase every year.

The vast majority of Albertans do not have private aircraft to pick them up in Palm Springs. If they do have to go to an important event such as a funeral, they drive or they use a commercial flight. Again, Mr. Speaker, it's the tale of two Albertas. To the Premier: won't she abandon her lavish ways and stop her attacks on Alberta families' incomes and their pensions?

Ms Redford: Mr. Speaker, you know, I don't expect a lot from the hon. member, but I think he could at least read the newspaper. The offer that we put on the table to AUPE was increases over four years; not a zero in the deal. So if we're going to talk about apples, let's compare apples to apples, not apples and oranges.

The Speaker: Thank you.

We're going to move on to the sixth main question, so no preambles from this point on, please.

Mathematics Curriculum

Mr. McAllister: Mr. Speaker, parents, teachers, and students across this province are very concerned with the radical new curriculum rewrite by Alberta Education. You see, the government and its educators believe in inquiry-based/discovery learning, but to forget about the fundamentals and to abandon tried, tested, and true methods that our kids have been using like times tables is ridiculous, and it does not serve our kids well. Will the Minister of Education do the right thing and ensure, not provide an option but ensure, that the fundamentals of mathematics like times tables are taught in our schools?

Mr. J. Johnson: I will.

Mr. McAllister: Wonderful, Mr. Speaker. Happy to hear it.

How will he do it, when will he do it, and will he make sure that each and every school is teaching times tables?

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, those skills that he's talking about are required in the Alberta curriculum today, but exactly how a teacher teaches them from one classroom to the next is a little bit different. Obviously, I expect my kid to know the times tables, and I expect every kid in the province to. One of the things we're doing with the review of the curriculum is that we want to make sure that the basics of literacy and numeracy are becoming more emphasized and are foundational across all subject areas, not just in math and language arts. I'd be happy to talk to the member about that. He obviously has done no research on it, and he has not inquired with me, and he hasn't shown up at any of the sessions.

Mr. McAllister: Well, Mr. Speaker, there are more than 7,000 Albertans that have signed a petition disagreeing with what this minister has to say today, so I would say that given that there are 7,000-plus Albertans who would like to see the fundamentals taught in our education system, will the minister agree to meet with Dr. Nhung Tran-Davies, who has spent the time to put this together to stand up for our kids while he and the bureaucrats believe in edubabble and double-talk as opposed to representing Alberta's students?

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, we have in fact met with the individual. I have looked at the petition. You know, I'm really heartened by the fact that a parent is engaged and has done that great work, and 7,000 names on there – as a matter of fact, they're not all from Alberta. Many are from outside our jurisdiction. But if there's even one parent that's concerned about that, we'll take that into account. We've had her meet with very senior people, including my chief of staff, my deputy minister, and the people working on curriculum, and although we do those revisions on an ongoing basis, we're going to take into account what she's brought forward and what other parents are telling us, including research from around the world and best practices. We're going to make sure that this is the best jurisdiction in the world for our kids to go to school.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, followed by Calgary-Fish Creek.

Provincial Fiscal Policies

Mr. Dorward: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday our Premier introduced Bill 1, the Savings Management Act, legislation that will see the creation of two new endowments and enhancements to the Alberta heritage scholarship fund. My question is to the

Minister of Finance. Is this really important for Albertans at this time?

Ms Blakeman: Point of order, please.

The Speaker: Point of order has been noted there.

Hon. Minister of Finance, I'm going to allow you to briefly comment on this and explain to the member where this actually fits in the Routine.

Mr. Horner: Well, Mr. Speaker, obviously, when we went out around the province last year doing our budget consultations, what we heard from Albertans was: yes, you put legislation into the House last year to legislate savings, but it's important that Albertans understand how those savings are working for them. And that's essentially what Bill 1 is. Hopefully, when we debate it in this House, it will be passed.

2:20

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, I'll invite you to ask a supplementary question that doesn't run the risk of being fouled, of being in anticipation.

Mr. Dorward: To the same minister: given that last year you introduced the Fiscal Management Act, acting on a commitment this government made to save in good and challenging times also, how does more spending on endowments and funds fit into that body of work? [interjections]

Mr. Horner: Well, Mr. Speaker, it is a good question because that is a question that comes up in round-tables that we have around the province and open houses that we have in many of their constituencies where Albertans have said: we want you to save, but we also want to know what you're doing with the savings. And that is a critical point of where we're going next. The future of this province means that we have to leverage what we have in the bank, and that means we're going to be using the earnings from those savings for what we're going to be doing in the future.

Mr. Dorward: Again to the same minister: you have said that borrowing for capital purposes is good for Alberta taxpayers because of low rates, but with this legislation it seems like you've opened the government purse strings and you're spending our savings. [interjections]

The Speaker: Why don't we just move on past this? I'll make a comment later with respect to what anticipation is so that everybody understands it more clearly, and I'll take the fault for not having explained it more thoroughly earlier.

Calgary-Fish Creek, followed by Stony Plain.

Health Services in Slave Lake

Mrs. Forsyth: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday's Speech from the Throne indicated that the government was working with communities across Alberta to develop family care clinics, yet we have people in the gallery representing their community because this government was not working with them on the already established FCCs. The pilot project Slave Lake FCC was created two years ago, and this past fall four physicians abruptly resigned. Now a community is left with fewer physicians per capita than the country of Nigeria. What is the minister going to do about Slave Lake's grave concerns about the deteriorating access to health care?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Horne: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm delighted that the hon. member refers to the family care clinic in Slave Lake. It wasn't that long ago, following a fire in that community, that the community was down to one doctor. With the introduction of the family care clinic model and the attraction that that brought to physicians and other health professionals, the number of doctors was raised from one to nine. Since then we've seen tremendous progress in Slave Lake in the addition of nurse practitioners, other health care professionals working in the family care clinic, working with local physicians, and working in the emergency department of the hospital. This is a model that is working. It is true that there is a dispute involving physicians at the moment, but the issue is not the model.

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, Mr. Speaker, let's talk about that model that is working. Given that Slave Lake has lost its obstetrics, its trauma service, the local air ambulance, and now half of the doctors, how can the 11,000 residents be confident that they can get the care they need when they need it?

Mr. Horne: Well, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you today that there are six physicians practising in Slave Lake. There are a number of other physicians that have site visits scheduled to the community. This is a community that has been served well by the family care clinic model. It is true that there are four physicians that chose to resign their positions in Slave Lake, as I understand it, in order to pursue private practice in the community. That is certainly their right as private contractors. But the fact remains that this is a vibrant community with a successful model that is attracting more doctors.

Mrs. Forsyth: So, Mr. Speaker, let's continue talking about that successful model. Given that first-time expectant mothers and those with high-risk pregnancies cannot give birth in their home communities because of the lack of doctors, anesthesiologists, and obstetrics support and given that Slave Lake's birth rate is substantially higher than the provincial average, does the minister really expect a mom in labour to drive two and a half hours to a hospital in Edmonton? Frankly, Minister, if it would have been me, I would have never made it.

Mr. Horne: Well, Mr. Speaker, if this hon. member is actually interested in supporting the citizens of Slave Lake and recruiting doctors to their community, I suggest she might want to try a different tack. The fact is that one of the four physicians in the community that resigned to pursue private practice had the obstetrical qualifications that the hon. member refers to. At least one of the physicians that will be making site visits to Slave Lake has those qualifications. If this member is interested in supporting that community, she might want to change her recruitment message.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Stony Plain, followed by Calgary-Buffalo.

Electricity Market Investigation

Mr. Lemke: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As you know, I represent the constituency of Stony Plain. There are several electricity generation facilities in my constituency. A lot of people in my community pay attention to electricity, and they are paying attention to what is going on with TransAlta and the Market Surveillance Administrator. My question is to the new Associate

Minister – Electricity and Renewable Energy. What the heck is going on?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Kennedy-Glans: Thank you for my first question in this House. This is a really serious matter and one that we're all paying a lot of attention to, so I'm grateful for the question. Briefly, here is what's been happening. The Market Surveillance Administrator, our electricity watchdog, investigated TransAlta for what they're calling anticompetitive behaviour. The MSA has also filed notice with the Alberta Utilities Commission about these allegations. The parties named in the investigation have also filed complaints about the MSA's conduct. Mr. Speaker, this is evidence that the system is working, and it is exactly what should be happening when complaints and allegations arise.

The Speaker: Hon. member, first supplemental.

Mr. Lemke: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With all this finger pointing back and forth, how is the AUC going to proceed?

Ms Kennedy-Glans: Unlike some others here in the House, we are not going to jump to conclusions. The AUC is gathering its facts right now to determine how to proceed with the issues. On your question about their capacity the AUC has the experience and the expertise to review these complaints. They have engineers. They have electricity experts. They have lawyers. They have economists. They have people equipped to dig deep on these issues. Mr. Speaker, I have confidence in the AUC's ability to consider and adjudicate these questions.

The Speaker: Final supplemental.

Mr. Lemke: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If the AUC finds that the market manipulation was happening, how is that going to help consumers who have overpaid for electricity?

Ms Kennedy-Glans: I'll say it again. We cannot prejudice the outcome of this AUC decision. If market manipulation did happen, the government has given AUC the authority to levy a penalty of up to a million dollars a day. As well, they can claw back any economic benefits the AUC determines resulted from that behaviour. Protecting electricity consumers is a priority of this government, which is exactly why we have the regulator and the watchdog in place. If the AUC levies a fine, this government will ensure that those funds are directed to consumers.

Thank you.

Mr. Hehr: Well, TransAlta Corporation was criticized last week for its alleged manipulation of the electricity market, but they cite documents that show this government may have the most serious explaining to do. It's troubling that in recent years the Market Surveillance Administrator, which is supposed to protect Alberta electricity consumers, appears to have adopted a regulatory approach whereby economic withholding, which is just price gouging, is not only permitted but perhaps encouraged. To the associate minister of electricity: was the MSA acting on government instructions when it adopted the new Wild West approach to market surveillance?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Kennedy-Glans: Thank you for my second question in the House today. The MSA is an independent body that was created when this government chose to deregulate electricity. It was

created for the express purpose of what it's doing today. And if you look at the qualifications of the individual who is acting in that capacity today, you'll be nothing but impressed.

Mr. Hehr: When the MSA was operating under its own policies and procedures, which clearly said that economic withholding is a good thing for these companies to do, why didn't the government step in and say that it is ridiculous to allow corporations to be gouging Albertans on their power bills?

Ms Kennedy-Glans: If the government of Alberta interfered every time there was an allegation about corporate activity, we would be awfully busy.

We have created a system of oversight of the electricity system, including protection of consumers, that is predicated upon the independence of the watchdog and the Alberta Utilities Commission, and we respect those roles and those commissions.

2:30

Mr. Hehr: Given that the Market Surveillance Administrator clearly published two reports that said, and I quote, that private corporations were allowed to engage in economic withholding, end quote, why was the minister and her department not aware, and why didn't they end this practice when that amounts to price gouging?

Ms Kennedy-Glans: I believe that this hon. member might be jumping to conclusions. I would rather that these questions be reviewed by experts in the place where we've determined for that adjudication to occur. Concluding that there has been wrongdoing here is entirely inappropriate.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, followed by Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Public Service Pensions

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier says that we should slash the pensions of over 300,000 retirees because we need to, quote, live within our means. But I think the Premier could benefit from a workshop on living within one's means. For public-sector retirees, their means are around an average of \$15,000 a year. To convert that into language the Premier can understand, that's just a touch more than a private flight back from a vacation in Palm Springs or about one-third of a trip for two to South Africa. To the Minister of Finance: aren't you even a bit embarrassed about attacking the modest incomes of retired provincial workers in the face of your Premier's repeated display of overindulgence?

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker, almost two years ago the Premier asked me to work with the pension boards through the local authorities pension board, the public-sector pension board, the Management Employees Pension Board, and the special forces board, all of whom are made up of members of those unions and those payers in the system, if you will, to ensure the sustainability of pensions into the future. She also asked that I would look at all of the options, including the DC option, which is the Wildrose Alliance's option of defined contributions, including, perhaps, even some other options. There was a resounding that they wanted to protect the defined benefit plan. In order to protect the defined guarantee, we must make some changes for the future.

Ms Notley: Well, given that this government has decided to actually eliminate the retirement security provided by guaranteed inflationary protection and given that this will mean seniors who

have devoted decades of service to this province will slowly slip into poverty as they age, will the Minister of Finance at least be making the same cuts to the Premier's travel budget so that she will eventually be forced to fly commercial, make the odd transfer in L.A., and perhaps take the occasional red-eye like the rest of us?

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker, I wish that members opposite would stop trying to scare retirees with misinformation. We are not getting rid of the guarantee for defined benefit contributions. Eighty per cent of Albertans do not have a defined benefit plan. The public sector has a guarantee of a percentage of probably what would be their highest earnings in their work with the public sector, a guarantee of a percentage of that for life. That guarantee stands. It stands today. It will stand after the changes. What will change is being able to afford to pay cost-of-living adjustments every year of . . .

Ms Notley: Given that the average pension payout is a mere \$15,000 per year and given that the PC decision to eliminate the 85 factor has been estimated to represent a 20 per cent clawback from that very group, instead of standing behind the Premier's lavish spending habits, why won't this government stop picking on people who can least afford it and reverse the mean-spirited attacks on our public-sector workers?

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure where the hon. member has been, but if she was to look around the world, defined benefit programs are under stress. They're under stress because we're living longer. We have not the same number of people coming into the system as are now dependent upon the system. That's very evident in all of these plans. What we have done is presented to the membership of the plans a compromise from where we were before. In fact, we are not getting rid of the early retirement subsidies. We are changing from an 85 to a 55, to a 90-60. There are still early retirement provisions with full pension at age 60 within the new proposals.

Electricity Market Investigation

(continued)

Mr. Anglin: Mr. Speaker, shocking news: the government's own Market Surveillance Administrator is now satisfied companies have been rigging electricity prices since 2011. This is three years of stealing from seniors, low-income families, and Alberta's businesses. Last May that minister accused the Wildrose of fear-mongering when we brought this issue forward. When will this government get its head out of the sand and put a stop to this stealing from Albertans once and for all?

The Speaker: Hon. minister, if you wish.

Ms Kennedy-Glans: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes. Thank you for the third question today. I want to respond to this question by focusing on consumers. Again, I want to restate that we cannot prejudice the outcome of this case, and I hope that the hon. member understands that. If market manipulation did take place, the government has given the AUC the ability to charge penalties of up to a million dollars a day and also to claw back any economic benefits. Consumers are a priority. If the AUC levies a fine, this government will ensure that those funds go to consumers.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Anglin: Given that the last time TransAlta got caught stealing \$5 million from Albertan ratepayers, they had to pay a fine of \$380,000, why should Albertans trust this government or the AUC to even care when the punishment for stealing from consumers is nothing more than a cost of doing business?

The Speaker: Hon. members, we allow a lot of leeway here. I'd caution you to be very careful when you use the word "stealing" going forward, okay?

Mr. Anglin: Absolutely.

The Speaker: I don't see anybody rising on a point of order yet, but it's sure to come.

Ms Kennedy-Glans: Again, I must remind this hon. member that we cannot prejudice the outcome of this case. It's being reviewed by the AUC as it should be. I restate that we care about consumers. Consumers will be looked after if there is a problem here.

Mr. Anglin: Given that the MSA allegations are, in effect, allegations of fraud, theft, destruction of evidence, all of which are criminal in nature, will this government ask the RCMP to investigate and file criminal charges as necessary and hold these companies and individuals to account?

Mr. Campbell: Point of order.

The Speaker: Hon. Government House Leader, you rose on a point of order, I assume, at 2:39?

Mr. Campbell: Yes.

The Speaker: Let's go on with the answer to the question here.

Ms Kennedy-Glans: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To conclude, I hope, the RCMP will make their decision about what they do. This member is getting way ahead of himself. This decision has yet to be reviewed by the Alberta Utilities Commission. They have the ability to do that. They have the authority to do that. I would like to let them do that.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, followed by Lacombe-Ponoka.

Bullying Prevention

Ms Fenske: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. More than 26 per cent of Albertans believe that bullying is just a part of growing up. Last week many members of this Assembly wore pink to help change that stigma and stand up against bullying. My first question is to the hon. Minister of Education. Given that bullying is a concern for many parents and students of all ages, what processes are in place in our schools to ensure that bullying is dealt with in a serious manner?

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, thanks to the member for the question and for being such a strong advocate for her constituents. On this particular issue I know that she as a former teacher is well in tune with it. You know, bullying in any form, anywhere, at any time in our schools is unacceptable, and we've set very high standards and expectations for school boards. One of the biggest things we've done recently is the Education Act. We passed some of the strongest language of expectations with respect to anti-bullying language in the entire country. I'd also point out that we've got a new Associate Minister of Family and Community

Safety, which makes a great statement for this government in terms of our priorities. In short, there are lots of tools out there. There is lots of support and even higher expectations on the roles and responsibilities of school boards and parents . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
First supplemental.

Ms Fenske: Thank you. To the same minister: if parents are unhappy with how bullying is being addressed at their child's school, whether it be lack of initiative or consequences, what other options are available to ensure that a fair course of action is taken?

2:40

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, the first thing we always encourage parents to do is to try to resolve the issue locally. Obviously, that means talking with teachers and if unsatisfied there, of course, talking with the administrator at the school. But if they don't get satisfaction, the autonomy, the authority, and the responsibility for this rests with the local school board. Then they've got the superintendent to deal with. They've got an elected board, duly elected officials that have a lot of responsibility. If they're not getting satisfaction, if they're not happy with the outcomes, we welcome them to come to our office or work through our local MLAs. But, obviously, first we want them to work with the local schools and the local school boards.

The Speaker: Final supplemental.

