



Province of Alberta

The 28th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Thursday, March 6, 2014

Issue 4

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  
Jablonski, Mary Anne, Red Deer-North (PC), Deputy Chair of Committees

Allen, Mike, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (Ind)  
Amery, Moe, Calgary-East (PC)  
Anderson, Rob, Airdrie (W),  
Official Opposition House Leader  
Anglin, Joe, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre (W)  
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)  
Bhardwaj, Hon. Naresh, Edmonton-Ellerslie (PC)  
Bhullar, Hon. Manmeet Singh, Calgary-Greenway (PC)  
Bikman, Gary, Cardston-Taber-Warner (W)  
Bilous, Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (ND)  
Blakeman, Laurie, Edmonton-Centre (AL),  
Liberal Opposition House Leader  
Brown, Dr. Neil, QC, Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill (PC)  
Calahasen, Pearl, Lesser Slave Lake (PC)  
Campbell, Hon. Robin, West Yellowhead (PC),  
Government House Leader  
Cao, Wayne C.N., Calgary-Fort (PC)  
Casey, Ron, Banff-Cochrane (PC)  
Cusanelli, Christine, Calgary-Currie (PC)  
Dallas, Hon. Cal, Red Deer-South (PC)  
DeLong, Alana, Calgary-Bow (PC)  
Denis, Hon. Jonathan, QC, Calgary-Acadia (PC),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Donovan, Ian, Little Bow (W)  
Dorward, David C., Edmonton-Gold Bar (PC),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Drysdale, Hon. Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (PC)  
Eggen, David, Edmonton-Calder (ND),  
New Democrat Opposition Whip  
Fawcett, Hon. Kyle, Calgary-Klein (PC)  
Fenske, Jacquie, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (PC)  
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)  
Hughes, Hon. Ken, Calgary-West (PC)  
Jansen, Hon. Sandra, Calgary-North West (PC)  
Jeneroux, Matt, Edmonton-South West (PC)  
Johnson, Hon. Jeff, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater (PC)  
Johnson, Linda, Calgary-Glenmore (PC)  
Kang, Darshan S., Calgary-McCall (AL),  
Liberal Opposition Whip  
Kennedy-Glans, Hon. Donna, QC, Calgary-Varsity (PC)  
Khan, Stephen, St. Albert (PC)  
Klimchuk, Hon. Heather, Edmonton-Glenora (PC)  
Kubinec, Maureen, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (PC)  
Lemke, Ken, Stony Plain (PC)  
Leskiw, Genia, Bonnyville-Cold Lake (PC)  
Luan, Jason, Calgary-Hawkwood (PC)  
Lukaszuk, Hon. Thomas A., Edmonton-Castle Downs (PC)  
Mason, Brian, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (ND),  
Leader of the New Democrat Opposition  
McAllister, Bruce, Chestermere-Rocky View (W)  
McDonald, Everett, Grande Prairie-Smoky (PC)  
McIver, Hon. Ric, Calgary-Hays (PC)  
McQueen, Hon. Diana, Drayton Valley-Devon (PC)  
Notley, Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (ND),  
New Democrat Opposition House Leader  
Oberle, Hon. Frank, Peace River (PC),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Olesen, Cathy, Sherwood Park (PC)  
Olson, Hon. Verlyn, QC, Wetaskiwin-Camrose (PC),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Pastoor, Bridget Brennan, Lethbridge-East (PC)  
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),  
Premier  
Rodney, Hon. Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC)  
Rowe, Bruce, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (W)  
Sandhu, Peter, Edmonton-Manning (PC)  
Sarich, Janice, Edmonton-Decore (PC)  
Saskiw, Shayne, Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (W),  
Official Opposition Whip  
Scott, Hon. Donald, QC, Fort McMurray-Conklin (PC)  
Sherman, Dr. Raj, Edmonton-Meadowlark (AL),  
Leader of the Liberal Opposition  
Smith, Danielle, Highwood (W),  
Leader of the Official Opposition  
Starke, Hon. Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC)  
Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)  
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)  
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)  
Towle, Kerry, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (W),  
Official Opposition Deputy Whip  
VanderBurg, George, Whitecourt-St. Anne (PC),  
Government Whip  
Weadick, Hon. Greg, Lethbridge-West (PC)  
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

## Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly

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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
Shannon Dean, Senior Parliamentary Counsel/Director of House Services	Nancy Robert, Research Officer	Chris Caughell, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
		Gordon H. Munk, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
		Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>