Ms Fenske: Thank you. My final question is to the Associate Minister of Family and Community Safety. At the community level where would you direct children and families who encounter bullying?

Ms Jansen: Mr. Speaker, every community has its own unique needs when it comes to resources for bullying and cyberbullying, and we are very proud in this government to have created a toll-free provincial bullying helpline. It's 1.888.456.2323. It's a wonderful resource. It's available in more than 170 languages 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It is fantastic. We appreciate the fact that a lot of people use it. It is a great resource.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka, followed by Calgary-Cross.

School Construction in Blackfalds

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Almost one full year ago the community of Blackfalds in my riding got some really good news, or so they thought. A new K to 6 school for the community was announced. But it is now one year later, and the only work that has been undertaken at the site has been the completion of a large Building Alberta sign. Can the Minister of Education please explain to my constituents when Blackfalds' new school will consist of more than just a couple of signposts and a PC billboard?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a good question. I can assure you that the first piece of work we do isn't when the hole gets dug. There's a lot of planning going on, and our schedule for that school is still 2016. We've got all the people working diligently to make that happen, and I expect that the people of Blackfalds are looking forward with much anticipation to that school. It's part of our building Alberta plan. It's a commitment

that this Premier and this government made, and we have every intention of fulfilling that very commitment.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Minister, there are many communities in Alberta that are waiting for schools. Given that the government lists that the project is under way on their online inventory of school announcements, can the minister please explain why not a single shovel has been in the ground since officials left the site of the announcement? Show me the shovels, minister.

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker, as I said in my earlier answer, we intend to have those schools open in 2016. That's still the plan. The shovels will be there in due course, but those people in those communities around Alberta ought to be very glad they chose this Premier and this government, with our building Alberta plan, because the opposition, with their smoke and mirrors plan, would not be providing the infrastructure that Albertans need and depend upon, the ones they asked us to deliver and the ones that this Premier and this government are delivering. That's why we're here. That side would not be providing the infrastructure that Albertans need.

The Speaker: The hon. member. Final supplemental.

Mr. Fox: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Minister, the clock is ticking. Will the students of Blackfalds be in their new school before the 2016 election is called, as your government has promised? Yes or no?

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member will be glad to know that he's essentially quoting the Premier. When she asked me to be the Infrastructure minister, she said: minister, the clock is ticking. She said: we want to get those schools open in 2016; it's your job and your ministry's job to get it done. Those are the instructions and the directions I'm working under, part of the building Alberta plan. It's a promise made. We intend to have it a promise kept. We're committed to it.

Physiotherapy Services for Seniors

Mrs. Fritz: Mr. Speaker, many seniors are slipping and falling in this cold weather, and they need physiotherapy to recover from their injuries. As you know, physiotherapy is not covered by the Alberta health care insurance program, the plan, and coverage through other programs is very, very limited. My question today is to the Minister of Health. Seniors in my constituency want to know what you will do, Mr. Minister, to ensure they have access to physiotherapy without causing them financial hardship.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Horne: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is an excellent question, and the weather that we have experienced this winter brings to mind a number of hazards that seniors face, particularly those who are living independently in the community and many of them alone.

We continue to be committed to supporting seniors to live independently. They have a number of options currently available to them when it comes to a full spectrum of health care services. This includes physiotherapy. A number of publicly funded physiotherapy services are offered through community rehabilitation programs across the province, and in this instance the physio-

therapist determines the number of treatments that will be publicly funded.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mrs. Fritz: Thank you for that answer, Mr. Minister. To the same minister, Mr. Speaker, given that seniors often need additional treatment for physiotherapy over and above what is available, my question is: will you look at programs to cover physiotherapy needed to help keep the seniors living independently in their homes?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Horne: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Physiotherapy is one of several supports that can be made available to seniors to help them. Obviously, when the issue of a fall arises, the involvement of physicians and physiotherapists and occupational therapists and other professionals is warranted, but seniors have a number of choices, as I have said, when it comes to accessing these services. Low-income seniors who require publicly funded physiotherapy can continue to access these through the flexible community rehabilitation programs that we have in place. Some services that are not covered by government are available through private and other plans.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mrs. Fritz: Well, that's the problem. Some services aren't available through government, and as I said, the programs are limited and not everyone is in the low-income stream. In fact, they're just above that, so they're caught in this very serious situation.

My question to you, Mr. Minister, is: will you consider reversing your current health care policy to restore the physiotherapy funding for seniors that was lost five years ago? It is my sincere hope that you will say yes.

Mr. Horne: Well, Mr. Speaker, what I can commit to and what we have already committed to is increasing access to all primary health care for seniors, including access to physiotherapists through family care clinics and through primary care networks. I will certainly admit to the hon. member that I in my own constituency have received letters from seniors who feel that the number of physiotherapy visits that are covered through the community rehabilitation program may not be sufficient to meet their needs. We will review that. But it would of course be short sighted to look only at that aspect of support for services for seniors that is needed in Alberta today.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat, followed by Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley.

Medicine Hat Landfill Fire

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Much to the relief of Cypress county, the Westar Landfill fire, that raged for a month, was extinguished at the start of the new year. Residents were displaced, toxic materials were burned, and chemicals were released. At this point we don't know what caused the fire, but we do know that not one provincial check was done to monitor proper protocol. Can the minister of environment explain why his government took a do-nothing approach to ensure that the proper dumping procedures were being followed?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Campbell: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I disagree wholeheartedly with the member. My department is currently investigating this fire and its cause. Once the investigation is complete, my department will determine if any of the environmental authorizations or regulations were not followed, and appropriate enforcement action will be taken. Enforcement actions can include warnings, administrative penalties, orders, or charges. My department also has monitored air quality extensively during the course of the incident. From January of this year results from the air monitoring are posted on our website. Nothing of concern has been identified at this time.

Mr. Barnes: Given that this situation revealed how serious the consequences could be for all associated and all in the neighbourhood, what is the government doing to ensure that private dump sites are going to be held accountable in the future?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Campbell: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, we took immediate action on the Westar site as soon as we could, and we had people evacuated because we were concerned about health issues. Once those health issues were alleviated, we brought people back in. I can tell this member that I've authorized my department to go out and start doing – I forget the word. Anyways, they're going to go and look at landfill sites without the people knowing they're coming, unannounced.

Mr. Barnes: The government was nowhere around before this happened, Mr. Speaker. Now, with the total cost of the fire past \$2 million, will the government commit to reimbursing Cypress county for expenditures that proper government of Alberta oversight in the first place could have prevented?

2:50

Mr. Campbell: As I said earlier, Mr. Speaker, this is under investigation right now, and I won't comment until the investigation is completed.

The Speaker: I believe the bell rang, Mr. Clerk, did it not? So 30 seconds from now I will proceed with the first of several members' statements.

Before we go, Government House Leader, do you have a point?

Mr. Campbell: Mr. Speaker, before we proceed to Members' Statements, I'd ask that due to Standing Order 7(7) we extend the Orders of the Day past 3 o'clock.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Members' Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley.

Les Rendez-vous de la Francophonie

Mr. Goudreau: Merci, M. le Président. Je me lève aujourd'hui pour souligner les 16e Rendez-vous de la Francophonie, une célébration nationale de la langue, du patrimoine, et des cultures françaises.

Du 7 au 23 mars près de 10 millions de francophones à travers le Canada participeront dans des festivités. Le thème de cette année, La joie de vivre d'hier à demain, cadre bien avec notre province. De Plamondon à Grande Prairie, de Fort McMurray à Lethbridge, des communautés à travers l'Alberta souligneront le

début des festivités ce vendredi avec des levers de drapeaux symboliques. Les francophones comme les Anglophones se rassembleront pour le lever du drapeau franco-albertain, un symbol d'unité qui représente l'entrelacement de nos cultures, de nos gens, et de nos langues.

Comme vous le savez, M. le Président, il y aura beaucoup d'occasions pendant le mois pour que les Albertains participent à des célébrations, de rassemblements communautaires à des activités éducatives. Même ici à la rotonde de la Législature vous accueillerez les membres de cette Assemblée et le public lors d'une réception dans le cadre des Rendez-vous le 10 mars.

Aujourd'hui notre population francophone est en croissance et devient de plus en plus plurielle et vibrante. Avec plus de 239,000 Albertains qui parlent français, les Rendez-vous de la Francophonie sont une excellente occasion pour tous les Albertains à sortir, célébrer la diversité culturelle et linguistique, et à découvrir ce que nos communautés francophones offrent à notre province.

Merci à tous les membres de l'Assemblée pour leur appui continu de cette célébration culturelle vibrante. Je vous encourage tous à prendre part aux activités de cette année.

Merci, M. le Président.

[Translation] Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today to highlight the 16th annual Rendez-vous de la Francophonie, a national celebration of French culture, language, and heritage. From March 7 through 23 close to 10 million francophones across Canada will take part in the festivities. This year's theme, Joie de vivre d'hier à demain, Joy of Living from Yesterday to Tomorrow, couldn't be more fitting for our province. From Plamondon to Grande Prairie, Fort McMurray to Lethbridge, communities across Alberta will kick off the festivities this Friday with ceremonial flag-raising ceremonies. Francophones and anglophones alike will come together to raise the Franco-Albertan flag, a symbol of unity that represents the interconnection of our cultures, peoples, and languages.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, there will be many opportunities for Albertans to participate in celebrations throughout the month, from community gatherings to educational activities. Even here in the Legislature Building rotunda you will be welcoming members of this House and the public to a reception in celebration of the Rendez-vous on March 10.

Today our francophone population is growing and becoming even more culturally and ethnically vibrant. With more than 239,000 Albertans who speak French, Rendez-vous de la Francophonie is a great opportunity for all Albertans to get out, celebrate our cultural and linguistic diversity, and experience the incredible joie de vivre that our francophone communities bring to our province.

My thanks to all of the members of the Assembly for their continued support of this vibrant cultural celebration. I encourage everyone to take part in this year's activities.

Merci. [As submitted]

The Speaker: Thank you.

Calgary-Shaw, followed by Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Municipal Funding

Mr. Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our caucus recently released our vision for municipal funding, something we call the 10-10 community infrastructure transfer. Municipal funding can be a complex issue, particularly under the current system; however, our plan is very easy to understand. The first thing you may note is that this is a transfer, not a patchwork of grants. This is the

key difference between the status quo and a truly sustainable future under Wildrose leadership. A Wildrose government would bundle together 10 per cent of the revenues collected from personal and corporate income taxes as well as education, tobacco, and fuel taxes and flow it directly through to the municipalities. The 10-10 community infrastructure transfer will result in more money reaching municipalities through ironclad block funding with no strings attached.

We believe this is exactly the type of funding arrangement Edmonton and Calgary will require to build out their transportation and LRT networks without having to impose punitive new taxation on Alberta families. Just to clarify for all stakeholders and especially the Minister of Municipal Affairs, who managed to completely miscalculate the totals of his own government's funding in a press release, under a Wildrose government all municipalities would be better off.

It is well known that a strong and effective opposition can lead a government. I'm sure this is why in the throne speech yesterday we heard the renewed commitment of a previously broken promise to again increase funding to municipalities. If the budget does in fact have more money flowing to municipalities on Thursday, we in the Wildrose can rest assured that our announcement of the 10-10 community infrastructure transfer played a role in achieving this small victory.

I say "small victory," Mr. Speaker, because with this PC government you never know when they're going to change their mind. Bottom line: under a Wildrose government our municipalities wouldn't have to wait for good news in a budget or a throne speech. They would have a true partner that respects their roles, values their contributions, and recognizes that their future success is integral to Alberta's future success.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, followed by Stony Plain.

Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville Police Services

Ms Fenske: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to rise today to recognize the work of RCMP officers in my constituency of Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville as well as those across the province. These are the individuals who put their lives on the line every day. They go to work making our communities a safer place. These are the individuals who deliver our province's police services and face situations that are unimaginable for many Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, early this past January the dedicated men and women of the Vegreville, Tofield, and Two Hills RCMP detachments were called into action to protect our community after a resident had several firearms stolen from their home by intruders. More than five Mounties were called into the line of fire after a dangerous standoff with a suspect. Two individual officers sustained injuries as a result of their tremendous efforts, and they are still recovering.

These Mounties, the several others from other detachments called in, and all of our law enforcement officers are courageous men and women in our province, who every day go above and beyond so selflessly to aid others in their time of need. These are the people that I would like to salute today. As the MLA and a resident of Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville I want to extend my sincerest thanks and gratitude for their unwavering dedication to ensuring that all Albertans have safe communities to live, work, and to raise our families in. Our communities are so grateful.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Stony Plain, followed by Whitecourt-Ste. Anne.

Grain Rail Transportation Backlog

Mr. Lemke: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I call attention to an issue impacting our agricultural sector and one causing immense concern in my constituency and in the constituencies of many of my colleagues. It's been a challenging few months for our agricultural community. This province's grain elevators are filled to the rafters while the ships intended to take Alberta's grain to market are in port. Our government is committed to providing the opportunity for all businesses to succeed, but this problem is out of our control. That's why I'm addressing the misinformation regarding the lack of rail cars available to haul Alberta grain to market.

Some have heard that the backlog is caused by a disproportionate amount of rail cars seconded by the oil and gas industry; others have heard about a shortage of total rail cars; and others, because of the Canadian Wheat Board transition. This is simply not true. Many industries are facing the same problem. It must be addressed. Other commodities, such as lumber and oil, are unable to find adequate rail shipping. This is not a new problem. There were complaints about rail service before.

Canada's railway network, which is responsible for moving our grain to market, is a federal responsibility. We are fully supportive of the federal government introducing legislative changes to make the system more accountable through direct and immediate penalties for whichever part of the system is responsible for the backlog, including inadequate rail service. I believe that legislating greater financial accountability in the rail system is one meaningful change that will yield more meaningful results.

Market access is a top priority for our government and is one of the key pillars in our efforts to continue building Alberta. Our reputation as a world-class supplier of food, energy, and other exports is at risk if we are unable to meet the needs of our customers in a timely fashion, so it is imperative that immediate steps be taken to improve the efficiency of our rail transportation network.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Whitecourt-Ste. Anne, followed by Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

Fallen Four in Memoriam

Mr. VanderBurg: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Nine years have passed since the national historic RCMP tragedy in the Whitecourt-Ste. Anne constituency shook the country. Candle lights flickered at the Fallen Four Memorial Park in Mayerthorpe last night as the community gathered to bring light into the darkness that descended on March 3, 2005, when four young RCMP officers were shot and killed north of the town. We have healed and moved on, but we do not forget the lives of constables Peter Schiemann, Leo Johnston, Brock Myrol, and Anthony Gordon, that ended tragically that day. I ask you to join me in remembering them, their families, friends, troop mates, co-workers, and the communities of Mayerthorpe, Whitecourt, and surrounding areas that embraced them.

3:00

Thanks to the Mayerthorpe Fallen Four society there's a beautiful six-acre memorial park that was built to honour Peter, Leo, Brock, and Anthony plus all police and military forces. It reminds us all that wounds heal and that a new beauty is possible in time through nature and community spirit. In this park four

bronze statues stand on guard with a 24-foot centrepiece that salutes all peace and police officers, all soldiers, and all those who have given their lives for their uniform. The volunteers who built this park, maintain it, and bring everybody together for the candle-lighting service are true Albertans, proud of those that protect us and ensure those who are gone are never forgotten.

Today, colleagues, I wear my Fallen Four pin with pride as a reminder that the brave are forever remembered, and I ask everybody in this House to do the same.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

Slave Lake Health Services

Mrs. Towle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Slave Lake is in serious trouble. In 2011 the community of Slave Lake had doctors, a surgeon, an anesthesiologist, a full dialysis unit, and a functioning operating room to meet patients' needs. These services are essential because Slave Lake faces high birth rates and also high mortality rates, close to double the provincial average. Being a young and growing remote community means there is a critical need for urgent care services and access to their doctors.

In 2012 the Premier decided Slave Lake would play host to her experimental family care clinic idea, an experiment introduced with little consultation, without guidelines, no parameters, and was not even supported by physicians and health care professionals across this province. Let's look at the effect of becoming the pet project for the Premier's next big idea.

In 2011 Slave Lake had 11 doctors. Today they have less than half that. In fact, they now have a lower doctor-to-patient ratio than the whole country of Nigeria. In 2011 Slave Lake had one anesthesiologist. Today they have none. In 2011 Slave Lake had a functioning operating room. Today nothing. In 2011 Slave Lake had a fully functioning dialysis unit. Now the residents have to drive three hours to Edmonton. In 2011 Slave Lake mothers could give birth in their own communities. Not anymore.

Despite this the PC government insists family care clinics are a success. This government talks about everyone having a home in the health care system, but for Slave Lake that home is somewhere else, not in their own community. The PC government, the Health minister, Alberta Health Services have let Slave Lake down.

However, there is hope. The Premier, the PC government can respect local decision-making. They can work with their stakeholders, with their community, and they can put this community first. They can swallow their pride. They can admit that the plan to ensure that Slave Lake's family care clinic was a success has failed. They can also offer the community of Slave Lake actual access to primary health care. To the Premier, to the minister, to Alberta Health Services: it's okay to admit you were wrong; make this right.

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: We have several tablings. Please do your best to be as brief as you can.

The Minister of Health, followed by Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Mr. Horne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to table the required number of copies of the Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan Statistical Supplement for 2012-13, detailing payments to physicians and for supplementary drug benefits in Alberta.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Edmonton-Meadowlark, I understand there are two tablings. Edmonton-Centre on behalf of.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings. The first is the evaluation report from the Leger research and development group on Reach Edmonton's schools as community hubs program, which, of course, they have found produced a value of \$4.60 for every dollar invested.

The second tabling on behalf of the leader of the Liberal opposition is an article, Health Stats Veer Off Course, and that to change things on the run with the new budgeting format is not helping things in health care.

May I continue, Mr. Speaker? I have tablings on behalf of my colleague from Calgary-Buffalo and one from myself.

The Speaker: Yes. I see there are about five tablings for Calgary-Buffalo and one for yourself, so why don't you get them all done now.

Ms Blakeman: Well, I can't see all five tablings for Calgary-Buffalo, so he's going to get what he's going to get.

The first one that I would like to do, Mr. Speaker, is the report by the MSA, the Market Surveillance Administrator. I'll just draw everyone's attention to page 3, in which it says that "the MSA accepts that economic withholding is rational profit maximizing behaviour, for example, when a market participant has long portfolio position." That will not be questioned or challenged. So what they did, they were allowed to do. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my colleague for Calgary-Buffalo.

The second tabling I have for him is a report by Deloitte on Alberta Infrastructure, the RFQ for 19 schools located in southern and north-central Alberta.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my beloved – oh, it isn't my beloved constituency. Well, it's on behalf of David McIntyre, who believes that the Alberta government should do everything they can to save Alberta's heritage rangelands. "Please give these lands bottom-to-top protection as part of the South Saskatchewan Regional Plan."

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The Minister of Finance, followed by Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings. On behalf of the Premier it's my pleasure to table the letters to the Auditor General that the Premier mentioned in her responses today. These letters are asking the Auditor General to review the travel and expense policies and specifically the office of the Premier as one of the examples for him to start with as well as to review the government of Alberta's air transportation service and the use of the planes. In addition, in this letter it is noted that the Premier's direction to myself as President of Treasury Board is to suspend out-of-province travel on all ATS planes and to look at the costing that we use for the government of Alberta planes. That would be the first tabling.

The second tabling is a letter from the Premier to myself outlining an ambitious piece of work for us to undertake that would be around the government's travel and expense policy, that we are to look to an RFP process for preferred providers in the area of travel and expenditure and air travel and hotels, et cetera, which we will be undertaking tout de suite, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Edmonton-Calder, you're next.

Mr. Eggen: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Today I have the appropriate number of copies of a petition of almost 3,000 signatures from the citizens of Slave Lake and area who are very concerned about the state of health care in their community. The petition was calling for the PC government to act in order to save the Slave Lake doctors who are being forced to leave the community. Basic and essential health services have been removed; for example, maternity care. These need to be restored immediately as well.

Thank you very much.

The Speaker: Are there others? If not, I have a tabling that I would like to proceed with. In my capacity as chair of the Members' Services Committee and pursuant to section 39(3) of the Legislative Assembly Act I'm going to table with the Assembly five copies of the following orders, that were approved at the December 10, 2013, meeting of the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services: the first being the Constituency Services Amendment Order 28, that being Order MSC 12/13; the second being the Transportation Amendment Order 12, that being Order MSC 13/13; and the third one is the Members' Services Committee Amendment Order 1, that being MSC Order 14/13.

3:10

Let us move on, then, with points of order. I believe we have three or four to deal with.

Point of Order Parliamentary Language

The Speaker: We are going to start with Edmonton-Strathcona. You had a point of order at 2:16 p.m. Let's hear it, please, with the citation.

Ms Notley: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The citation is 23 (h), (i), and (j), and it relates to the Premier's comments in response to the question that was put forward by the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. I, of course, don't have the Blues, but I do have the question that the member himself asked, and I have a clear recollection of the Premier suggesting that the member was misleading the House with his question.

In his question he asked the Premier: why won't she recognize that her exorbitant use of public funds for travel and excessive security and use of government aircraft and staff severances is a poor contrast to the frozen wages and reduced pensions that they are proposing for public employees? Then the Premier responded to that by accusing the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood of misleading the House.

Now, the parliamentary authorities are quite clear that the term "misleading the House" has been found to be unparliamentary, and Speakers on repeated occasions have called upon members who have accused others of misleading the House to offer an apology. Although, frankly, we don't have to get into a long discussion of the facts because we do know that the language in and of itself is unparliamentary regardless of whether or not the statement made by the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood is accurate.

I will, however, suggest that Bill 46, which, of course, granted, is somewhat up in the air right now given the proclamation through judicial review about what an outrageous piece of legislation it is, notwithstanding that fact, that piece of legislation proposed for April 1, 2014, to March 30, 2015, is a freeze on public-sector salary and wages of zero.

You know what? We can't talk about what lovely little discussions are going on behind closed doors. Strangely, I think it's kind

of reasonable for us as members of this Assembly to hold this government to account for pieces of legislation that they bring in and pass through this Assembly, even those pieces of legislation that subsequently receive outrageous levels of criticism by the judiciary as that particular piece of legislation did. I think it is quite reasonable for the member to have suggested that this government is freezing public-sector wages.

We also know that the ATA deal, which was legislated by this government, also imposes zero per cent for this particular year. I believe the government claims same thing for the doctors, although I'm less clear on that one.

Regardless, I think it's arguable that what the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood said is absolutely true, in fact. As well, the government is proposing to reduce pensions, and no amount of spin can get past the fact – and we'll have lots of opportunity to discuss that – that the changes that this government is making to pension plans will result in a loss of income to future pensioners.

That being said, that's what the member said. Now, had the member actually said that the Premier was dressed up like a unicorn, even then the Premier would not have been able to suggest that the member was misleading the House because that is the parliamentary tradition. The fact of the matter is that it might simply have been a misinterpretation or mistake about whether or not she was dressed up like a unicorn. Although, you know.

Anyway, the point is that it was an unparliamentary statement by the Premier, and I would respectfully request that the Speaker ask that the Premier offer an apology to the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood and withdraw the statement.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader to respond.

Mr. Campbell: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. That was quite a diatribe of nothing to do with the point of order. The member did make some comments that were misinformed and did, in my mind, lead me to believe that I didn't know what was going on at that bargaining table. The member talks about three zeros, which he knows is not true. If you look on the AUPE website and if you look at the offer with prejudice to the union, it's \$1,550, \$1,550, \$775, 1 per cent, 2 per cent, and then paid holidays between Christmas and New Year's for the second, third, and fourth years of the agreement, Mr. Speaker. So those aren't zeros. That's actually almost 10 per cent over four years when you look at the math on that.

Mr. Speaker, the member also talked about the fact that we're reducing pensions. That, again, is categorically untrue. We are not reducing pensions at all within the public sector.

As the House leader for the fourth party went on about all of the things, the fact of the matter, Mr. Speaker, is that the Premier called the member to task because he was misleading this House in talking about issues that aren't there. At no time can we now go back to zeros, because with the with-prejudice argument that we put on the bargaining table, we are held to that final offer. Again, let me say that that's \$1,550 the first year, \$1,550 the second year, \$775 the third year with a 1 per cent increase on the grid, 2 per cent on the grid the fourth year, and paid days between Christmas and New Year's for all members that are nonessential services.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Are there others? The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

Mr. Wilson: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a pretty simple case, I would think, rather cut and dried. There was a question

asked by the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. In the response the Premier suggested that that member was in fact trying to mislead this House. It is a long-standing tradition in this facility, in all parliaments, that that is language that is deemed unparliamentary. Look no further than *Beauchesne's* 489. It's very clear in there, and this is not a case where I believe that there can be multiple interpretations of a phrase. It was very clear what the Premier was trying to say. She was trying to deflect from the responsibility that her government has taken and actions that her government has taken, and quite truthfully she was trying to deflect from the actions that she had taken in a trip to South Africa. Now, I am not going to, in this argument on the point of order, get into the long details around that trip. We all know what they are.

At the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, it is unparliamentary for this Premier to stand in this Assembly and tell this Assembly that a member is intentionally misleading the House. It is that simple, and I would echo the member's comments, the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, and I would ask that you rule that the Premier apologize and withdraw that remark.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Are there others?

Well, I've stood in this House a number of times to comment on parliamentary language and unparliamentary language, and I've told most of you at least half a dozen times that tone is important, temperament is important, context is important.

I received the Blues just a minute or two ago, so let me just refresh your memories as to what happened. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood stood and said the following:

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The one thing I don't understand is the Premier's double standard. Why won't this Premier recognize that her exorbitant use of public funds for travel, excessive security, use of government aircraft, and staff severances is an unfair and unjust contrast to frozen wages and reduced pensions for public employees in our province?

Shortly thereafter the Premier stood and said the following:

Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member wants to ask me questions with respect to this circumstance, that's fine, but it is entirely inappropriate for this hon. member to mislead the House with respect to AUPE negotiations or pension reform. It is not appropriate to suggest for any reason that the great work that our Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board has done with respect to pension reform will not be helpful to public servants in the future. Let's remember that as we saw last week, our better offer to AUPE involved wage increases for four years.

Now, I don't know about most of you, but I can tell you that I'm not privy to those particular discussions, so I don't know what went on in them. I don't know where negotiations stand. I don't know who's at the table. What I do know, though, is that an allegation has been appropriated here to a member of the House by suggesting that he misled the House with respect to AUPE negotiations or pension reform. I'm going to wait until I get the rest of the Blues just to make sure that I'm adjudicating this correctly, but frankly I do think that was an unfortunate choice of words, to accuse someone of misleading the House. We've had the point clarified here. Nonetheless, I will ask if under the circumstances the hon. Government House Leader would do the honourable thing and simply ask that on behalf of the Premier those words be withdrawn.

3:20

Mr. Campbell: Well, Mr. Speaker, thank you. They're unfortunate, the words the Premier used, but she just wanted to make

sure that all Albertans did know the truth about negotiations and about pensions. On your recommendation I will withdraw the comments.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you very much.

That closes that matter, but please let it stand as a warning to all of you. We're looking forward to a very productive session. Today was pretty good, and members were in fairly good form. I will be clamping down on all of these points regardless of who says them, so please know that in advance.

Let us move on.

Point of Order Anticipation

The Speaker: We had a second point of order, by I think it was Edmonton-Centre against Edmonton-Gold Bar, at 2:20 p.m. Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to use as my citations on anticipation *Beauchesne's* 408(1)(a), 409(5), 409(12), and 410(14), all of which are different versions of a request or an outlining that anticipation should not be – and I think the clearest way it's put is in 410(14). "Questions should not anticipate an Order of the Day although this does not apply to the budget process."

Now, Mr. Speaker, as you and other Speakers have reminded us in this House repeatedly, when it appears on the Order Paper, it can be called any time. Although it may not be on the House leaders' agreement for the day, it could of course be called, and sometimes the government does that if they want to have a bit of mischief. Lo and behold, when I look at the Tuesday, March 4, 2014, Order Paper, on page 6, halfway down the page, it does say: Government Bills and Orders, Second Reading, Bill 1, Savings Management Act, Hon. Madam Premier. In fact, we do have this on the Order Paper. It's there for anyone that wishes to reference it. Standing to ask a question about something that is on the Order Paper for debate is, I believe, a tragic misuse of time.

Now, I'm going to go on and talk about the principles of question period, which appear in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* on page 501. It's specifically talking about the need for urgency in questions and accountability and keeps making the statement that time is scarce. Now, Mr. Speaker, I have repeatedly complained to you and to previous Speakers on just about any opportunity I can get about what I believe is an inappropriate number of questions that are allocated to government members and inappropriate placement in the rotation. This Assembly is the only one in Canada that gives such prominent placement to government backbenchers in question period, both the number of questions that they get and how high they appear in the rotation.

This was a perfect example of why it is so wrong, Mr. Speaker. By that member asking a question that was, one, inappropriate and, two, mischievous or perhaps his version of levity – I don't know; he will, I'm sure, tell us – he took away a question from an opposition member who was trying to be here and do what we are supposed to be doing as a principle in question period, which is a matter of urgency and which holds the government to account. So I would say that what the member was doing was a perversion of the principles and guidelines for oral questions.

I'll also make note that since the government members do have that time – and I have been assured they need that time in the rotation and the number of questions so they can bring forward urgent, terrifically important questions from their constituents –

then I would rather expect that that would be what was happening. So I think this is a very good example of why government members should not have questions in question period. If they do, they should be restricted to a very low number, two or three, at the end of the rotation. This was an egregious misuse of time in question period.

An Hon. Member: A perversion.

Ms Blakeman: I used “perversion” already. You want it twice?

It was egregious, it is a perversion of what we are meant to do here, and I believe that the member should apologize to this House for having done that. I would certainly ask the Speaker to find that he has breached 408(1)(a), 409(5), 409(12), 410(14) from *Beauchesne*, and the principles found on page 501 of the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* for oral questions.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Campbell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think you’ve already answered this point of order by the fact that you didn’t allow the supplementary question by the member, so we get your point, and we’re prepared to move on.

The Speaker: Anyone else? Calgary-Shaw.

Mr. Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’ll briefly comment, just following up on the comments that my colleague from Edmonton-Centre made. I believe that we saw an example today of a good use of a government backbencher asking a question – and that was the Member for Stony Plain – a valid question. It’s unfortunate that it’s such a rarity that it actually stands out in our memory that it happened. All too often we see the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, you know, striving to mediocrity, which he again achieved today. It’s a clear violation of Standing Order 23(e): “anticipates, contrary to good parliamentary practice, any matter already on the Order Paper.” I hope that this is something that we don’t have to deal with again because, as the Member for Edmonton-Centre noted quite clearly, it is an absolute waste of our time.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Are there others?

Seeing none, hon. members, anticipation is accurately portrayed here in our own standing orders, as has been referenced. Because not everybody carries this little bible or booklet around with them, let me read it to you. Under our own standing orders, which are the ones that we’re mostly guided by, item 23 says:

A Member will be called to order by the Speaker if, in the Speaker’s opinion, that Member . . .

- (e) anticipates, contrary to good parliamentary practice, any matter already on the Order Paper or on notice for consideration on that day.

With that in mind, let’s review what actually got said. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar stood at approximately 2:19 this afternoon and said the following:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday our Premier introduced Bill 1, the Savings Management Act, legislation that will see the creation of two new endowments and enhancements to the Alberta heritage scholarship fund. My question is to the Minister of Finance. Is this really important for Albertans at this time?

At that point Edmonton-Centre rose on a point of order, I acknowledged it, and then the Minister of Finance stood to try and answer the question.

Now, I want to point out one other item here that’s very important for you to read, and that’s in *Erskine May*, 24th edition, page 398, where it says the following about the rule against anticipation:

Formerly, the House strictly observed a rule against anticipation according to which a motion could not anticipate a matter already appointed for consideration by the House, whether it were a bill or an adjourned debate upon a motion. The rule survives in Standing Order No 28, which requires that in determining whether a discussion is out of order on the ground of anticipation the Speaker must have regard to the probability of the matter anticipated being brought before the House within a reasonable time.

In fact, that particular bill, that was cited by Edmonton-Gold Bar, is on the Order Paper today, so that’s one violation there, obviously, because it is coming up for debate very shortly. But it also seeks an opinion, and you have to be very careful, hon. members, when you’re crafting your questions or if you’re getting help with the crafted questions, to make sure that you don’t violate rules of anticipation or the rules that pertain to matters that seek an opinion: is this good, or is this bad? That’s more opinion than it is fact. Please keep that in mind.

I know that members have risen here on occasion and kind of circuitously, perhaps, referred to something that might have been on the Order Paper, so I listen very carefully to those, but this one, I think, is fairly direct and blatant, and as such I do find that there is a point of order here to be upheld. Let that stand as a reminder and an admonishment to all to check the Order Paper and make sure that what your question is about is not going to be in violation of the anticipation rule.

3:30

In closing, let me also remind you, though, that the House of Commons – I believe I’m correct in this – no longer has this rule, and perhaps it’s time that we visited that same rule and withdrew it from our standing orders. That, however, is up to you to determine. But at the moment I can only enforce what is in the rules. So that point of order has been made, upheld, and we can go on to the third point of order now.

I believe we had a third point of order at 2:39. It was the Government House Leader, who rose in response to a comment made by the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre. We’ll go to the Minister of Justice for the citation.

Point of Order Factual Accuracy

Mr. Denis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I’m rising on behalf of the hon. Government House Leader with respect to citations 23(h), (i), (j), and (l) as well as *Beauchesne*’s 72.

In particular, Mr. Speaker, the reference that the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre made was that a member or a minister here should seemingly direct the police, direct the RCMP to investigate a particular matter. It’s well known that we do not simply direct the police. We can report things to the police, but we do not direct them. For example, if I had a problem with the Minister of Human Services, I couldn’t just tell the police to go and arrest him. I would have to simply give the information to them, and they would have to decide, in their sole and unfettered wisdom, whether or not to pursue it. There’s a whole balance of case law in the courts on that.

Particularly, though, with 23(l), “introduces any matter in debate that offends the practices and precedents of the Assembly,” again, Mr. Speaker, there’s no business that any of us has directing any police or law enforcement here.

Now, I realize that we're just starting new again. This member has a lot of experience in a lot of areas, so I'm just simply suggesting that he withdraw this statement and refrain from making comments dealing with directing the police in the future.

Before I take my seat, Mr. Speaker, I'm just going to quote from *Beauchesne's 72*. It's "well established that outside police forces should not enter the precincts [here] without permission." Obviously, they have nothing to do with us here, and similarly we have nothing to do with them. That is really a key point in a free and democratic society, that politicians do not and should not ever direct the police.

I would just ask that this member kindly withdraw these particular remarks.

The Speaker: Hon. member, you wish to respond?

Mr. Anglin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Regardless of the jurisprudence that the associate minister was referring to, the issue here is the allegations that the Market Surveillance Administrator made, not any allegations that were made by anyone in the opposition.

Now, the allegations comprised two full binders. They're quite extensive, and it's already been documented here today that they're quite significant. I would add that they're quite tragic in nature, and they are extremely severe, being made by the very people who are tasked with monitoring the market.