## **Executive Council**

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Dave Hancock	Deputy Premier, Minister of Innovation and Advanced Education
Naresh Bhardwaj	Associate Minister – Services for Persons with Disabilities
Manmeet Singh Bhullar	Minister of Human Services
Robin Campbell	Minister of Environment and Sustainable Resource Development
Cal Dallas	Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations
Jonathan Denis	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Wayne Drysdale	Minister of Transportation
Kyle Fawcett	Associate Minister – Recovery and Reconstruction for Southwest Alberta
Rick Fraser	Associate Minister – Public Safety
	Associate Minister – Recovery and Reconstruction for High River
Doug Griffiths	Minister of Service Alberta
Fred Horne	Minister of Health
Doug Horner	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
Ken Hughes	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Sandra Jansen	Associate Minister – Family and Community Safety
Jeff Johnson	Minister of Education, Ministerial Liaison to the Canadian Forces
Donna Kennedy-Glans	Associate Minister – Electricity and Renewable Energy
Heather Klimchuk	Minister of Culture
Thomas Lukaszuk	Minister of Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour
Ric McIver	Minister of Infrastructure
Diana McQueen	Minister of Energy
Frank Oberle	Minister of Aboriginal Relations
Verlyn Olson	Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development
Dave Quest	Associate Minister – Seniors
Dave Rodney	Associate Minister – Wellness
Donald Scott	Associate Minister – Accountability, Transparency and Transformation
Richard Starke	Minister of Tourism, Parks and Recreation
Greg Weadick	Associate Minister – Recovery and Reconstruction for Southeast Alberta
Teresa Woo-Paw	Associate Minister – International and Intergovernmental Relations

## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

### Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Chair: Mr. Amery

Deputy Chair: Mr. Fox

Dorward	Pastoor
Eggen	Quadri
Hehr	Rogers
Kubinec	Rowe
Lemke	Sarich
Luan	Stier
McDonald	

### Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

Chair: Mr. Casey

Deputy Chair: Mrs. Jablonski

Amery	Khan
Barnes	Sandhu
Dorward	Sherman
Eggen	

### 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
Fenske	Pedersen
Fritz	Sandhu
Jablonski	Swann
Jeneroux	VanderBurg
Leskiw	

### Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

Chair: Mr. Jeneroux

Deputy Chair: Mr. McDonald

Bikman	Leskiw
Blakeman	Quadri
Brown	Wilson
DeLong	Young
Eggen	

### Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Chair: Mr. Zwozdesky

Deputy Chair: Mr. VanderBurg

Casey	Mason
Forsyth	McDonald
Fritz	Sherman
Johnson, L.	Towle
Kubinec	

### Standing Committee on Private Bills

Chair: Mr. Xiao

Deputy Chair: Mrs. Leskiw

Allen	Notley
Brown	Olesen
Cusanelli	Rowe
DeLong	Stier
Fenske	Strankman
Fritz	Swann
Jablonski	

### Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

Chair: Ms Kubinec

Deputy Chair: Mr. Rogers

Calahasen	Pastoor
Casey	Pedersen
Kang	Saskiw
Khan	VanderBurg
Luan	Wilson
Notley	Young
Olesen	

### Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Mr. Anderson

Deputy Chair: Mr. Dorward

Allen	Khan
Amery	Luan
Barnes	Pastoor
Bilous	Sandhu
Donovan	Sarich
Fenske	Young
Hehr	

### Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Chair: Mr. Khan

Deputy Chair: Mr. Anglin

Allen	Goudreau
Bikman	Hale
Bilous	Johnson, L.
Blakeman	Webber
Brown	Xiao
Calahasen	Young
Casey	

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, March 6, 2014

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Good afternoon.

Let us pray. Dear Lord, as we conclude our work for this week in this Assembly, stay with us in our work beyond this Chamber, be among us in our fulfillment of duties to help others, and lead us with wisdom and kindness as we represent those who put their faith and trust in us to represent them. Amen.

Please be seated.

### Introduction of Visitors

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Redford:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly the members of a very distinguished delegation from Iceland. They're on a working visit to Alberta to strengthen the ties between us and to promote friendship, understanding, and shared prosperity.

I would ask each of them to rise as I introduce them: His Excellency Sigmundur David Gunnlaugsson, Prime Minister of Iceland; Mrs. Anna Sigurlaug Pálsdóttir, the Prime Minister's spouse; Mr. Jóhannes Þór Skúlason, political adviser to the minister; Mr. Jörundur Valtýsson, foreign policy adviser to the minister; His Excellency Thordur Aegir Oskarsson, Icelandic ambassador to Canada; Mr. Hlynur Gudjonsson, consul and trade commissioner at Iceland's consulate general in New York; Mr. Gordon Reykdal, honorary consul of Iceland in Edmonton; and Mr. Stewart Wheeler, Canadian ambassador to Iceland. They are accompanied, Mr. Speaker, by a business delegation, which is seated in the members' gallery and includes representatives from the Icelandic tourism industry; Icelandair, which we're very excited about in Edmonton; and the Iceland press.

On behalf of the government and the people of Alberta it's a privilege to welcome all of them here to our beautiful province in the heart of western Canada. I know that their visit will be a fruitful one on many different fronts, and I'm sure and confident that our friendship will continue to grow and deepen. We are tremendously glad to be their hosts. Now I ask all members of the Assembly, who've already done it, to give them another warm welcome.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, and welcome to all guests.

Deputy Premier, you have some introductions.