In other jurisdictions, unlike Alberta, the Market Surveillance Administrator is the adjudicator, and the individual or the company or the parties must then appeal if they don't like the decision. What the hon. member is saying is that I had asked the minister to direct the RCMP. Well, nothing could be further from the truth. I didn't say, "Direct the RCMP" at all. What I asked, which is something this government is fully capable of doing or that any individual here is fully capable of doing, was: will this government ask the RCMP to investigate? Not direct. Anyone can ask; anyone can report.

What we have here is an issue of gaming. That's not under dispute. Those are the allegations being brought forward by the market administrator. I will point out that the Speaker cautioned me on my first supplemental, and justifiably so. I got close, but I didn't cross the line. But it was a justifiable caution when I use language.

Basically, I didn't make any allegations whatsoever. That's what has to be determined here. When the Speaker cautioned on the language that I used in the first supplemental, that was in direct relationship to a previous finding. What the hon. minister has brought forward on the point of order is a point saying that I've requested that they direct the RCMP. I fully understand that nobody directs the RCMP.

Here's what we've got. What we have is a situation where allegations have been made, severe allegations. Gaming is a form of stealing under numerous jurisdictions, and that is not a stretch. You can make that connection when you look at market manipulation. When you can look at gaming, if there's profit made from that gaming, that is looked on as theft.

Now, the allegations extend much further than that. The Market Surveillance Administrator is making allegations that are akin to fraud, theft, and destruction of evidence. Those are serious under all jurisdictions. Those are criminal by nature under Canadian law. We still have the ability to take this from the Market Surveillance Administrator, which is what this government has done, give it to the Alberta Utilities Commission, and say: you adjudicate. There's nothing preventing anybody, particularly the ministry or even the Alberta Utilities Commission, from calling in the RCMP and

saying, "Hey, we've got a bigger issue here," and there is a much bigger issue going on, in my view.

The point that the member is making, that I requested that the minister direct the RCMP: that's not what the question says. If you check the *Hansard*, it says quite simply, "Will this government ask the RCMP?" Anyone has that right to ask the RCMP. That is to make a point of how severe these allegations are. Now, what's missing in this and what's missing in the point of order is all the harm that has been caused over a period of time that is within the allegations, and you can't convince any Albertans that something is not wrong with this system. All these members here have heard the complaints from their constituents, and now we have not just one allegation. It's not the first allegation. This is now a history of numerous allegations that have come forward over the years. We have had findings in the past. I documented that finding in my first supplemental, and we have a pattern here that borders now on corruption. That needs to be dealt with. Corruption itself is a criminal offence.

Again, at what point do we deal with the violation of utility regulations and cross that line into criminal offences and ask the RCMP to investigate? I don't believe what I'm doing here is making any direction or declaration of direction at all to this government. I'm asking the government.

I will finish with that. If you check the *Hansard*, it says quite clearly, "Will this government ask the RCMP?" Thank you very much.

The Speaker: Are there others?

Seeing none, let me review the circumstances as I saw and witnessed them and have since read about. At approximately 2:36 p.m. the hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre stood and said the following:

Given that the last time TransAlta got caught stealing \$5 million from Albertan ratepayers, they had to pay a fine of \$380,000, why should Albertans trust this government or the AUC to even care when the punishment for stealing from consumers is nothing more than a cost of doing business?

I immediately stood thereafter and said to the member the following:

Hon. members, we allow a lot of leeway here. I'd caution you to be very careful when you use the word "stealing" going forward, okay?

I want to remind you all again. You know, what's important here isn't only the language that we use here but the accusations that we attribute against people who are not in this Assembly, who would otherwise be given an opportunity to defend themselves, but because they don't enjoy the privilege of immunity, like we all do, they are at a disadvantage. They cannot stand up and defend themselves. I found the use of the word "stealing" in this instance to be not appropriate, and I stood on that very point, and the member himself has just said that he agrees with my intervention and my admonishment at the time.

There are many different ways to try and get a point across. In this case, you might have used something more polite such as "overcharging" perhaps, if that was the case – I don't know – but certainly I take offence on behalf of others that the word "stealing" is inappropriate here, and it's inappropriate to level some blame at someone who is not here and able to defend himself or herself.

3:40

On the second point, the hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre went on and in a supplemental said:

Given that the MSA allegations are, in effect, allegations of fraud, theft, destruction of evidence, all of which are criminal in

nature, will this government ask the RCMP to investigate and file criminal charges as necessary and hold these companies and individuals to account?

At that point the hon. Government House Leader rose on a point of order, which I had anticipated 30, 40 seconds earlier because I could see where this was going.

It's very clear here that the hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre was not directing or dictating that the RCMP step in or whatever the banter was between the two members earlier today in support or in defence of this particular point of order. He actually did say, "Will this government ask the RCMP?" So I accept that, and *Hansard* will stand as a record of that.

I think that sometimes we are prone to asking very tough questions here, and this was a tough question. This was up to a point, I thought, a fairly well-worded question except for the allegations that were made against somebody not here and the use of the word "stealing." So I'm going to admonish anyone going further in that line of questioning and tell them to please refrain from using that kind of language. The point about the RCMP I think has been sufficiently clarified.

We're going to move on and carry on. That's it: no more points of order. We can go on with Orders of the Day, the former point having been now clarified.

Orders of the Day

Government Motions

2. Mr. Campbell moved:
Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly resolve into Committee of the Whole, when called, to consider certain bills on the Order Paper.

[Government Motion 2 carried]

3. Mr. Campbell moved:
Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly resolve itself into Committee of Supply, when called, to consider supply to be granted to Her Majesty.

[Government Motion 3 carried]

Evening Sittings

4. Mr. Campbell moved:
Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 4(1) the Assembly shall meet on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday evenings for consideration of government business for the duration of the 2014 spring sitting unless on motion by the Government House Leader made before 6 p.m., which may be made orally and without notice, the Assembly is adjourned to the following sitting day.

[Government Motion 4 carried]

Transmittal of Estimates

The Speaker: The hon. President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have received a certain message from His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, which I now transmit to you.

The Sergeant-at-Arms: Order!

The Speaker: Hon. members, the Lieutenant Governor transmits supplementary supply estimates of certain sums required for the service of the province for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2014, and recommends the same to the Legislative Assembly.

Thank you. Please be seated.

The hon. President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I now wish to table the 2013-14 supplementary supply estimates, No. 2. When supplementary estimates are tabled, section 8(3) of the Fiscal Management Act requires that an updated fiscal plan be tabled. Accordingly, the 2013-14 supplementary estimates include an amended 2013-14 fiscal plan. The supplementary supply estimates will provide additional spending for 13 government departments. When passed, the estimates will authorize approximate increases of just over \$2 billion in operational funding, \$223 million in capital funding, and \$11 million in financial transactions funding for the government. The largest share of these amounts will fund the province's ongoing flood recovery activities.

Government Motions

(continued)

5. Mr. Horner moved:
Be it resolved that the message from His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, the 2013-14 supplementary supply estimates, No. 2, for the general revenue fund, and all matters connected therewith be referred to Committee of Supply.

[Government Motion 5 carried]

6. Mr. Horner moved:
Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 61(2) the Committee of Supply shall be called to consider the 2013-14 supplementary supply estimates, No. 2, for the general revenue fund for six hours on Wednesday, March 5, 2014.

[Government Motion 6 carried]

Amendments to Standing Orders

7. Mr. Campbell moved:
 - A Be it resolved that the standing orders of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta effective March 5, 2013, be amended as follows:
 1. Standing Order 18(1)(h) is amended by striking out " , except as provided under Standing Order 52".
 2. Standing Order 52 is amended
 - (a) in suborder (1) by striking out "18" and substituting "15" wherever it occurs;
 - (b) in suborder (3) by striking out " , which shall not be subject to debate or amendment".
 3. Standing Order 52.01(1) is amended
 - (a) by striking out "18" and substituting "15";
 - (b) in clause (b)
 - (i) by striking out "Enterprise and Advanced Education" and substituting "Innovation and Advanced Education";
 - (ii) by striking out "and Infrastructure" and substituting "Infrastructure, and Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour".
 4. Standing Order 59.01 is amended
 - (a) by striking out suborders (3) and (4) and substituting the following:

- (3) Following consultation with House Leaders, the Government House Leader shall table in the Assembly the schedule for consideration of main estimates at any time following the announcement of the date of the Budget Address and no later than the Thursday preceding the first meeting scheduled, and such schedule shall be published in the Order Paper for the next sitting day.
- (b) in suborder (5)(d) by striking out “for a minimum of 2 hours to a maximum of 6 hours” and substituting “for a maximum of 3 hours”;
- (c) in suborder (6)
- (i) by adding the following after clause (d):
- (d.1) for the next 20 minutes, the members of any other party represented in the Assembly or any independent Members and the Minister, or the member of the Executive Council acting on the Minister’s behalf, may speak,
- (ii) by striking out clause (f) and substituting the following:
- (f) for the time remaining, to the extent possible, the rotation outlined in clauses (b) to (e) shall apply with the speaking times set at 5 minutes as provided in Standing Order 59.02(1)(c).

- B Be it further resolved that the Select Special Ethics Commissioner Search Committee be authorized to meet during the consideration of the 2014-15 main estimates.
- C And be it further resolved that this motion takes effect upon passage.

[Government Motion 7 carried]

Committee Membership Changes

8. Mr. Campbell moved:
Be it resolved that the membership of the Assembly’s committees be replaced as follows:
- (1) Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund: Mr. Casey, chair; Mrs. Jablonski, deputy chair; Mr. Amery; Mr. Barnes; Mr. Dorward; Mr. Eggen; Mr. Khan; Mr. Sandhu; and Dr. Sherman.
- (2) Standing Committee on Legislative Offices: Mr. Jeneroux, chair; Mr. McDonald, deputy chair; Mr. Bikman; Ms Blakeman; Dr. Brown; Ms DeLong; Mr. Eggen; Mrs. Leskiw; Mr. Quadri; Mr. Wilson; and Mr. Young.
- (3) Standing Committee on Private Bills: Mr. Xiao, chair; Mrs. Leskiw, deputy chair; Mr. Allen; Dr. Brown; Ms Cusanelli; Ms DeLong; Ms Fenske; Mrs. Fritz; Mrs. Jablonski; Ms Notley; Ms Olesen; Mr. Rowe; Mr. Stier; Mr. Strankman; and Dr. Swann.
- (4) Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing: Ms Kubinec, chair; Mr. Rogers, deputy chair; Ms Calahasen; Mr. Casey; Mr. Kang; Mr. Khan; Mr. Luan; Ms Notley; Ms Olesen; Ms Pastoor; Mr. Pedersen; Mr. Saskiw; Mr. VanderBurg; Mr. Wilson; and Mr. Young.
- (5) Standing Committee on Public Accounts: Mr. Anderson, chair; Mr. Dorward, deputy chair; Mr. Allen; Mr.

- Amery; Mr. Barnes; Mr. Bilous; Mr. Donovan; Ms Fenske; Mr. Hehr; Mr. Khan; Mr. Luan; Ms Pastoor; Mr. Sandhu; Mrs. Sarich; and Mr. Young.
- (6) Special Standing Committee on Members’ Services: Mr. Zwozdesky, chair; Mr. VanderBurg, deputy chair; Mr. Casey; Mrs. Forsyth; Mrs. Fritz; Ms L. Johnson; Ms Kubinec; Mr. Mason; Mr. McDonald; Dr. Sherman; and Mrs. Towle.
- (7) Standing Committee on Alberta’s Economic Future: Mr. Amery, chair; Mr. Fox, deputy chair; Mr. Dorward; Mr. Eggen; Mr. Hehr; Ms Kubinec; Mr. Lemke; Mr. Luan; Mr. McDonald; Ms Pastoor; Mr. Quadri; Mr. Rogers; Mr. Rowe; Mrs. Sarich; and Mr. Stier.
- (8) Standing Committee on Families and Communities: Ms Olesen, chair; Mrs. Forsyth, deputy chair; Ms Cusanelli; Ms DeLong; Ms Fenske; Mrs. Fritz; Mrs. Jablonski; Mr. Jeneroux; Mrs. Leskiw; Mr. McAllister; Ms Notley; Mr. Pedersen; Mr. Sandhu; Dr. Swann; and Mr. VanderBurg.
- (9) Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship: Mr. Khan, chair; Mr. Anglin, deputy chair; Mr. Allen; Mr. Bikman; Mr. Bilous; Ms Blakeman; Dr. Brown; Ms Calahasen; Mr. Casey; Mr. Goudreau; Mr. Hale; Ms L. Johnson; Mr. Webber; Mr. Xiao; and Mr. Young.

[Government Motion 8 carried]

Adjournment of Spring Session

9. Mr. Campbell moved:
Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 3(9) the 2014 spring sitting of the Assembly shall stand adjourned upon the Government House Leader advising the Assembly that the business for the sitting is concluded.

[Government Motion 9 carried]

3:50 Adjournment of Spring Session

10. Mr. Campbell moved:
Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 3(9) the schedule for the 2014 spring sitting as outlined in the calendar published pursuant to Standing Order 3 be modified to allow for the spring sitting to be extended beyond the first Thursday in June until such time as or when the Government House Leader advises the Assembly that the business for the sitting is concluded, and at such time the Assembly stands adjourned.

[Government Motion 10 carried]

Consideration of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor’s Speech

Ms Kubinec moved, seconded by Mr. McDonald, that an humble address be presented to His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor as follows.

To His Honour the Honourable Colonel (Retired) Donald S. Ethell, OC, OMM, AOE, MSC, CD, LLD, the Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Alberta:

We, Her Majesty’s most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Ms Kubinec: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a tremendous honour to move acceptance of the Speech from the Throne, presented by His Honour the Lieutenant Governor of the province of Alberta. I would like to thank His Honour the Lieutenant Governor for setting forth the vision of the Second Session of the 28th Alberta Legislature.

I would also like to thank the hon. Premier for the opportunity to move acceptance of the Speech from the Throne. I am excited by the Premier's vision for Alberta and her commitment to build Alberta and move this province forward on many fronts, from outstanding health care delivery to finding new and expanded ways to get Alberta's products to international markets. Our province is fortunate to have a visionary, proactive leader committed to building a better and more prosperous Alberta that serves the needs of our vibrant communities, peoples, and businesses.

The Speech from the Throne sets forth the next phase of the building Alberta plan, and our constituency of Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock is an example of building Alberta. We are having a new school built in Neerlandia. The plans are under way, and the shovels will go in the ground this August. We have a modernization project in our Pembina north schools, that my constituents are very excited about.

This plan is one that will ensure Alberta remains in a position to be the best it can be and a leader on the national and international stages. It signals a commitment to excellence in transparency, determination, and strength. It provides certainty of direction, with a clear blueprint for action that's focused on the three priorities that matter most to Albertans: investing in families and communities, opening new markets for Alberta's resources, and ensuring that the government lives within its means. Significant progress has been made on all three priorities since 2012.

The Speech from the Throne articulates our actions and investments to further this work and ensure that Alberta remains the province of choice for over 4 million people. It clearly outlines how we are investing today in Alberta's future to support the nearly 1 million people expected to join our fine province in the decade to come.

Investments in research and innovation will maintain and grow our world-class resource economy and build the skilled workforce we need to stay strong. To quote from the throne speech, "Alberta is Canada's economic engine." We know first-hand the pressures associated with this prosperity. Our population will grow to 5 million people in the next 10 years, and the Speech from the Throne exemplifies the courage of this government to meet Alberta's growth head-on, to invest today in innovation for tomorrow, and to set our province up for long-term success.

This work includes opening new markets through co-operative efforts with other provinces and other jurisdictions. It includes building our communities through targeted funding for municipalities so that they can successfully address growth pressures. Alberta's success depends on all regions of the province, from Edmonton to Calgary to our vital, small rural centres, so this government will continue to invest in the necessary programs, services, and infrastructure to build on our collective expertise and will to succeed.

This throne speech sets out a commitment to create new supports for research and world-leading innovation to drive growth and economic diversification for years to come. It will fund innovation in rural Alberta to maximize our agricultural and food-processing sectors. It will invest in new ways to encourage collaboration between social and family organizations and non-profits to address important issues like poverty, homelessness, and family violence. It will expand support for apprenticeship, trades,

and technology sectors to build the skilled workforce Alberta needs to remain successful as we grow our markets.

The Speech from the Throne also sets up the action this government will take to ensure that Alberta's kids get the best start in life, from education to health care to social well-being. I think all Albertans will be pleased by this forward-looking approach to governance, that is focused, target driven, and responsible, and one that is committed to putting in place the infrastructure, education, public health care, and social supports to enable all Albertans to be the best they can be in an open, inclusive, and prosperous society.

I am excited to be a part of a government that is committed to building our province, strengthening our communities, investing in our families, and broadening our economic base to realize the full potential of our resources through research and innovation but, most importantly, a government that invests in Albertans.

In closing, I would like to again thank His Honour the Lieutenant Governor for his inspiring words. Again, I thank our Premier for her inspiring leadership and commitment to the people of Alberta.

It has been an honour to rise today and move acceptance of the Speech from the Throne. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Little Bow.

Mr. Donovan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, it is a pleasure to rise today and speak to the Speech from the Throne. I guess I'll hit it pretty well off the cuff on most of these things. In here we have quite a few things about agriculture, which I think is great because it has been pushed to the back burner for a number of years, so I do appreciate that it's been raised to the level that it has, pointing out that it is the largest renewable resource this province has and the second largest that brings money into this province, behind oil and gas.

Now, some of the challenges that we have in here are – and I'll quote – leading the charge for better rail services to our rural farm families so they can gain international markets, which is a great, warm, fluffy thing to say, but this isn't a new problem. Back in the '90s, when there were problems with grain movement, the province bought numerous cars – I believe it was one per constituency at the time; don't quote me on that because I don't have the exact facts – with the heritage trust fund. Now, my question is that all these cars were out there, and nobody can ever find one. It seems like they've all disappeared. It would be . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but I overlooked the fact that the motion needs to be seconded first, and I've got to go over here to Grande Prairie-Smoky. That is my error, not yours. My apologies.

Grande Prairie-Smoky.

4:00

Mr. McDonald: Sorry, Ian. Nice start, anyway.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It truly is a privilege to rise today in the House and second the motion to accept the Speech from the Throne. The Alberta that we know and love today is a place where families have the supports they need to thrive and grow, including world-class education and health care, social programs and community services, and essential infrastructure like roads, schools, bridges, and health facilities. As we heard in the Speech from the Throne, this government has an unwavering belief that while our quality of life is great, we can always be better, and the commitments laid out in the throne speech clearly support this vision.

This government will invest in families and communities by building new schools, modernizing old ones, keeping class sizes low, and supporting new spaces for thousands of students. We'll build stronger families and communities by investing in child intervention and addressing family violence and other important social issues like poverty and homelessness. We will ensure that Alberta communities have access to effective services like home care, mental health supports, and enhanced youth outreach programs, and we will continue to dedicate resources and supports to enhance the quality of life for the most vulnerable in our society, low-income seniors and disabled Albertans.

Alberta's success depends on the regions, from cities to towns to smaller rural centres, and this government will help them address growth challenges with renewed long-term funding for GreenTRIP and municipal sustainability initiatives. This government is also investing in our future by creating new supports for research and world-leading innovation to drive continued growth in our economy. These investments will be made in our agricultural sector for new, made-in-Alberta solutions that will get our products to market and in our communities through the social innovation endowment.

To support these investments, this government is opening new markets, as highlighted in the throne speech. Alberta is the economic engine of this country, and we remain in a strong position despite some of the challenges we've faced in recent years. The key to building Alberta is opening new markets and finding fairer prices for our products. The throne speech outlines the many ways that we are focusing our efforts to increase agricultural exports, build new markets for oil and gas across North America, sign trade deal agreements with China, Japan, and India, and fight unfair labelling for our exports.

It also outlines the investments we're making at home for Albertans to ensure that we have a highly skilled workforce and a relevant workforce that has the capacity to grow and diversify along with our economy. This includes the creation of a dedicated pipeline training facility, one that will arm Alberta's workforce with many heavy equipment operators, pipeline construction experts, and land reclamation specialists. We will continue to work to diversify our energy mix to give consumers more choice within our electricity market, including alternative energy and renewable, all of this while we continue to build our savings, maintain the lowest tax structure in Canada, and put ourselves on the path to a balanced budget. This government will continue to live within its means and will continue to invest in the things that matter to Albertans.

To conclude, Mr. Speaker, I know that our government has the right plan in place. I also know that the government focuses on the things that matter most to the people in Alberta. Alberta will continue to stand as a province of choice, where we all work together every day to retain our high quality of life and open the doors to tomorrow's possibilities. I look forward to working with all of my hon. colleagues in the House as we build a better session this spring.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

We're going to go back to the hon. Member for Little Bow, with my apologies once again to that member for the interruption. Standing Order 29(2)(a) will be available following this next speaker.

Mr. Donovan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just clarification on time on this. Ten minutes, is it?

The Speaker: You have 15 minutes plus five minutes under 29(2)(a).

Mr. Donovan: Oh, perfect. Let me stretch my legs out on this, then.

As I was talking earlier about back in the '90s, the grain movement isn't a new problem that we've had in this province, and I am glad that the province has identified it and has been working with their federal counterparts to try to get some grain movement. There are definitely some lingering questions that I get from my constituents about what happened to the railcars that were around back in the 1990s. I'm hoping that at some point we can track down what's happened with that.

My due caution. When the ag minister brings up the statement that we're going to fine the companies for their lack of grain movement, my challenge with that is that as a grain producer, when there are only two companies that move your grain, you're well aware of what's going to come back. They're just going to up your costs. When you pass that on, they're going to pass it on to the producer, with the additional stress to the bottom line. So it's not really going to help us out a lot. Hopefully, we can move forward on that.

I'm glad, again, that the ag minister touched on MCOOL. Also, the throne speech talked about MCOOL, the country of origin labelling. Again, as an agricultural producer these are key things that need to be dealt with that are hurting our economy greatly.

One of the good things I like to see in here – and I guess I always like to be optimistic on what comes out in these. Whether there's actually going to be any backing to it afterwards, that will be the challenge. One of them is the standing of those communities hit hardest last June, the firm commitment to rebuild these and mitigate the projects under way. I'm excited to hear that because my constituency had over 300 homes that were affected by the flood and some of the challenges of fixing that.

One of the challenges also with mitigation is that when you send the water downstream somewhere else, you're hoping that it will be able to be in good hands and capable spots to deal with that. I hope the Minister of Infrastructure has his ears open for this because downstream the Bow River irrigation district has some great plans that could be laid out which would help with any of the water that is sent downstream, to be able to capture that and be able to use it down the road for irrigation and also for off-stream storage. I think those are some things that we need to do.

Now, you can understand that I'd probably have a little bit of a challenge on some of the wording in here: "This government will invest in better seniors' care, focusing funding on aging in place" and on innovative technology for them to stay in their own homes and in the areas where they were raised. We always talk in this province about aging in place, staying in your community. I had a challenge right when I first started this job when in Carmangay a long-term care facility was shut down. Now that's water under the bridge, so to speak. I've worked with the minister on that. Hopefully, we can make that a community project that will turn around to be a better project at the end. You can see that it's one of those challenges that once you've been bit, you're a little bit shy of whether it's actually going to come through or not.

One of the other challenges that comes through from that, if we're going to let people age in place, is rural handibus funding. I've met with municipalities, recently with the MD of Taber, and one of the questions they had was: if we're going to let people age in place, how are we going to fund it so they can safely age in place, be around, and still be functional in their own homes? Transportation is always a challenge. That's one of the things in this Speech from the Throne that I hope the government does

follow on with their own wording. That's something that they could recognize and, hopefully, work with people on.

I guess education is something that is always key in rural Alberta, and I think we want to make sure we have a good education system that allows all students to have the same equal access to education. I'm hoping that that's also something that stays in there.

The Alberta agriculture and food innovation endowment I believe is a welcome addition to the promotion of things that we do make in Alberta, how we can fabricate and make a good product to be able to sell in our own province. One of those things we need to be able to do is make sure how we fund that, and we have the challenges to that.

I guess we have multiple things as we go through the nice orange-and-blue pamphlet we got here. As we talked about earlier here on some of the made-in-Alberta agricultural solutions and getting them to market, the Alberta sugar beet growers, for instance, have lots of challenges on their plates down there in my riding and also in other ridings that are adjacent to it on where their markets are going to be with only one player in the game. I'm hoping also with some of this that there's some actual backing because I'm trying to understand and be able to tell my constituents that there are things actually being done. As the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka talked about earlier today in question period, we put up the signs, but where are the shovels, and when are things actually moving forward? Those are things, I guess, that people in my constituency would definitely like to be able to see.

4:10

We do have great opportunities in this province. I think we should all be proud to say that we're from this province and the things that we have to offer. I think that we need to be able to move forward on that, and we need to be able to figure out how to get our provincial economy back to scale. Part of any good economic program is that – yes, we have a \$40 billion budget, but when we spend \$44 billion, that's maybe not the best way to do math, for any of the economic majors on the other side of the floor.

One of the challenges – and I hear that constantly from my constituents – is: live within your means. We need to be able to do that. I understand that we have lots of challenges and infrastructure things that we need to raise. Every time we ask, it gets tossed back at us that you'd cut it, that we'd have a build-nothing quote. I thought it was quite skilled to tuck that one here in the throne speech. That was a nice touch to it.

My comment is that, you know, I think it gets down to pure politics. Everybody does the banter back and forth, what's not being done right. I think we should probably focus on what we can do right, and one of the things we could do right is figure out how to balance the books, live within our means and make sure we spend accordingly, make sure we get value for our dollar. I think that just about every constituent I ever talk to doesn't have a problem with the money that's being spent in this province, but one of the challenges is: do we actually have value for our dollar on anything that's being spent?

There seemed to be quite a few questions today in question period about a trip to South Africa, I believe. One of those things there is that it becomes an entitlement issue. There's not a constituent that I've talked to who said that that should have been done. They don't disagree with the fact that the Premier was invited to it. They've never disagreed that she couldn't go on a trip like that. It's a matter of the cost and the means and the ways to get there. It goes back to an entitlement issue. I think that it really resonates, you know. So I guess from the constituents I've talked

to, I think that's one of the things that definitely needs to be looked at. I'm even excited to see in the news that the Premier has asked the Auditor General to look at the travel expenses, so I think that's a positive.

One of the things we have in here also, as I was going through the nice pamphlet, is that at the end of the throne speech we talk about our trade barriers within our own borders. These have been challenges for constituents since I've started this job. In the MD of Foothills the Foothills Meat Processors, because it's an abattoir and they actually kill the animal there and cut it and sell it, falls under different rules. They fall under the Alberta Agriculture rules. Now, if that abattoir, for instance, opened a building across the street, brought in the animals and killed them but actually cut the half and sold it at a building across the street, they'd fall under Alberta Health rules, which aren't as stringent on some of the things that need to be done.

Not that I ever think our food is unsafe in this province. I'm a firm believer – and as you can tell by my size, I eat lots of it – that we have great food here, and I'm more than happy with the safety of it. We just need to make sure that all the parties are playing under the same set of rules. I think that something that this province needs to look at is some of the challenges that we have with our rules to make sure that there's a process in there, and then they can follow it so that everybody is on the same page.

As a business owner, you know, there would definitely be a challenge to know that all the rules aren't the same, so I'm hoping that when the line in here says that our internal trade barrier is often more difficult than trade within our own borders and outside, we can figure that out just on our own rules that affect a lot of our agricultural producers and any of the people that work in that market, which is also the meat processing programs and businesses that run with that.

You know, I've tried to stay with what my constituents want. I think our constituents are well aware that we need to spend money on infrastructure that's done in our province. We want to make sure that our value for our dollar is good on that. I encourage our government to please stick with that while they're moving forward on their plan, with the building Alberta together program, I'd assume for the next two years, of where they see things going.

We really need to focus – I guess I'm fairly biased on focusing on rural Alberta. I'm happy with all of our urban centres and the great things they bring us, but rural Alberta brings us lots of vibrant things like the taxes and things like that and the hard-working people that work out there to make Alberta what it is, say, as agricultural producers. I'm glad to see that the throne speech focused multiple times on agriculture. I couldn't be more ecstatic because I've always told people I'm an advocate for agriculture, and I'm willing to work and I always have been willing to work with the hon. Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development. He's been very helpful to work with, and so has his staff.

I think that at the end, as long as we have a vibrant and strong rural Alberta and Alberta in general, you have a better province to work in. People come in, and they stay in the small towns, and the rural doctors are going to start coming out and working in the rural areas.

The Minister of Health and I have had numerous conversations about doctor retention in rural Alberta. Again, it's another challenge, as we heard today with Slave Lake, about how far people have to travel to be able to deal with a physician in their area. I think people expect levels of service. One of the challenges is that if you're a doctor, what's the incentive to go to rural Alberta and practise? I think we need to figure out a program and a system that works for that, and I assume that the minister – he's tried multiple

things, and I appreciate that because we're not going to get it right every time. He's always willing to give it a whirl, and I hope he continues to do that.

To keep rural Alberta vibrant, we need to keep adding those things. There are lots of neat things out there. The final mile for Internet I think has helped a lot of rural people to be able to stay on the edge of technology that way, and I think that is a positive. I'll try to, I hope, bring their concerns forward, their questions to this Assembly. I'm hoping that at some point, with what's written in here, we can follow through with a lot of that from the Speech from the Throne and actually have something to show Alberta's constituents of what they're going to be able to expect in the next two years. Hopefully, it's not just some lip service.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available.

Seeing none, let me take a moment here to acknowledge the birthday of a gentleman who is celebrating a particular milestone birthday. I don't know what the age exactly is, but I know that he's young enough to not be embarrassed if it were to be known. Please join me in congratulating him on his birthday.

Hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, happy birthday, sir.

Are there others who wish to speak to the throne speech? The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

Mr. Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that. It is an honour as always to respond to the Speech from the Throne. The first time I had the opportunity to do this, as many members in my caucus had the opportunity to do, was in our maiden speech, so this is kind of nice to follow up and have another shot at it, this time being a little bit more directly in response to the words that were spoken yesterday by our hon. Lieutenant Governor.

It is always interesting to me to hear a Speech from the Throne laying out a government agenda. I suppose there should really be no surprise that in these documents, in these words, you find a rather, I guess, contrived vision of where it is that we are in our province's history. Obviously, there were a number of references to building. I believe 25 times the word "building" appeared. The building Alberta plan appeared another 12 times. My colleague from Airdrie and I were having a little bit of fun with that yesterday. I don't know if any of you happened to notice our little game we were playing, but you know, it is what it is.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

There are some things that I do want to specifically address about this document and the speech, some things that just – it kind of boggles my mind how this government had our hon. Lieutenant Governor come and say some of the things that he did. For example, confidence. Page 1, the second-last paragraph: "A place where families have confidence that their government will stay true to its word." I mean, we've seen example after example of this government breaking its word and breaking commitments that it made to the public in the 2012 election campaign to the point where it's lost pretty much all credibility on a number of files, particularly the fiscal file.

You know, I know that we will be seeing a budget later this week and that, again, based on the Speech from the Throne there's a general consensus that they're going to present what they call a balanced budget. But who knows what term or terms they're going to use in which to shake down those numbers to arrive at a balanced number? Last year they changed the way that government finances are reported, and with that, I guess, changed

the Fiscal Responsibility Act and the government management act. It's an unfortunate turn of events.

We get into the building Alberta plan, page 2. Again we have in the second paragraph that "this is a government that will stay true to its promises." You know, it's flabbergasting to me that this appears in here. It's just simply not the case. This is a Premier who will probably most be remembered for not staying true to her promises if she can get past the scandal of the day.

4:20

Another line that this government likes to use all too often, Mr. Speaker: "Ensuring government lives within its means." I'm not sure what this means to the government of Alberta, but what it means to families living in Alberta is that they actually spend less than they take in. What we've seen this government doing consistently year in and year out over the past six years is running deficits and spending more than they take in.

A little bit further down here we have "neither nature's wrath, nor economic fury." Economic fury? The bitumen bubble was economic fury by overestimating the resource revenue income that the province would take in by predicting hundred dollar plus barrels of oil. That's not economic fury. That's poor fiscal planning. Call it what you want, but "economic fury" is certainly not a term that I would have put in here.

The next paragraph. "Investing in families means your government is making good on its key promise to build 50 new schools and modernize 70 more over the next three years." Well, three years from the date that this was read in the House, which will be March 3, 2017, is not the key promise that was made in the election that was held on April 23, 2012. That promise was that these 50 new schools would be built and 70 modernizations done by the election in 2016, which, as all in this House are probably keenly aware, could be called as per the fixed election date legislation pretty much two years from right now. Well, schools don't just magically build themselves, and this government is seemingly taking some credit for schools that were announced by the former Premier in 2011. We've seen members in this House make comments about how some of those 50 new schools have been completed already, but it's just simply not true. We see a large number of building Alberta signs, but unfortunately there are no schools behind those signs.

So I don't understand. Again, here we are on the second page, and we've now made three references to a government that stays true to its promises, one of which is noted as its key promise, and they're not going to deliver on it. Now they're changing the terms so that the key promise is now for the next three years. Well, I guess that even remains to be seen. Like all governments, this government, I'm sure, will be judged in history, and some of these promises – it just boggles my mind that they're putting these on paper and claiming them to be today's promise.

We move on. In the next paragraph we're talking about family care clinics. One of my colleagues earlier today referred to that as a pet project of the Premier. It's really encouraging to see that more FCCs will follow, considering the absolute disaster that one of the first ones was up in Slave Lake. You know, I guess this is what happens when a government puts blinders on to the realities around it. Disasters happen around them, and they don't really care. They're just moving along.

We keep moving on down, and we get down to: "This government is three years ahead of schedule in finishing [the] ring road, [in Edmonton] and will twin Highway 63 from Grassland to Fort McMurray – in full and on time – by 2016." [interjection] I think they are rather encourageable on the other side. But this is a commitment that was originally made in I believe it was 2006. So

I don't know why they're suggesting that this is something that's going to be on time by 2016. That's 10 years later than the date that it was originally announced and certainly not on time by the date that it was originally announced. [interjection] Oh, I'm sorry. I thought the hon. Minister of Infrastructure had something to add, but I'm sure he'll ask me a question later.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, please. The member has the floor.

Mr. Wilson: You know, I'd be happy to table the press release from 2006 announcing the twinning of highway 63 tomorrow, Mr. Speaker.

We move on now to page 4. More gold. It's talking about how "the Governments of Alberta and British Columbia signed a landmark agreement to move Alberta's oil and gas to the B.C. coast," which is great. That was a bit of a struggle for our two provinces to come to an agreement, and you know, we're happy that they were able to. Unfortunately, there's still a pile of regulatory framework and its hurdles that we need to go through on a federal level before that's ever going to become a reality.

Signing a provincial energy agreement with China is good, assuming that you can actually get your product to that market, which at this point in time we can't do because we don't have a pipeline out to that coast. Now, we do obviously have some other ways of getting it there through rail or whatnot.

Page 5 we get the goal of putting our – I'm just going to read it because it deserves it.

To meet the commitment under the Building Alberta Plan to live within its means, your government made difficult decisions in Budget 2013 – decisions that helped Alberta turn the corner, putting our province on the path to a balanced budget.