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour and a privilege for me to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly today a good friend and a good public servant, indeed, Mr. James Rajotte, Member of Parliament for Edmonton-Leduc. He was first elected to the House of Commons in 2000 as the Member of Parliament for Edmonton Southwest and was re-elected as the Member of Parliament for Edmonton-Leduc in 2004, 2006, 2008, and 2011. He has served as the chair of the Standing Committee on Finance for the House of Commons from 2008 and still serves in that capacity today. Previous to being chair of the Standing Committee on Finance, he served as the

chair of the Parliamentary Committee on Industry, Science and Technology.

I've known James for many years. I believe he's the hardest working Member of Parliament for Alberta, and I think he's the smartest Edmonton Member of Parliament for Alberta. I can say that because he's my Member of Parliament. He represents me in Ottawa, and it's a privilege to work together with him serving the constituents of Edmonton-Whitemud and all Albertans. He's here today to observe question period and, more importantly, to observe the Treasurer's delivery of the Budget Address this afternoon. He's in your gallery, Mr. Speaker. He has risen, and I would ask all members of the House to acknowledge him.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Let's begin with school groups, shall we? The President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Horner:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly a group of grade 6 students from J.J. Nearing elementary school in St. Albert. They are accompanied by teachers Mr. Curtis McDougall; Ms Christine Sowinski, who just happened to have taught one of my daughters; and parent helpers Mr. David Roberts; Mrs. Valerie Alvarez; Mrs. Skerik; Leanne Feregotto; Mrs. Tina Barrett; and a very close friend of mine, Mrs. Joanne Krips.

I would like to mention a special young man within the group, Aaron Krips. Aaron has a great deal of energy and expends it by playing hockey and dancing competitively in hip hop. I've known Aaron since he was born. In fact, his mom and dad were my campaign managers when he was that young. Aaron is very interested in current Alberta events. I can also tell you, Mr. Speaker, that the guides that were touring these two classes through today, when I went down to talk to them, said that this is one of the best groups that they've had. I have watched Aaron grow into a fine young man.

I've also been in this school a number of times. The teachers are excellent, and they produce excellent results, Mr. Speaker, as does our entire system. I'm sure these grade 6 students are having an enjoyable day at the Leg. today. They are seated in both the public and the members' galleries this afternoon. I would ask them all to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

**Mr. Fox:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly 36 individuals from the grade 9 class of Ponoka secondary campus along with their teachers, Brady Teeling, Jolene Deleeuw, and parent Lee Arnold. I'd like to note how incredibly bright these young students are as they asked about the concerns that they have in protecting our education system in this province. Please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Are there any other school groups?

If not, we'll proceed with the introduction of other guests. Please note that we have 20 more introductions to go, so may I beg your indulgence to keep your intros as short as possible so that we can get them all in before 10 to 2. Let us start with the Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Bhullar:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce two sets of individuals. First of all, I have seven members of the Alberta College of Social Workers, five of whom

work within the Ministry of Human Services. It is National Social Work Week, and given what you've just told me, I'll jump to their names and thank them for their service: Justin Mettler, Pamela Anderson, Mira Zorniak, Tim Golumbia, Rick Guthrie, Lori Sigurdson, Alec Stratford. Social workers deal with some of the most difficult social issues in our society. I'd like them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, on your behalf it's my pleasure to introduce Gurmeet and Tina Sidhu – great friends of yours, of mine, and of the members for Edmonton-Manning and Edmonton-Ellerslie – generous individuals that contribute immensely to our community. I'd ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of our Assembly.

**Mrs. Sarich:** Mr. Speaker, it's an honour and a privilege for me to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all Members of the Legislative Assembly four representatives from the Ukrainian Canadian Congress Edmonton branch and the Ukrainian Music Society of Alberta, who are here today to help pay tribute to the 200th anniversary of Taras Shevchenko's birth on March 9, 1814, and are the host organizations for the upcoming Shevchenko concert in Edmonton. My guests are seated in the gallery, and I'd ask them to please rise as I mention their names. I would like to welcome Mrs. Luba Boyko-Bell, president, Ukrainian Music Society of Alberta, and vice-president, Ukrainian Canadian Congress Edmonton branch; Mrs. Maria Miroutenko, executive member, Ukrainian Canadian Congress Edmonton branch; Ms Irena Tarnawsky, vice-president, Ukrainian Music Society of Alberta; and Mr. Michael Bell, member, Ukrainian Music Society of Alberta. I would now ask that we provide them with the traditional warm welcome.

Thank you.

**1:40**

**The Speaker:** The Associate Minister – International and Intergovernmental Relations, followed by the Minister of Justice.

**Ms Woo-Paw:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the House a delegation currently involved in importing Alberta's beef products into China, worth about \$100 million a year, which is sure to grow as demand for the high-quality agricultural product in Asia is going to increase. We are joined today by Mr. Shen Ling and Jonathan Chang with ZRHL Group, and Mr. Lin Weizhong and Liu Qing with BGH Group. Also accompanying the delegation are Mr. Jake Louie, Mr. Grant Louie, Stan Cichon, and Liang Wei Long with Canadian Elite Beef Inc. My guests are seated in the public gallery, and I'd like to ask all of my colleagues to give them the warm welcome of the House.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General, followed by Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Denis:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two residents of my constituency, the beautiful area of Calgary-Acadia. First of all, a friend of mine, Karen Lloyd, originally from Vernon, B.C., has lived in Calgary for 22 years. She's quite active in school traffic safety, school councils, and service to her community. I had the privilege of meeting her at the door during the last election. With her also is her daughter, Hannah, who is a straight-A student, a grade 8 student at Willow Park school. She is the fourth of eight children. Her favourite topics are humanities and reading. This is her first visit here. Her mother, Karen, has brought her to see question period and also the

budget today. Please give them the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks, followed by Red Deer-North.

**Mr. Hale:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's with great pleasure that I rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Legislature two outstanding gentlemen from the town of Strathmore. His Worship Michael Ell, mayor of Strathmore, has lived in Strathmore for more than 35 years and in many capacities has always strived to build a stronger community, and Mr. Dwight Stanford, the CAO for the town of Strathmore, who is an invaluable resource to our community and council. I would ask that they both rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Red Deer-North, followed by Calgary-Hawkwood.

**Mrs. Jablonski:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two introductions today. It gives me great joy to introduce to you and through you to members of this House a very important young person in my life. Thirty-nine years ago this weekend I had one of the greatest adventures of my life when I gave birth to our first child, Jeremy Jablonski. Jeremy is the president and CEO of The Coverall Shop in Red Deer, Alberta, that has the theme: We've Got You Covered! In the past five years Jeremy has been instrumental in winning the business of the year award twice. I'm depending on his great success so that I can have a comfortable retirement. He's in the Speaker's gallery, and I would ask him to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

Also with us here today, Mr. Speaker, is the president of the Red Deer College for the past five years, Joel Ward. He must be doing a great job because he just received another contract for another five years. He's a great dancer, a great conversationalist, and a visionary, and we are very fortunate to have him as the president of our college. He is accompanied by his chief of staff, Elaine Vandale, who has been with the Red Deer College for the past 17 years. She is the woman behind the man, who knows everything. She's always one step ahead. She serves the president, the college, and our community with excellence. They are in the members' gallery, and I would ask them to stand to receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Hawkwood, followed by Calgary-Mountain View.

**Mr. Luan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly two active members of the community of Calgary-Hawkwood. These gentlemen volunteer for associations in our community and were very strong contributors in mobilizing community support for flood relief and community rebuilding during the unprecedented 2013 flood in southern Alberta. My first guest is Mr. Edmond Lee, president of Sunflower Development, and the second is Mr. Byron Price, with the Thomas J. Ranaghan Foundation. I would ask them to rise to receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, followed by the Minister of Education.

**Dr. Swann:** My guest hasn't arrived, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The Associate Minister of Accountability, Transparency and Transformation, followed by the Associate Minister of Electricity and Renewable Energy.

**Mr. Scott:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased and honoured to introduce to you and through you two members of my region in Fort McMurray, in the oil sands region, who exemplify public service. The first is Kim Jenkins. He is currently the chief operating officer of the Keyano land trust corporation. Prior to his move to the Keyano land trust corporation, he spent 32 years with the Fort McMurray public school district, the last five in the role of superintendent. He is the current Canadian superintendent of the year. Mr. Jenkins is also the chairman of the Wood Buffalo Housing & Development Corporation.

The second individual is Bryan Lutes, who is the president of the Wood Buffalo Housing & Development Corporation. He is also the president of the regional chapter of the Urban Development Institute. Bryan brings his experience also to the Fort McMurray chamber of commerce.

I'd like both of my guests to stand and receive the warm welcome of this House.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Now we go to the Associate Minister of Electricity and Renewable Energy, followed by Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Ms Kennedy-Glans:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a joy for me to introduce to you and through you to all members of this House a tireless advocate for seniors' care in Alberta, Mr. Greer Black, a constituent of Calgary-Varsity and CEO and president of the Bethany Care Society for the last 22 years and soon retiring. Please rise, and let us celebrate you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, followed by Calgary-Fish Creek.

**Mr. Anglin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour and a privilege for me today to introduce to you and through you a mayor of a small community. As all elected officials know, the most overworked, underpaid elected official is the mayor of a small community. This isn't just a good public servant but a great public servant, His Worship Mr. Fred Nash. I'm going to ask Mr. Fred Nash now to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Calgary-Fish Creek, followed by St. Albert.

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you one of my staff from Calgary, Ms Jennifer Wainwright. Jennifer is in my office in Calgary, and I'm extremely pleased to have her up here. She is the unbelievable health researcher that I have on my team in Calgary. I'll ask her to rise and accept a warm welcome.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for St. Albert, followed by the Minister of Infrastructure.

**Mr. Khan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm extremely honoured today to rise and introduce to you and through you to my colleagues in the House three very outstanding people who are pillars in the St. Albert community. The first, I'm very pleased to announce, is Mayor Nolan Crouse of St. Albert, who is in his fourth term on the St. Albert city council and recently began his third term as our city's mayor. In addition to serving on a number

of boards and working tirelessly for our community, he also serves as the chair of the Capital Region Board. Mayor Crouse is incredibly involved in our community, and we are most lucky to have him serving as our mayor.