Well, I have got to say that I really appreciated the comments made by the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood after the Q3 update where he referred to the government as lucky idiots. It's rather fitting that these tough decisions that were made in Budget 2013 really have nothing to do with the fact that your numbers are looking a little bit better. It has everything to do with the state of the Canadian dollar being at around 90 cents. It has everything to do with natural gas prices going up. But I suppose it is the nature of a government to take credit for things which it does not do.

You know, talking about the new single energy regulator, from my understanding from some of the people that I have in my constituency of Calgary-Shaw, this has been somewhat of a problematic drilling season for some of our small producers because the regulator decided to go through an entire review process in December, and it has stalled and delayed what would be the drilling season. I'd hope that this government is well aware of the problems that the single regulator has created for itself at this point in time, although like many other things I don't have high hopes.

Then we get to page 6. Page 6 for me was probably the lowest point of this speech. Again, when we talk about His Honour, our Lieutenant Governor, we're talking about the most decorated living war veteran in our country, and he sat in that chair, Mr. Speaker, and he read this phrase. "Building nothing would sacrifice Alberta's future." [interjection] Pound all you want, Minister, but that is just a shameful thing to have our Lieutenant Governor read in this House because it's a partisan shot on a government talking point that has been proven to be absolutely false about the opposition, and it's in here veiled as part of a throne speech outlining the vision for this province. It is absolutely shameful that this phrase appeared, and it's shameful that

you would support it in the way in which you just did, Minister. But I guess not much surprises me anymore.

I'm looking forward to seeing what the Edmonton and Calgary city charters have to bring. That's going to be an interesting debate. As I referred to earlier in my member's statement, from the bottom of page 7, "your government will renew the long-term funding commitment to the Municipal Sustainability Initiative." Well, there we go again as I refer back to broken promises. In 2012 the Premier promised to take the municipal sustainability initiative from \$846 million, and then the next year it was going to go up to \$1 billion, and in 2014 and years afterwards it was going to \$1.6 billion year after year after year. Well, what happened? Apparently because of economic fury she broke the promise, and it was left at \$846 million. Well, it's encouraging to see that that broken promise will be rectified, and I'm looking forward to seeing on Thursday to what extent. Are they going to go right to the \$1.6 billion as was promised in the election campaign? Who knows what they're going to do.

Talking about the flooding, the "government will make firm the commitment to build community mitigation projects." Definitely important. I'm excited to see what they're doing with new flood hazard mapping as well. The flood hazard mapping, as we all know, was a very critical debate that we had here back in the fall session, something the Wildrose pushed for very, very, hard. I'm happy to see that the government has included this in part of their move forward.

At the bottom of page 8 we get into some of the education issues. Now, this has been a hot topic in Alberta, particularly around the curriculum and assessment piece in education. I have to say that I was a little surprised to hear the Minister of Education today stand and suggest that he was going to change course and he was going to ensure that knowledge and understanding and the multiplication tables in education systems throughout the province will remain as requirements in the Alberta curriculum, which has not been the case recently as per many media reports and a 7,000-signature petition that will probably be tabled in this House at some point. It is an encouraging development.

4:30

But at the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, this is a document that really doesn't hold a lot of weight. It's not really much of a vision. The Premier was talking about putting forward a vision for the next 15 to 20 years. All I see here is a document that will try to hang on or allow this government to hang on to the thing that it craves most, which has been power, that it has had for 43 years. I'm a little disappointed, as I laid out, that some of the overtly partisan remarks were put into this speech, that we had to put our Lieutenant Governor through reading some of that.

I look forward to seeing what actually comes from this.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Anglin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would ask the hon. member to comment particularly on issues dealing with flood mitigation. I understand that it was brought up in the speech. I know that not just High River but Calgary and a community in my own constituency, Sundre, suffered greatly during not just the last flood but previous floods going back in history. The government now has claimed to make it a commitment, but I'm not sure where this is leading to. I was wondering if the member would care to

comment on the government's proposal to deal with flood mitigation and the issues with our watersheds.

Mr. Wilson: Well, I thank the member for the question. I think one thing that we learned this past spring was that we need to do everything that we can to be prepared. It is encouraging to see that the government is taking mitigation very seriously. I think it's something that we need to act on as soon as possible because, as we're all aware, political will to spend hundreds of millions of dollars on flood mitigation will dissipate the further away we get from a natural disaster like what we experienced in the spring of 2013.

I think that it's a good step forward that they struck the task force. They seemed to come up with some interesting ideas around the dry dams on the Elbow and Sheep and other rivers. There's extensive work that's being done in High River already to this day. I think that we're going to see some of this being covered as we go through our supplementary supply estimates through the Municipal Affairs budget.

I think it's critical that this government does work with municipalities and makes sure that they have the funds available to them to properly set up a mitigation plan for their communities, in particular Calgary, where the majority of our businesses downtown were impacted fairly severely. As one of the economic drivers of this province, which is, in turn, the economic driver of our country, I think that protecting downtown Calgary and the areas around it is critical.

There are some very interesting projects that have been floated, Mr. Speaker, particularly the underground tunnel that would go from the Glenmore reservoir flowing through to the Bow River under the 58th Avenue. I guess it's going to go underground. It's a fascinating project. It's a pipe that could be eight metres wide from what I've read. It could take up to, I believe, 650 cubic metres per second, which is a substantial amount of water. It's thinking outside of the box, which is, I think, something that we recognize that we may have to do a very good job of. I hope and pray, as do, I'm sure, all members of this Assembly, that we do not get hit with another disaster of the nature, size, and scope that we did in 2013 before we have the opportunity to get these very important mitigation projects built to their fullest extent.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. members.

I do have some more time. The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Rowe: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, would like to ask my colleague. I, too, paid very much attention to the throne speech, as we all did, and I paid particular attention to their continued commitment to supporting municipalities. I was looking forward, as the member was, to seeing us maybe getting back to where the MSI was promised to be, as the member has said. In our supply estimates that were handed out just a little while ago, I see that the MSI, the municipal sustainability initiative, has gone from a whopping \$846 million with a huge increase to \$847,000,570. That's not much of a commitment, so I'd like to get the member to respond to that.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, are you referring to the supplementary supply estimates for the finalization of the current year, or are you referring to the comments from the throne speech?

Mr. Rowe: Supplementary supply estimates.

The Deputy Speaker: The member might attempt, but I think you're mixing two items there.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

Mr. Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would concur with your assessment. I believe that what we'll see on Thursday will be a massive injection of cash into the MSI fund, and that will be for Budget 2014 moving forward as opposed to supplementary supply estimates for this current fiscal year. But it is a good question and something that we should be watching very closely.

As noted earlier – and one knows that I like repeating phrases like this – it was a broken promise by this Premier. Hopefully, this government will do what it can to rectify that.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Hon. members, I have a very short list of people that wish to speak. My next speaker will be the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, followed by Calgary-Fish Creek and the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

The Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Dr. Sherman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Alberta Liberals I'm pleased to reply to the Speech from the Throne for the Second Session of the 28th Alberta Legislature. The Alberta Liberals will work hard to build a strong economy and a strong society. Alberta Liberals want a fiscally prudent, socially progressive, and environmentally responsible government at home and abroad.

Mr. Speaker, we are fortunate to live in the best province in the best country in the world, where the people cherish democracy, personal freedoms, and the rule of law. As Albertans we are blessed with an abundance of natural resources which are in high demand across the country and the world. Our greatest resource, however, lies in the character, the work ethic, and the potential of our people. Hard-working, industrious men and women have built this great province, and we owe them a debt of gratitude. They have braved many challenges, and they have made this a better place for their families, a more welcoming place for newcomers, and a better world for us. Alberta is a place where hope meets opportunity. Many continue to arrive here every day from across the world to make a better life for themselves and their families.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta has a good economy, and it thrives in spite of government policies, not because of them. We do well as a province despite our grossly unfair flat-tax scheme that sees multi-millionaires pay the same small percentage as a single mother earning minimum wage. Nor is it due to the poor environmental record this government has created for Alberta, a poor record which is making it very difficult for us to get the needed pipelines built so that we can get our product to market. Instead of solutions, this government offers nothing more than foot-dragging and exercises in political spending.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta succeeds because of the vast natural wealth with which our province is blessed and because of the hard work of everyday Albertans working to make a better life for themselves and their children. This government will see all of their prosperity squandered in one generation with current policies, saving peanuts while other jurisdictions by comparison have put away hundreds of billions of dollars in less time. It would launch a direct assault on the people who built this province by bullying them into contract negotiations and denying them fair compensation.

It would cram our children into overcrowded classrooms while promising to build badly needed new schools, many of which will

be nothing more than portable trailers loosely thrown together in a field. It would saddle our young people with crushing student debt and limit their educational choices.

It would see people languish in hospitals because this government neglects to invest in nonprofit, community-based home care and long-term care, as a result wasting hundreds of millions of dollars and leading to cancelled surgeries and lost workplace productivity, all while subsidizing private companies, many that are outside of this province, that can neither reduce the costs of health care nor deliver the high quality Albertans expect and deserve.

It would treat local governments, who are directly responsible to the vast majority of Albertans, as wards of the state or administrative puppets serving the interests of the provincial government instead of the residents who elected them. No, Mr. Speaker, this is not the way to build a strong Alberta economy.

4:40

If there is one thing that Albertans have seen clearly over the last couple of years, it's that the Conservatives' fiscal management – or should I say mismanagement? – leaves much to be desired. To say that it has expensive tastes would be a massive understatement, as evidenced by first-class flights and very expensive hotels. I have reminded the government at every opportunity that we are here to serve the public, not to be served by the public. We need to find out where all of our money is going, end the government's wasteful spending, and ensure that we're getting the best value for taxpayer dollars so that we can provide Albertans with the level and quality of services that they pay for and deserve and desperately need at a time of growth.

This year's throne speech, with all of its chest thumping about the economy, raises one very important question that Alberta Liberals want the government to answer. Mr. Speaker, what good is a strong economy if you don't have a strong society? The words in this Speech from the Throne are not backed up by the brutal cuts in the 2013 budget. The effects of the cuts will be felt by Albertans for years to come. This is a time to build this province, but the budget from last year will hurt the province for the years ahead and hurt our ability to build a strong economy and a strong society.

In fact, one thing I saw missing in the Speech from the Throne – well, a couple of things. You know, the Premier didn't even mention ending child poverty. She made a commitment to end child poverty in five years. We're year 3 into that commitment. Also, the Premier completely omitted the social policy framework, the very policies that will help build a strong society and improve our economy for the future, an economy of innovation, research and development, and technology.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to do something a little different here. I believe that the government has many issues. I believe that what we need to do is propose solutions. This is what an Alberta Liberal government would do. The Alberta Liberals support the energy economy. We believe that it's essential that we get our pipelines to tidewater. We believe that it's essential that we get our pipelines going east, west, and south. The way to get our pipelines to tidewater is to rebuild our credibility on the environment. The Alberta Liberals would bring in world-best practices on the environment, independent monitoring of the environment, and strict enforcement of the rules.

President Obama and the Democratic administration in the U.S. expect us to take meaningful action on carbon as do European partners. By putting a real price on carbon and dealing with the environmental issues, we can remove the barriers that impede our ability to get our pipelines to market. Mr. Speaker, the world

wants us to do well in this file. I believe Albertans are ethical, moral, good people, and I believe we are the safest, most reliable source of energy on the planet.

With respect to the economy we also need to cut red tape. Many entrepreneurs have told me that there are too many rules and too much paperwork. In a global marketplace business needs good rules and strong rules. Many in business also say that we need an educated, skilled labour workforce. We have the people, but the people need an education system that meets their needs so that they can meet industry's needs. This is good business, Mr. Speaker.

I believe, also, that when we get our product to tidewater, we as a province and as a country should make an effort to upgrade and refine as much of our product at home, if not in Alberta, at least in our country. The Alberta Liberals would love to see a national energy corridor and a transportation corridor from coast to coast with bidirectional flow of products and people. We need to break down interprovincial trade barriers. We as a country need to work together. I believe that the resources Alberta has been blessed with can benefit the nation more than they are currently benefiting our nation today.

I would like to talk about social policy, Mr. Speaker. One of the major issues for Alberta Liberals is the education system. We would like to ensure that every child in our province and every citizen has a chance to get a world-class education that's affordable, that's accessible, that's of high quality, and that meets the needs of the individual and our society.

Today we have 1,000 fewer teachers and 50,000 more kids in the school system. Over the last four years alone Alberta had one of the highest high school dropout rates in the country, the lowest postsecondary participation rates in the country. The Alberta Liberals would make the largest investment in Alberta history in education, from early childhood to postsecondary.

We need to maintain our schools. We need a massive investment in maintenance of the schools that we currently have. We need to staff our schools appropriately with the right number of teachers, and those teachers need support. We need to ensure that our students are getting the best possible learning experience from their classrooms.

We also do need new schools. Absolutely. The Alberta Liberals will build new schools, not as private-public partnerships but schools as community hubs, schools that would include a cafeteria so children can get breakfast and lunch, schools that will have daycares so working parents who have some kids in school can have affordable world-class daycare, child care, many of them single moms. Mr. Speaker, our schools need to have public health clinics. Let's put not only the school nurse but the nurse practitioner and the whole health care team, the prevention side of the health team, into the schools, what we call wraparound services.

Let's give our teachers the opportunity to teach. Our teachers are being parents and social workers and nurses to many of our children. I believe if we make this investment, it will actually save us money in health care, in the criminal justice system, and in the children and youth services system. An ounce of prevention will save us a lot of money down the pipeline, but more importantly it would improve the lives of our young people and give them the opportunity to do amazing things.

Mr. Speaker, the next billion-dollar idea in Alberta will come from our children. In postsecondary the Alberta Liberals would not only restore the drastic cuts that were made; we would actually make a massive investment into postsecondary education and adopt the recommendations of the Ignite report, one of the largest reports made with the consultation of the teachers and the staff

and the students in postsecondary institutions, to make sure postsecondary education is accessible, affordable, of high quality, transferable, and there's full accountability in the system. Today we have amongst the highest tuition and fees in the country and amongst the lowest postsecondary participation rates in the country. It also is hurting our economy, it's hurting individuals, and it's hurting our community.

The Alberta Liberals will care for our seniors. We will do what is necessary to treat them with dignity and respect. The very people that have built this province and this country will live out their lives with dignity, with world-class home care, nonprofit community-based home care and lodge care, and world-class nonprofit community-based long-term care. Alberta Liberals will bring in a drug plan so that seniors can afford their drugs, unlike the government who wants to bring in a drug plan that's a tax on the sick. If seniors can afford to get their drugs, they will actually stay out of the hospital system. We know this investment in a drug plan will actually improve their lives and save us money in the acute-care health system.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about health care. The Alberta Liberals will fix the health care system. In fact, we will bring back the strongest performance and accountability measures in the country, and we will legislate them. In order to achieve those measures, yes, investing in our seniors and the disabled and the community capacity system is essential. We will make sure that every Albertan has a family doctor. We will invest heavily in our family care clinics or primary care networks. We need to have one type of clinic. They need to be one. We will integrate them into acute care and integrate them into seniors' care and into our school system. We will bring in the most robust health care guarantees in the country.

Health care spending is up 43 per cent since 2007. The population is only up by 15 per cent. If you can't manage health care, you can't govern because if you can't manage health care – that's a \$5 billion increase since 2007 – the province is either going into debt or you're cutting the very services that keep people healthy and out of the health system, services like education and seniors and disabled supports.

4:50

Mr. Speaker, the Alberta Liberals would give our civil servants, the nurses, the teachers, the front-line responders, the support staff, the very heroes who build this province – we would treat them with respect by repealing Bill 45 and Bill 46, which violate the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The Alberta Liberals will not take away their pensions like the Conservative government wants to do. The Alberta Liberals will ensure that the seniors who will retire shortly will not live a life in poverty.

I'd like to talk about infrastructure. Infrastructure is essential for an economy. We need to build the roads and the bridges and the buildings necessary to grow our economy and to serve our society. The Alberta Liberals will invest heavily in LRT in Edmonton and Calgary and green transit to ensure that Albertans have affordable and green transportation. The Alberta Liberals will ensure that our municipal leaders are given the respect, revenue, and shared responsibility that they need to build our cities and towns.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans shouldn't look to the Conservative throne speech for any real solutions to a decades-old problem. There simply aren't any. The throne speech is a eulogy for an intellectually dead and very tired political dynasty. It was a force for good decades ago.

There's only one thing from this speech that growing numbers of Albertans can agree on. It's time for new management, and it's time for change. Not change for change's sake. We don't need to

look to the radical right or the far left, that will hurt the economy. We need smart and thoughtful management. Alberta needs a government that knows how to provide both a strong economy and a strong society. An Alberta Liberal government will handle that task. We will get Albertans . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I'll recognize the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Mr. Saskiw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member had talked about budgetary measures. I'm just wondering how the Alberta Liberal Party would balance the books. Apparently, this government can't.

Dr. Sherman: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member. This is one of the most fundamental questions. The economy: this is as good as it gets. The best employment rates in the country, amongst the highest incomes. Oil is as high as it gets. Gas is at \$5. Why are we going into debt? Why aren't Albertans getting the services? Well, I'll tell you why. The Alberta Liberals believe that good ideas should not be rejected because of the source. In fact, the Wildrose has put out some good ideas on how to cut some wasteful spending. I believe all of our political parties can agree on that because that just makes sense. It does make sense, and I give them the credit because it's due.

The Alberta Liberals would implement many of those wasteful spending cuts, and we would go beyond that. In health care alone, better management in health care. Imagine, just a 10 per cent efficiency in health care could achieve possibly a billion dollar savings and better health care. The Alberta Liberals will better manage health care. We're the only party with the solutions to fixing the health care system. That's on the spending side.

Beyond that, Mr. Speaker, on the revenue side we talked about that we do need to increase our revenue. The way to increase the revenue is to deal with the environmental barriers and get our pipelines to tidewater. There'll be more money coming in for corporations and businesses and companies and government coffers. That just makes sense. It's good economic policy, actually.

The plants: the royalty holidays are over, Mr. Speaker. There's a lot of money coming in. There's a lot of money that's coming in, but we also believe we need to go back to a progressive income tax. A progressive income tax would actually be a tax cut for the majority of Albertans. We did some research and found that the progressive tax that Premier Lougheed brought in was 44 per cent of the federal tax bracket. In fact, the taxes used to be 7.48 per cent for low-income Albertans and 12.76 per cent for high-income Albertans. So the flat tax that was brought in in 2001 was actually a tax increase for the vast majority of Albertans.

The Alberta Liberals understand that if you cut taxes for working families and cut their school fees and cut their bills that they've got to pay for electricity and gas, when working families have money in their pocket, they have money to spend on a better house, a better car; they eat out. We believe that's actually good for the economy. With the policies of trickle-down economics, where you give a few billionaires a whole bunch of money, well, all that trickles down is burdens.

The Alberta Liberals are the party that believes that if you invest in middle-income and low-income working Albertans, if you invest in education, health, literacy, and make sure that they've got money in their pockets, we'll have a stronger economy and a stronger society. And if we do that, we will also save money in the criminal justice system, in the children and youth services

system, the health care system. These systems are the symptom of a lack of investment upstream. That's exactly how we will not only balance the budget, but we will actually save money and get our citizens the services they need: a good education system, a good health care system, good public infrastructure. Not only a good social policy, they're actually economic enablers for the economy of the future.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the hon. member for asking me a very complex question to a very complex problem. I believe that if we all as legislators work together, we could all build a strong economy and a strong society and a better Alberta.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw on 29(2)(a). You've got about a minute.

Mr. Wilson: Yes, sir. Thank you. I appreciate it, Mr. Speaker. Hon. member, you acknowledged that men and women built this province; however, reading this document, you would almost assume that the PC government built this province. Would you care to comment on that?

Dr. Sherman: Thank you, hon. member. I didn't want to be too negative about the Speech from the Throne, but it did look like more of an election document. It was lacking in humility. Really, it's regular, everyday, hard-working people, the heroes, who have built this wonderful province, not a political government. It's our seniors who built this province. In fact, many of them who built this province never voted for this current government. They built it before this government ever came into existence. It's the moms and dads right now who work hard every day who are building this province, and our children will continue to build this province.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Next speaker. I'll recognize the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm absolutely thrilled to stand up and make some comments in regard to the Speech from the Throne. I've been here a long time. Honestly, I hate saying that because it dates you. You know, you think, "Oh, my gosh," when you start reflecting. The last time I stood up and spoke to a Speech from the Throne was shortly after I got elected in 1993, and I can tell you that that's 21 years ago.

It's been interesting to watch what has happened over all those years and all the different speeches from the throne that have taken place since then. It always used to excite me, listening to it. I thought it was a great ceremony, and I listened intently to what the LG had to say. I've been around long enough to know that this is a back-and-forth sort of negotiation, that this is what the government wants in the speech, this is what the LG is prepared to say, and at the end of the day, after much back and forth, it gets approved.

I was really kind of looking forward to hearing what was going to be said in the Speech from the Throne yesterday because, if you recall, we haven't had a Speech from the Throne for the last two years. You know, that's unusual. I haven't gone to any debating to find out exactly if there has been a period where there wasn't a Speech from the Throne for two years. It's a speech that kind of sets the agenda for where the government is going, what they are doing, a time to tell Albertans what the agenda is.

It was interesting for me to listen and see where this government is going in regard to what they're going to do on behalf of Albertans. You know, words are interesting. I find that sometimes you have to sit back and put the 24-hour rule in place and take some time to read it. Throughout this whole speech I haven't identified anywhere – and one of the members can stand up and correct me – where it talks about the openness, the accountability, and the transparency that this Premier alluded to when she first got elected. You know, they talk about working hard and innovative ideas.

5:00

The other thing that's missing in here that I have found interesting: nowhere does it even mention telling the truth to Albertans. I know that's a word that we have to be very cautious on.

I've had the privilege, if I can say this, of being on both sides of the House, and I say that in all honesty and all fairness. I was elected in 1993 as a PC, had what I consider probably the most privileged and honoured time working under the Premier at the time, Premier Klein, and have a deep, deep, deep amount of respect for the man and learned so much under his leadership and with some of the colleagues that were with me at the time. In fact, I had so many mentors over there at that particular time that I sometimes wonder if when I first got elected in 1993, they all of a sudden thought that they had a Siamese twin because to me I was beside them right from the beginning, sucking up as much energy and as much knowledge as I could from them because I had, as I indicated, a great deal of respect.

What I found under that leadership, under that particular Premier, Mr. Speaker: it was rocky. In 1993 that particular Premier had an agenda, and he said that he was going to balance the books. I know there are a couple of my colleagues over there that were with me in 1993. Calgary-Cross comes to mind. Lesser Slave Lake was there. It was an interesting period of time. We've heard Premier Klein talk about how there wasn't a protest that we didn't go through every day. I remember coming home one day to my husband and breaking down and saying: "You know, nobody likes me. Everybody hates me." He said: "Yeah. You're going to go to the garden and eat worms next, I'm sure." But this was the agenda that was focused on, and this was what we were going to do.

What I find so interesting about the building Alberta plan – and I have to tell you, Mr. Speaker, that I hate that slogan out of all the slogans I've seen this government do since 1993. They talk about their building Alberta plan, and my colleague earlier today talked about his school, and we see these multiple big signs – I see all these big signs – yet to this day I haven't seen a shovel. If anybody could even show me a shovel. I appreciate the fact that we're promising . . . [interjections] I hear some words over there. I think it's the Solicitor General.

The Deputy Speaker: You've got the floor, hon. member.

Mrs. Forsyth: You know, he still hasn't learned in this Legislature that I'm hearing impaired, so all I get is a muffled noise from him, and that's probably . . .

Mr. Hale: You're lucky.

Mrs. Forsyth: Lucky that I can't hear him. You know, I find it interesting that the Solicitor General and the Associate Minister of Public Safety, who are supposed to be representing the people of Alberta, can't sit quietly and listen to some of the comments I

have to make. [interjection] He's going again, and fortunately I can't hear him.

We talk about their two-year mandate, and then they've delivered this government's first Speech from the Throne. It contained the following message.

Over the next four years, this government will . . . deliver and fulfill a clear, focused, target-driven mandate. Albertans will know where the province is headed and how progress is being made, because this is a government that will stay true to its promises.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I've given up counting how many promises have been broken by this particular government, and I'm sure we would have no problem tabling how many broken promises this particular government has. You know, I can give you a ton of examples under health care. I can give you a ton of examples as simple as promises that the Premier made prior to when she was running for the leadership about all the things that she was going to do, and it's just been one broken promise after another broken promise.

You know, as Health critic for the last four years I don't even know what to say on the health care file other than the fact that the health care professionals in this province truly, truly, truly are the ones that need to get a standing ovation day in and day out for the jobs that they do under very difficult circumstances. I hear daily about when people get into the system and how well they do and how professional the people in the system are.

What we continuously hear about are the cancelled surgeries, the wait-lists, the quarterly reports that this government was so adamant they were going to do. Now we're not even getting a quarterly report; we're kind of getting a half sort of a quarterly report, maybe not so much a quarterly report on what they're doing, which I think really is a tragedy, quite frankly. If there was one thing that I did respect about Alberta Health Services, it was the quarterly reports. Even though they were failing on many of their performance measures, at least they put it in black and white, and at least they showed that they were making some progress.

You saw today when we had the people up from Slave Lake on the FCCs that the answers we got back from the minister truly were sad. Albertans, quite frankly, are onto his answers when he answers things in the Legislature. The amount of FOIPs that we're getting, and the amount of brown envelopes that we're getting. I tweeted a little while ago that it makes my day when I hear from a leak or I get a brown envelope or I get a FOIP because none of them lie. Quite frankly, when you have it in black and white – I think it's 86 pages of a FOIP that I'm trying to go through right now just on one and then another 81 pages on another. You have to go through that, and these kinds of things don't lie. The dickering that we have to go through back and forth just to get these FOIPs released, and then they have them all blacked out because there's something within the FOIP legislation. You know, it's some sort of confidentiality under 23(1). I can appreciate that.

I guess for me and on behalf of Albertans if the government could talk about when they're going to build these. The Minister of Infrastructure answered the question today in regard to the school, I think, in Blackfalds that my colleague asked him about. I'm not a builder. I'm not a plumber. I don't know other than that I'm in major renos at this particular time and I see the problems and the delays that I have and others have in regard to when they're doing major renovations. I don't know how the heck he's going to do, I think, 50 new schools and 70 renovations in two years. I'm not a rocket scientist. I just don't know how these are going to be built. The Minister of Infrastructure, no question, is going to be out there with his own shovel, making sure that this stuff gets done, because otherwise it's not going to get done. Are

all of us . . . [interjections] Oh, he's saying something also. You know, I've known him for a long time, when he was an alderman and when he was running for mayor, so I'm sure that he will get that school done if he has to even use his own shovel and will provide us with information.

The other thing that I find fascinating in this is that they talk about that "375 programs have already been reviewed under Results-Based Budgeting, with the third phase set to begin and be fully completed this year." I would imagine that falls under the Minister of Finance. I stand to be corrected on that, but I do think that it was his initiative or the Premier's. I would love to know and to get some details about his results-based budgeting. I can tell you as the critic for Health that I haven't seen any results-based budgeting in Health. In fact, we're having some very interesting conversations back and forth with AHS in regard to some numbers that they've recently put out that they can't seem to find. We'll be bringing that to the minister's attention to find out just exactly how they're going to go back and rationalize that to Albertans.

The family care clinics. This is one of my favourites. "Your government is already working with communities across Alberta to develop the first wave of Family Care Clinics that are open later and provide health care closer to home. More FCCs will follow." Well, that's an interesting statement. It doesn't say if it's going to be the 140 that they promised. More FCCs to follow. This is in the Speech from the Throne. More FCCs to follow. Just incredible.

5:10

They talk about how "this government will invest in better seniors' care, focusing funding on aging-in-place and on innovative new technology that allows patients to recover in their own homes." Well, we don't have to look back on what's happening to the seniors in our province or some of the horrible, horrible things that we've seen. The government doesn't seem to understand that the fact of the matter is that while we appreciate what they're doing in continuing care spaces, we have seniors in this province that need to be in long-term care nursing beds. These particular seniors, many of them, hundreds of them, for that matter, are still tied up in an acute-care facility. We've had people that have spoken out more often than I can imagine, like Dr. Paul Parks, in regard to the need for building some long-term care nursing beds so these seniors can age in place, because they don't fit into a continuing care model.

I saw that with my own mom, who was in a continuing care facility and ended up in the hospital. The doctor that was taking care of her said to me that we needed to sit down and have the family chat, and that's always kind of not so good. He said that my mom would not be able to return to the continuing care facility that she was already in, that she would have to go into a long-term care nursing bed. He didn't think that he would be able to get her into that kind of a facility because there was no room, and the government wasn't building any more long-term care nursing beds.

You know, you hear these stories, Mr. Speaker, but when they hit you personally, you have to make some difficult decisions. The government needs to understand that there have to be long-term care nursing beds.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Standing Order 29(2). The Member for Calgary-Shaw.

Mr. Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Member for Calgary-Fish Creek. You have been an outstanding advocate for

health care and seniors' care in this province. I'm wondering if you could comment on some things that you would hope to see in this document regarding both health care and seniors' care.

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, Mr. Speaker, there are so many things. I mean, I've briefly touched on them. I think probably one of the most disgusting things that I've seen from this government within the last couple of weeks is how they buried the Wild report, the most anticipated mental health and addictions plan, that this government paid thousands and thousands of dollars for. It's historical. That's how important this report was, and they buried it on February 14 at 4:30 in the afternoon on their website, without any press release or anything, probably a 272-page document on mental health and addictions, which is key to moving people, 1 in 5 people with mental health, 1 in 10 people with addictions. And this government buries it. It's a disservice to the mentally ill in this province and a disservice to people with addictions in this province. They should be embarrassed about doing that, quite frankly.

I can tell you about some of the things in regard to what's happening with our seniors. Health care. I can honestly stand up every day for every question in question period and probably go 365 days in regard to asking the minister and the government health care questions, and they continually tend to BS their way around some of the answers. You know, it really is embarrassing.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there others? The Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Anglin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd be interested in asking the hon. member. I know she was directly affected by the flood of 2013. With the comments in the speech dealing with the whole flood and flood mitigation, I wonder if the hon. member would make some sort of comment on what her expectations were. Or did the throne speech meet those expectations?

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, Mr. Speaker, we were some of the lucky ones in the floods. We were evacuated on the Thursday night at about 10 o'clock. I had a nice officer at our door, knocking on the door, telling us that we would have to be out of the house in the next hour. We spent most of the time after we were evacuated from the house – my husband and I started off at the drop-in centre, and then we moved out to High River.

This government always seems to want to take the credit for everything, but the problem with taking the credit is that they forget to thank the people who should have had the credit, the thousands of Calgarians and other like-minded Albertans that knew when people were in trouble and went out. We were working with many of my colleagues, including my colleague from Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. We kind of ended up in the same team, slugging through the mud, carrying stuff out for seniors, and things like that. My colleague from Strathmore-Brooks: for the mom of one of his friends we had a crew out there for days trying to help her out. You know, the government can take the credit, but in retrospect the credit has to go to the absolutely incredible Calgarians and thousands of Albertans that did the job of the government.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there others?

Next to speak, the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise to respond to the Speech from the Throne, delivered yesterday by His Honour the Lieutenant Governor. There is nothing in that speech that lays out a real vision for this province from this

Progressive Conservative government. It barely talks about improving primary health care. It doesn't address fairness for workers. It forgets altogether the Premier's promise to end child poverty. I want to tell Albertans what the New Democrat vision for Alberta is. This is the Speech from the Throne, were we to be the government, that we would deliver in this House.

Alberta is a great province. It's a province that I'm proud to live in. It's a province fortunate to have great natural resource wealth, but the most important resource in this province, the resource that our prosperity is truly based on, is Albertans themselves.

Albertans have told this government what they want. They want a government that invests in essential services like health care and education. They want to see the government plan for a prosperous future by developing our oil sands carefully and intelligently. Albertans believe in fairness. They believe in protecting the vulnerable, working to end poverty, especially for children, and caring for Albertans with disabilities. They want a government that builds schools and hospitals but ensures that they are properly staffed. But they also want balanced budgets, and they want to see fair, competitive taxation that gives a break to middle-class families while ensuring that the very wealthy in our society pay their share. Those are New Democrat values, too, Mr. Speaker.

There are four pillars that a New Democrat government would depend on: first, to develop a strong fiscal plan to fund the province's needs; second, to create the economic conditions for long-term prosperity that includes everyone; to protect the clean air, water, and land that will sustain Alberta for generations to come; and finally, to deliver the public services that Albertans need and expect.

New Democrats believe that it's past time for us to put our finances on a firm footing. More than 20 per cent of operational spending in Alberta is funded from oil and gas royalty revenues, which are notoriously volatile and which see us at risk of cutting our core services and laying off teachers and nurses every time the price of oil drops. We can do better than that, Mr. Speaker. We must do better than that.

Alberta has a structural problem with revenues. Cuts to corporate and personal income tax for high-income individuals have drastically reduced the revenue we receive and have given a massive tax break to the very wealthy. Moreover, our royalty framework continues to bring in the lowest returns in the world on oil and gas resources. We've lost out on billions and billions of dollars that could have gone to our provincial treasury to fund essential services and to fund savings for the future. While our ability to fund essential services has been negatively impacted, middle-class families have had to pay more than their fair share in taxes.

5:20

A New Democrat government would embrace competitive taxation while ensuring that we have a stable source of revenue to fund the services we need. When the wealthy pay their fair share, Mr. Speaker, we can provide lower taxes for the middle class. Of course, we also know that Albertans want balanced budgets, and we believe that revenue reform is the best way to deliver the services Albertans expect and deserve while balancing the provincial budget.

An Alberta New Democrat government would plan for a thriving, sustainable economy, which includes everyone. It's a prosperous province, Mr. Speaker, and all Albertans need to share in that prosperity. The public-sector employees of this province help us deliver the services that Albertans expect and deserve. Bills 45 and 46 and sudden dramatic changes to pension plans are a poor repayment for the hard-working employees who keep our

province healthy, maintain our roads, and work with vulnerable Albertans. An Alberta New Democrat government would immediately repeal both bills 45 and 46. We would work with unions to negotiate a fair contract for all public-sector employees. A government that fails to reach a fair contract with its workers is, quite simply, a government that has failed to do its job.

Prosperity for Albertans should mean security for Albertans as they age. Albertans need a government that delivers quality of life after retirement, which means a government that protects pensions and works to expand the number of people in the province with access to good pensions. An Alberta New Democrat government would join in the calls for an expanded Canada pension plan, which has been blocked by the government of the province of Alberta, and not continue to block improvements that would dramatically improve the quality of life of retired Albertans.

We would also seek to negotiate fairly and openly with plan members and unions to ensure that public-sector pensions provide guaranteed benefits and a fair, livable retirement for the people who work to make our province great year after year.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta's oil sands are an essential part of the economy of this province, and they're the source of much of the prosperity that this province enjoys, but the New Democrats believe we could be doing so much more to build on and to protect our oil sands prosperity. Upgrading more of our resources here in the province would deliver good, long-term jobs for Albertans long into the future.