My second guest, Mr. Speaker, is a gentleman named Al Evaniew. Al is a partner at the law firm of Brownlee LLP. Al is a remarkable and active member in our community. I'm proud to acknowledge and congratulate Al on his recent appointment as Queen's Counsel. I'm extremely pleased to know Al and consider Al a very dear friend.

My third guest, Mr. Speaker, is Cathy Heron. Cathy is a lifelong St. Albert resident who is in her second term as city councillor. She's a very busy wife, mother, and an incredible community member who works, again, tirelessly for our community, and most importantly she's a great neighbour.

I believe His Worship Mayor Crouse and Mr. Evaniew are seated in the members' gallery. Councillor Heron is in the public gallery. I'd ask them now to rise and receive our warm acknowledgement.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I'm going to extend and delay the clock at the same time here for a couple of minutes so that we can finish these intros off.

Let's go to the Minister of Infrastructure, followed by Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today and introduce to you and to all members of the Assembly Mr. Fouad El Kardy and Ms Selma Amery. Fouad and Selma are dear friends of mine and are here to join us for this exciting budget day and to witness the building Alberta plan in action. I'm pleased to introduce them to you today and ask that they receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

1:50

**The Speaker:** Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills, followed by Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

**Mr. Saskiw:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly three guests today, all great community leaders. Coming all the way from the charming town of Elk Point, Debra McQuinn is a financial planner with Servus Credit Union by day and is an Elk Point town councillor and the president of the Elk Point chamber of commerce by night, yet somehow she finds time to play for the town's ladies' hockey team. Debra has been a resident of Elk Point for 17 years now along with her husband, Andrew, and two children, Colby and Jessica.

My second introduction is Chris Brown, who joins us today as a resident of Lloydminster, where he is a reporter with the *Lloydminster Source*. Chris came to Alberta in 2013 from Ontario, where he previously served as the assistant director of communications for the hon. Leona Dombrowsky, the former Minister of Education. So with the Minister of Justice he has something in common. He's a former Liberal staffer.

The third is Garth Rowsell, who is a financial adviser with Edward Jones in Lloydminster, and I know he would be able to teach the government a thing or two about planning a budget and saving for the future.

I'd ask that my guests rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock, followed by the Minister of Service Alberta.

**Ms Kubinec:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you the mayor of Woodlands county, Mr. Jim Rennie, and his lovely daughter Hannah. The Member for Whitecourt-Ste. Anne and I in Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock share this dedicated elected official. Please join me in welcoming the mayor and his daughter.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Service Alberta, followed by Medicine Hat.

**Mr. Griffiths:** Thank you. It's a pleasure for me to rise today to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly a man of integrity, a man of principle, and a man who's always told it like it is. This man is my hero, but more importantly, members of the Assembly, it's my dad. Mr. Speaker, he's seated in your gallery. I'd ask him to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The final one is going back to the Associate Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations. Please read the names that you have and ask them to rise, and then we'll move on. They've already been introduced. Thank you.

**Ms Woo-Paw:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I really appreciate it. My guests are seated in the members' gallery, a delegation from China and members of Canadian Elite Beef Inc. Please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

**The Speaker:** My apologies. Medicine Hat, you had one on the list here, too. Quickly.

**Mr. Pedersen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly three guests that have joined us today in the public gallery. Petros Kusmu is the president of the University of Alberta Students' Union and is always a great advocate for students across Alberta. Petros has been instrumental in the IGNITE report, which was launched last month and which I hope the minister reads cover to cover. Petros was born and raised in Edmonton and in his spare time performs with his band, Quordal Fusion.

Conner Brown is the vice-president external for the University of Calgary Students' Union and the chair of the Council of Alberta University Students, and it has been my great pleasure as the advanced education critic getting to know him. He's originally from North Vancouver. He played for the Delta Ice Hawks before attending the U of C.

Kenneth Taylor is the vice-president external for the SAIT Students' Association and is also the chair of the Alberta Students' Executive Council. Ken has been great to work with over the last couple of months, and he is a great reminder that our best and brightest come from all 26 of Alberta's postsecondary institutions.

I would ask that they all rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I'm going to recognize the leader of the Liberal opposition, and that will be it. We will have set a record for introductions in this Chamber today.

The hon. member.

**Dr. Sherman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Toby Ramsden. He's an accountant. He works with Dogs with Wings. More importantly, two of his children ran as candidates in the last

provincial election for the Alberta Liberals. I'd like Toby to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** Hon. Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, your first main set of questions.

### Premier's Travel Expenses

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier is in all sorts of hot water over her travel expenses, and I want to give her a chance to clear the air for Albertans by telling us some of the details about how her travel decisions are made. Can the Premier tell us how her flights are booked, who decides between the options, and who signs off on those decisions?

**Ms Redford:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from the hon. Leader of the Opposition. I understand that Albertans want to know that their tax dollars are being used wisely. That's why I've written to the Auditor General. I've asked him to review out-of-province flights. We've grounded the government planes travelling outside of the province until that review is done. I've also asked the Minister of Finance to move forward with RFPs with respect to accommodation, with respect to rental cars, and with respect to transportation airlines.

**Ms Smith:** I notice, Mr. Speaker, that she didn't answer the question, so I'm going to try again more specifically. I would like the Premier to tell us about how the decision was made to take a government plane to Ottawa for the South Africa trip. We know there were at least three other options, which we put in a press release on February 6. I'll table that. Can the Premier tell us why she ruled out a \$625 direct flight from Calgary to Ottawa on WestJet and why relatively inexpensive Air Canada flights through Winnipeg and through Toronto were also rejected?

**Ms Redford:** Well, Mr. Speaker, as I've said in this House before, this is certainly something that's very important, which is why I've asked the Auditor General to come to the office to review these processes. That is certainly the appropriate forum for this. From our perspective, it's very important that Albertans know that they get value for taxpayers' dollars. We want to make sure that the Auditor General feels completely comfortable taking that responsibility on – it's an independent office of the Legislature – and we're looking forward to that work.

**Ms Smith:** Well, Mr. Speaker, maybe third time's the charm. A whistle-blower who works for the Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations told us a different story. They said that they provided several flight options, including the ones I've mentioned, that would have made it to Ottawa on time. However, they said that these options were rejected because it is the official policy of the Premier's office that the Premier will never fly economy and that the Premier will never take any commercial flight that is not direct. Can the Premier tell us whether that's true?

**Ms Redford:** No.

**The Speaker:** Official Opposition House Leader, your second main set of questions.

### Mathematics Curriculum

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, over the last two days we have been asking the Education minister some important questions about the



elementary math curriculum. Alberta parents are concerned that the new math curriculum is not focused on learning the fundamentals, but in mathematics, knowing the basics is the whole point. Will the minister make changes to the elementary math curriculum so that mastering basic addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division is its primary goal?

**Mr. J. Johnson:** Mr. Speaker, this question sounds very reminiscent of one I had a few days ago, to which I answered quite simply: we will. There is a curriculum review ongoing of the math curriculum right now and our entire curriculum, and one of the key goals of that is to make sure those foundational, basic pieces are more strongly emphasized.

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, the problem is that the Education minister keeps trying to say that there's no issue here, but Alberta parents disagree. They know their kids are not being taught to memorize the basics. They know that their bright and talented kids are getting to grade 5 without memorizing their times tables. Does the minister agree that if kids leave elementary school without having memorized their times tables up to 10 times 10, then our math curriculum has utterly failed them?

**Mr. J. Johnson:** Mr. Speaker, once again, it seems like they can't take yes for an answer. We agree that this needs to be very strongly emphasized. We agree that this is something that we want to make sure is in the curriculum and is a high priority. However, I don't want to concede that Alberta is not one of the top-performing English jurisdictions on the entire planet, which other jurisdictions tell us is the case and international tests prove is the case.

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, that's the reason it shouldn't be changing. Now, we know that the government has a hard time with basic math because we have to keep explaining deficits to them over and over and over again. For decades the Alberta basic math curriculum was world leading. Now this government has decided to chase after New Age fads, and our kids are suffering the consequences. Now, the Premier is a mom, so will she stand with the thousands of other parents and instruct the Education minister to return us to the tried-and-true methods to teach basic, elementary math?

**Ms Redford:** Mr. Speaker, it's pretty exciting to embrace change, to look at progress, and to think about how to improve things. That's why Albertans voted for us two years ago. That's why this budget today will speak to progress and will speak to change. I hope that the hon. member isn't suggesting that we can continue to succeed and grow and thrive in this world and in this country by keeping everything exactly the same. I know that's what they said in the last election, but I thought they would have learned something themselves by now.

2:00

**The Speaker:** The hon. opposition leader for her third main set of questions.

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would hope all the parents over there would go and ask their kids what the result is of two times eight, because a lot of kids these days can't answer that question.

### Electricity Pricing

**Ms Smith:** Albertans expect fairness in the marketplace. That's why market manipulation allegations brought against TransAlta are so troubling. If true, they represent a major breach of public

trust and another failure of this government to protect Alberta families and small businesses from being gouged on their power bills. To the Premier: will she confirm that her government will not tolerate electricity market manipulation?

**Ms Redford:** Mr. Speaker, that is exactly why we have a system in this province that ensures that if those circumstances are found to be true, the companies have to deal with the consequences. I'll go further than that, and I will say that if it is determined that that is the case, then we will ensure that we are accountable to consumers, that companies that pay fines are able to see that money go back to consumers because that's protecting consumers.

**The Speaker:** The hon. leader.

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The allegations against TransAlta are serious enough in some jurisdictions to be considered at least illegal if not criminal. The rules in Alberta, however, are not nearly as strict. As is, they currently appear to give market manipulation and intentional price inflation a free pass, leaving ratepayers like families and small businesses open to being gouged. To the Premier: is it the policy of the government to allow a power company to turn off a power plant so they can force up prices and gouge consumers?