Mr. Speaker, we recognize that our prosperity requires access to more markets than just the United States, but we also know that it's time to do a better job of balancing development with a long-term, value-added strategy and a plan to protect Alberta's air, land, and water.

Mr. Speaker, power prices in this province are far too high. Gaming the system by power corporations has become almost routine. A New Democrat government would reregulate the industry, starting with the residential and small-business electricity rates.

We need to do a better job of protecting our air, land, and water. We need better public transit in our cities, better environmental protection, a strategy to deal with tailings ponds, and real regulation on the use of water, on flaring, and on drilling in urban areas. Monitoring of energy projects must be independent and science based. For too long our energy regulations have simply been a rubber stamp on development projects. The boards are stacked with industry friends and insiders and lack the balance that they need. Citizens, First Nations, and environmental groups are all stakeholders, and they all deserve a seat at the table when we discuss the future development of our resources.

A New Democrat government would focus on developing a world-class renewable energy institute. We would look into the options for Alberta's energy future and develop a future for this province that will be prosperous long after our natural resources run out.

Alberta's New Democrats also share a vision with all Albertans for better public services. Year after year Albertans say that investing in health care, education, and other essential services is their priority. That would be our priority as well. We'd fix Alberta Health Services, and we'd protect and expand public health care.

Mr. Speaker, public health care isn't something just as a talking point. It's been shown over and over again that the best, most cost-effective health care is publicly delivered health care, yet in this province we are too dependent on private delivery and the corporate model for Alberta Health Services, that has created chaos in our health care system. The system is more top heavy and less responsive to the needs of today's Alberta families. While the

professionals who work in our health care system report feeling less supported in the crucial work that they do, spending on administration has increased, and services have not improved. A New Democrat government would abolish Alberta Health Services altogether and bring the governance of the public health system back under the control of the Ministry of Health.

We'd make major investments in health care with a common-sense, targeted, and fully costed plan for the \$1 billion yearly increase in federal health transfers, that Alberta will begin receiving this year, investing in long-term care and home care, reducing prescription drug costs for seniors and low-income Albertans, supporting mental health care, expanding our medical and nursing programs, and protecting public laboratory services in Alberta. We'd continue to invest in community clinics to improve access for families across the province in rural and in urban areas.

Ensuring excellent education and care for our young people from child care to kindergarten through to postsecondary is another area where Albertans expect investment and excellence. Sadly, it's yet another area where years of Conservative failure have damaged the system. Child care in Alberta is far too expensive for ordinary families. We would work to create a child care strategy that ensures that parents living in a province where people already work the most in Canada aren't working still more hours just to pay for high-quality child care.

We'd end the failed P3 model for building schools and return to a traditional financing model to build schools where they're needed. An Alberta New Democrat government would finally do the necessary work with municipalities and school boards to solve overcrowding and to revitalize schools in older communities.

For young people looking for a postsecondary education and training, it's vital that we restore programs at Alberta's colleges, universities, and trade schools. As the province with a postsecondary participation rate that's already the lowest in Canada, Alberta needs a strategy to ensure that our young people are developing the skills and the knowledge they need for a successful, prosperous future. The Alberta New Democrats would strike an affordability task force to work with young Albertans to ensure that postsecondary education is accessible, affordable, and attractive. For a start, we'd put a real freeze on tuition fees and work to deliver a ban on mandatory noninstructional fees as well.

As Alberta's government New Democrats know that we can do better. We can provide the public services that Albertans need and expect. We can give our young people the skills, knowledge, training, and opportunities to be part of the most prosperous workforce in the country. We can strengthen and protect our public health care system. We can balance the budget. We can make things easier for middle-class families. We can ensure that Albertans get the prosperity that we all deserve from the resources that we all own together.

We believe that Alberta is a great province, a province with great natural resource wealth and fabulous people. It's time for those people to have a government that respects what they want, what their families' needs are, and what they're asking for. That's the kind of Alberta, Mr. Speaker, that we can all be proud of.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Standing Order 29(2)(a). The Member for Calgary-Shaw.

Mr. Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Member, for your speech there. I was wondering if you could offer some comment on the insinuation that difficult decisions that were made in Budget 2013 are going to put our province on the path to a balanced budget as per what was written in this speech.

Mr. Mason: Well, thank you for that question, hon. member. I think that when the government betrays the trust of the people that elected it, their favourite euphemism is to say that we had to make difficult decisions. They only made some kinds of difficult decisions: difficult decisions to cut persons with developmental disabilities, to cut postsecondary education, to break their promise on child poverty, and so on. Those were the difficult choices they did make.

The difficult choices they didn't make were to look at the revenue system that we have in our province and make sure that everybody is paying their fair share. They didn't make a decision to look at the royalty regime that we have in this province, and they didn't make a decision to cut wasteful government programs that are subsidies to big business; for instance, the carbon capture and storage program. Those are the decisions they didn't make. The decisions that were made I think will do very little to put us back on a firm footing financially.

5:30

I know that the government is not willing to examine the taxation system in our province. They're not willing to reverse corporate tax cuts or tax cuts for the wealthiest of Albertans, so they depend more than ever on volatile royalty revenue, which is a roller coaster. We even had the Minister of Finance use that term the other day. We have to get off that roller coaster. We can't be laying off nurses and teachers every time the price of oil goes down. But that's the kind of situation we're in.

Now there are additional government revenues – we heard that from the Finance minister – but he says that they're not going to invest in more spending for the social programs that they've cut. Instead, they want to rebuild the fund so that they can go through it all again. So the question really is: will we get out of the cut-and-add, cut-and-add, debt, pay-down-debt, more debt, pay-down-debt kind of roller coaster, that kind of unstable financial planning for the province under this Progressive Conservative government? No, I don't think we will. I think that it's going to take a government that's prepared to put our financial position on a firm footing and deal with the structural fiscal imbalance that exists in this province so that we can have balanced budgets and the kinds of programs that Albertans expect without having them cut every other year.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Are there others under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, followed by Calgary-Mountain View.

Mr. Anglin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a response to the throne speech, there's something that I was quite disappointed in, particularly when we talked about the agreements between Alberta and B.C. to get our oil and gas to the coast. It's significant because it has to do with the environment. The speech had an absence of any commitment to address environmental issues, and that's significant because all of our abilities to access markets are being hindered by our record or the perception of the lack of a record of dealing with the environment. Without addressing this, we're basically not just handicapping the ability to help our industries access the market, but we are also doing a disservice to the average Albertan, who desperately wants clean water, clean air, and clean land, without a doubt.

Universally, across this province, people do want a clean environment. They want a good environmental policy. They want a good environmental record. What we have is a situation where in the last year we have experienced the largest coal mine disaster

ever to leach into a riverway in Canadian history. That's the Obed coal mine disaster. Currently there are no changes to policy. There is no mention of what we would do differently to prevent this from happening again. We also still have the issue of the condition of the Athabasca River. As a result, is there going to be any mitigation? We're dealing with heavy metals that do not dissolve. Unfortunately, the minister previously had said that they would dissipate or dissolve in the river, but that's not true. That's not science based.

We have significant issues, and these issues plague us as a province. It plagues our economy if we're not able to address them to the satisfaction of the everyday Albertan, if we're not able to address these issues to the satisfaction of the marketplaces that we're trying to access. When this government looks at some of the issues that are hindering the building of our pipelines, all those hindrances are based on environmental concerns. If you look at Nebraska dealing with the XL pipeline, it's all about water. It's all about the pipeline going through an aquifer. If you look at the Gateway, going to the B.C. coast, First Nations are concerned about the river crossings and are concerned about the safety and the likelihood of having leaks.

Now, what's missing in the formula is that our industries have the technology, and they have the qualified people. We have the ability to actually do something to set the record straight, but we're not doing it. Hence, what we have is, in essence, hollow words. The words are good. The intentions may be well meaning, but if they're not followed by action, then everything is for naught. It's the action that actually makes that commitment a reality, and what we're not seeing here is action. Clearly, this is a problem for this government. It's a problem for all Albertans.

I want to give a microexample of the words not following the actions. The little community of Bentley, Alberta, which is in my constituency, has a highway 12 bypass. This government likes to take credit for things that it doesn't do. Unfortunately, now it's going to get credit for doing something terribly wrong. They stuck up a big building Alberta sign, which is wonderful. We really like the building Alberta signs. It helps the sign companies stay in business. It contributes to our economy. Unfortunately, they've got a big building Alberta sign where the government decided to start the construction of a bypass and then cancelled it. They cancelled it after it broke ground, allowed the runoff to violate our environmental laws, and there it lies in an absolute mess.

The community of Bentley is going to celebrate their centennial this summer, and we only have a matter of a few months to do one of two things, either complete the project – I don't expect the minister to be able to get it done. Hopefully, he would stand up and say that he can guarantee that he'll get it done, but I'm not expecting that. What I am expecting is for him to address the issue and say: we're at least going to clean it up so that when you hold your centennial, it doesn't look like we've trashed your community. That's not an unreasonable request from this community. Here we have the whole premise of building Alberta, but what we don't really have is the follow-through and the actions of actually building.

We're seeing the same with schools. I for one would desperately like the government to follow through and actually do what it says it's going to do. Unfortunately, even the builders who are dealing in this industry, who are dealing with the government, are all saying in unison that they will not have these schools built on time, not on the time frame this government has said. Now, I would like these builders to be wrong. I would like this government to be right. But what I can't see, even from this speech, is where there's a connection from what the government is saying through to a fruition, where they will actually accomplish

their goal. That's not visible, but what is visible is that the government is going to be consistent in what it's been doing, which is not getting the job done. Clearly, we have a disconnect between this speech and the reality of what's happening out in Alberta.

Now, another example is seniors' care. In seniors' care we've got some significant issues, but I'll just deal with a couple of issues that I'm quite familiar with in my constituency, and those have to do with the long-term care out in Rocky Mountain House. We have a situation where we have a new seniors' facility, that the ribbon was cut on last year. All well and good. That started under Ed Stelmach, and we saw the follow-through. It took years to do it.

But what happened in the process is that we've cut funding for the operation of our long-term care in that facility, where those front-line workers cannot meet the commitment of Alberta Health, which is to provide even two baths a week. They can't do it. They're not staffed and they're not funded to get it done. The problem is that more and more staff are being cut back. Now we have seniors who are in critical need of getting their meals to them on time. A lot of these meals now have to be reheated in a microwave because they sat too long, and they got cold. Anyone here who knows anything about eating out or eating anywhere knows that if you have to continually reheat food, it takes away from the quality. So they get a lesser quality product. They get a lesser quality meal.

What's happening here – and to a T every one of the front-line health care workers in this long-term care facility in Rocky Mountain House will testify that this now is an extreme example, and it's a critical situation, where proper care is not being delivered. It's not for wanting to deliver the care; it's just that the resources are no longer there in that operation to provide that care. The cutbacks have been too great. We have an imbalance in the system. I wish Rocky Mountain House was the only place, but it's not. We're seeing it elsewhere, in other places in the province, and this is a real issue that affects us.

5:40

I just want to come back to the issue of dealing with the environment because it's something that's been haunting the enforcement on environmental issues. It's woefully lacking. I used this example once in the House. I'll use it again. Unfortunately, I'll probably use it multiple times because it has not been resolved. Anyone can understand that when there's a question about environmental damage, you want an adjudicator. You want to determine: what was the damage? What was the extent of the damage? Who was responsible for the damage? I think we all understand that type of process. We want a fair and reliable process that gives the public confidence that justice can be served.

In the case of the Bilozer family we have an issue where none of those requisites are in question. Imperial Oil was found guilty. Imperial Oil admitted it. Alberta Environment has issued multiple – multiple – enforcement orders in the last 20 years, yet nothing has been done to clean up this quarter section belonging to this family. That is just absolutely unreasonable, that you could go to that length and still not have the ability as an organization – this would be Alberta Environment or in the case now of the Alberta Energy Regulator. They cannot just make this company do what they said it should have done 15, 20 years ago, do what they said it should have done 10 years ago or even five years ago. We still have not cleaned up the damage, the environmental damage.

Again, I wish this was the one example, a one-off example, that we could just isolate. Unfortunately, it's becoming the norm for the average property owner in Alberta who has suffered environmental damage. That should not be the case. Again, I

understand if that's in question – what the damage is, who's responsible, to what extent the damage is – everybody understands that, but when those questions are answered and enforcement orders are issued, there should never ever be hesitation or delay in the execution of an enforcement order because that's when people lose confidence that we're doing the right job to protect the environment.

Another item that the throne speech focused on was the whole issue of the MSI and the hope that some expressed that there would be a lot of money – and I mean a lot of money – focused on the MSI going forward. If that amount is measured by the smile on the minister's face, I know it'll be a lot of money, and it should cover all those cuts that took place, going way back, in infrastructure building and at least get us on the path of making up that infrastructure deficit. One of the real criteria that keeps many of the municipal councillors, the municipal mayors up at night is: "What's going to happen here? How is it going to affect me short term? How is it going to affect me long term to build infrastructure for my community?" Again, that's universal right across both the AUMA and the AAMD and C.

Infrastructure is critical to the growth of any community, and I don't think anyone here would argue differently. In order to encourage economic growth, you have to have that in place. Without that, it makes it extremely difficult to grow communities. This is a huge issue. Although the throne speech mentioned it, what I would have liked to have seen is a larger commitment so that when this budget rolls out, these mayors, these councillors, the reeves, and these various municipalities would have the anticipation that they have good things to come because there's going to be long-term, steady funding to meet their needs.

Some of these communities are desperate in the sense that the infrastructure has been lagging for so long. Everyone knows there are pressures on all our communities. They differ from community to community, but I think right across Alberta there are pressures on every community to get their infrastructure caught up with the rate of growth in this province, and we're lagging. I think the minister admits we're lagging. We need a plan and a long-term plan on how we're going to get there.

That takes me to flood mitigation. I know that ministers have met with the community of Sunde. I want to thank them for taking that opportunity. Like High River, Sunde is one of those critical communities that faces imminent threat from the flood potential of spring, just barely a few months away. Now, we have studied the river out there to death. I mean, if you look at the studies that go back 20, 30, 40 years, we've got enough studies that we could build a dam with the paperwork we produced, but the fact is that we've not done anything substantive to mitigate the flood.

Now, you don't have to be an expert to realize that it takes action. In the long term there might be the realization that water storage in the form of a dam is one opportunity or one measure that we could take to mitigate and manage that water system, mitigate the floods but also to manage that water system to prevent future floods and also to provide a recreational area or water as needed during those arid times. That makes sense. But in the short term we need . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

Mr. Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for his comments on the throne speech. I know he has a lot to say about the environmental side of things, but I'm

wondering if he could comment perhaps on the number of times, as reflected in this document, that the government maintains that it is keeping its promises.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Anglin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I didn't get to mention a lot of things, but I do want to talk about these promises. There's a promise in here by the government to diversify its energy mix, both alternative and renewable energy frameworks, to empower consumers. This is one of those comments that is hollow in this document when you contrast that to this government's actions. The Alberta Utilities Commission just recently cancelled, based on an interpretation of its regulations, a number of private contracts and put out of business a number of solar companies that were viable, that were in business, and it really shook the industry. How do you get a government which says, "This is what we want to do, empower customers' choice," yet the agency that it created, the Alberta Utilities Commission, which it put so much faith in, cancels a number of private contracts without even consulting these people and puts these businesses right out?

What I want to follow up on also is this idea of the Alberta Utilities Commission being the adjudicator of what is going on in the industry right now, which is the price-fixing of our wholesale market. The former Minister of Energy said last May, in reference to this price-fixing, "The hon. member is trying to frighten people with evidence that is unconnected to what people pay for electricity." Unfortunately, that's not true. What people pay for electricity has everything to do with the bottom line on the bill.

When you get a company like TransAlta manipulating electricity prices, that reflects on all those ancillary costs, all those extra costs that are added onto the bill beyond the price of electricity. It's a rigged system against the consumers. These big generators get to charge consumers for the loss of electricity, but they also get to charge consumers for the building of transmission lines, which is free to these big generators. So consumers pay for electricity that they never receive. In doing so, the system is set up so that these companies are allowed to do this. Those are the rules that the Legislature has set up with the Alberta Utilities Commission.

5:50

So how will this commission act as an adjudicator? Most jurisdictions don't have the commissions do that in issues of price-

fixing. Most jurisdictions have the Market Surveillance Administrator as the adjudicator, as the watchdog, as the agency that issues the penalty. Then if the companies or the individuals don't like that, they have the ability to go to the appeals court.

We don't have that. We've got this little buffer in between. Right now TransAlta is asking for an in camera hearing so the public doesn't have access. I have to tell you that we're going to be watching this closely. If you look at the rules of the Alberta Utilities Commission, they favour the industry to get an in camera hearing. That's how they're set up. I'll be really interested to see if the commission has the ability not to provide that in camera hearing.

That's a sad state of affairs when you look at how we want to protect our consumers, because in the end it's not just Alberta's economy that's being hurt by this gaming. It really hurts, and it makes our seniors suffer, particularly those seniors on fixed income. It really penalizes those people that are on limited income and lower income families. It forces them to make choices.

When you take a look at what's been happening, TransAlta was found guilty of manipulating the California market. They were named in all those allegations, and they were found guilty by the FERC during that Enron scandal back in 2000-2001. They have been found guilty in Alberta now and charged multiple times. So where is the incentive not to do this? Oh, by the way, anyone who knows this industry – one company can't do it alone. They need help to manipulate the prices. How many times have they gotten away that we've not caught them? We know how many times we've caught them.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

I recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm wondering if we could call it 6 o'clock, and I'll postpone my remarks until I have the full 15 minutes.

Mr. Campbell: Well, Mr. Speaker, on the advice of the Member for Calgary-Mountain View we'll call it 6 o'clock and reconvene at 7:30 tonight.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:53 p.m.]

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