**Ms Redford:** Mr. Speaker, there is an independent process going on to determine what happened. It would be ridiculous for this hon. member to suggest that this government would think that that was appropriate. That's why we have a system in place. It's a system that protects consumers. That's why this issue is before that regulator right now, and we look forward to the results.

**The Speaker:** The hon. leader.

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The rules don't protect consumers. It certainly appears as though the electricity market is stacked against everyday Albertans who pay their bills. Those bills keep going up, and while this kind of price gouging is great for a handful of power company executives, it could mean the difference between profitability and bankruptcy for a small business or making monthly rent for a family. Again to the Premier: why hasn't her government stepped in to protect consumers by clearly making it illegal to turn off power plants and drive up prices?

**Ms Redford:** Mr. Speaker, in this province we have a system that is very closely monitored, and we know that there are times when decisions have to be made. Our concern as a government is to ensure that if a company ever makes that decision and it is found that there is any sort of manipulation, they pay the consequences. That is why we have a regulator. That is why this investigation is going on, and we look forward to the results.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

### Public Service Compensation

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Madam Premier, you're recognized as a smart lawyer and a champion of human rights. Alberta union people, therefore, are honestly insulted and distressed by Bill 46, apparently designed to save public dollars. Bill 46, of course, takes away bargaining rights guaranteed under the Charter and assured by former Premier Peter Lougheed, your mentor. Please explain to all Albertans, particularly unions, how a protracted Bill 46 battle in the courts, paid for by Albertans and which you will lose, will save money.

**Ms Redford:** Well, Mr. Speaker, as we said when we introduced the legislation, we believe it's very important to be accountable to Alberta taxpayers and to make sure the public servants get fair compensation. We hope that that legislation will allow for a negotiated settlement. We understand that everyone has the opportunity to take a look at challenging legislation. We understand that the AUPE has decided to do that. Our fundamental responsibility is to try to reach the outcomes that we set in our legislation, and we'll try to do that.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I'm just going to get the Minister of Justice to clarify whether Bill 46 is sub judice.

**Mr. Denis:** My understanding is that it's under appeal, Mr. Speaker, 23(g).

**The Speaker:** It is sub judice, then, to pursue questions in that way.

Hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, do you want to recraft your two final sups?

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Does the Premier not see how this action is harming both her moral credibility and her credibility as a responsible steward of the public purse?

**Mr. Hancock:** Mr. Speaker, it's precisely the responsible stewardship of the public purse that brings forward a bill like Bill 46. We made a promise to Albertans and a promise to all of those who are paid by the public that we would treat them fairly and we would treat them consistently within the context of the fiscal framework. We made the promise, and we made agreements with various sectors that are paid by the public purse, and we wanted through Bill 46 to ensure that that same opportunity was extended to our union.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.  
Try and avoid Bill 46 directly.

**Dr. Swann:** Mr. Speaker, these are front-line workers: public servants, teachers, cleaners, nurses.

Adding insult to injury to all Albertans is the poorly managed imposition of pension changes. Have you considered the cost of these negative actions both in terms of loss of your trust and reduced worker morale and lost productivity in this province?

**Mr. Horner:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member mentioned the pension changes that we're advocating for the pensions. The promise of keeping a defined benefit pension plan is exactly what we're protecting. As I said in this House a few days ago, in July 2012 I met with all the pension boards – members of the union are represented on those boards – and we talked about whether we would go to a defined contribution or a defined benefit program. They wanted us to protect defined benefits, and that's exactly what these changes are all about. In fact, we are doing what we can to protect the promise to those employees.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

#### **Premier's Travel Expenses** (continued)

**Mr. Mason:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. A government policy identified by the Auditor General specifies that "family members may not travel on government aircraft unless it is a minister's spouse invited to an event." A list in the current policy

of those eligible to take government aircraft does not include family members. While we can all sympathize with working parents who try to balance work and family, it does not justify breaking the rules just because you can. To the Premier: why do you think that the rules don't apply to you?

**Mr. Horner:** Mr. Speaker, on the policy as it relates to the government aircraft, number one, the first call on our aircraft is if we have an emergency. We had that last summer when we had to move cabinet ministers, environment ministers, the minister responsible for municipal affairs to the area of the flood. That was the first call.

The second call on our planes, Mr. Speaker, is the Lieutenant Governor because we want him to be in communities that are not served by commercial aircraft. We want him to be in places like High Level, High River.

The third priority, Mr. Speaker, is the Premier. When the Premier or any cabinet minister is asked to attend a function and they want to bring a family member, whether it's the spouse or others, we have said: let's keep the families involved in what they're doing.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. A little different than the answer that the Finance minister gave yesterday. I have the list here. It doesn't say family members on the list.

Most working moms – and dads, too, for that matter – would like to spend more time with their kids, but they're also very upset when this Premier uses the mom defence to justify taking a government plane to and from Palm Springs when a cheaper commercial flight was available. To the Premier: why didn't you take a commercial flight back from Palm Springs instead of ordering up a government aircraft at a cost of thousands of dollars?

**Ms Redford:** Because there were no commercial flights available from Palm Springs on that day.\*

**Mr. Mason:** Mr. Speaker, that is patently untrue.

**Mr. Campbell:** Point of order.

**Mr. Mason:** And I'm going to go on to another matter. Apparently, the Premier also had two security staff with her in Palm Springs. Albertans are wondering: why does the Premier need security while on vacation in Palm Springs? Is this standard practice? How much has been spent on vacation security since the election? Please fill us in, Premier.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Justice.

**Mr. Denis:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To this member's inquiry, it has always been the practice to provide any Premier of this province with security, and the security is tailored towards their individual needs.

With respect to specific comments, we don't talk about matters of police investigations and court cases here, and similarly neither should we talk about matters of individual security. That is something that is determined by the actual security officers, not politicians.

**The Speaker:** Okay. The first five questions have come and gone, so no preambles now to your supplementaries, please.

Let's start with Calgary-Fish Creek, followed by Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

\*See page 99, left column, paragraph 3

**2:10 Whistle-blower Protection for Physicians**

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans have been inundated with story after story of waste and mismanagement from this government. The last week alone has provided a number of completely unacceptable examples coming from the Premier's office. Knowing this, you would expect that the Alberta whistle-blower commissioner would be busy. Sadly, that's not the case. As reported in January, most days the phones are silent, and only one single investigation has been undertaken. To the Associate Minister of Accountability, Transparency and Transformation: how can you call this gold-standard legislation when, seemingly, nobody has the confidence to use it?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Scott:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think every Albertan can be proud of the whistle-blower legislation this House brought forward. It provides an opportunity for any concerns to be addressed. We have a person that's responsible for dealing with the legislation. I think it's an effective piece of legislation. The fact that people aren't calling might lead to conclusions other than that suggested by the opposition. We are a very transparent government, and we're delivering transparency.

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Well, Mr. Speaker, they don't have trust in the whistle-blower legislation. They're blowing the whistles to us, actually.

Given that last fall, when I asked the minister when he would be following the advice of Justice Vertes and tabling legislation to include whistle-blower protection for all physicians, not just a few directly employed by AHS, the minister seemed entirely unaware of the recommendation, has the minister rethought this? When will you be bringing forward amendments for the spring session?

**Mr. Scott:** Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to say that 89 per cent of physicians are covered by the current whistle-blower legislation. That seems to be a fact that's ignored by the opposition. There is also a section of the whistle-blower act that covers the other 11 per cent. They can also make a whistle-blower claim if they'd like to. So physicians are covered by whistle-blower legislation in Alberta.

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Well, I said it last fall, and I'm saying it again: he doesn't even know his own legislation. Read the report.

Given that the minister has made it clear he has no intention of following through on Justice Vertes' key recommendations to provide whistle-blower protection to, Minister, all physicians, should Albertans be calling the commissioner to report the outrageous waste of \$10 million on this inquiry, that you ignore?

**Mr. Scott:** Just to repeat what I've said earlier, physicians are covered in Alberta. Eighty-nine per cent are covered directly by the whistle-blower legislation. The other 11 per cent are covered by a section in the whistle-blower legislation that permits any person in Alberta to make an anonymous report, or if they have information, they can make a report of a whistle-blower concern that they have. Alberta is covered by whistle-blower legislation. The legislation is effective.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Government House Leader, your point of order was noted at 2:09 p.m.

Let's move on to Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, followed by Chestermere-Rocky View.

**Public Service Pensions**

**Ms Fenske:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many of my constituents of Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville are dedicated, hard-working public servants, and they are looking for justification for the changes to their pension. Well, I would think that last night at the Public Accounts Committee the Auditor General clearly gave that justification. To the hon. minister of Treasury Board and Finance: if you informed us today that instead of having a defined benefit plan, we would have a defined contribution plan, how much money would Alberta taxpayers be on the hook for?

**Mr. Horner:** Mr. Speaker, the actual number would be part of the actuarial analysis that would have to happen, but what would happen is that you would have no more new entrants going into the defined benefit program to pay for the unfunded liability that is already there. That means that taxpayers, presumably, would be on the hook for the full amount, \$7.4 billion. That's one of the reasons – one of the reasons – why we did not look to do what the opposition wants to do, which is to cut off entrants to the defined benefit and move to the defined contribution. We think that having a defined benefit program for our employees is a benefit they should keep.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms Fenske:** Thank you. To the same minister: given that the government has agreed to accept the Auditor General's recommendations, are you going far enough to ensure that my constituents receive their pensions when they turn 80 or 90? They are living that long.

**Mr. Horner:** Well, Mr. Speaker, that is a good question. I know that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview in the Public Accounts last night asked the Auditor General whether or not, you know, we can maybe just let this slide a little bit because maybe things are going to get better. From the *Hansard* Blues of that I'll quote the Auditor General saying: "No. To consider these plans at this time is imperative." It's imperative that we do what we're doing now so we can keep the promise to those individuals because they are living longer. We need to do it now.

**The Speaker:** Final supplemental.

**Ms Fenske:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, one of the concerns of the Auditor General was if employees could clearly understand their plans' designs and outcomes going forward. How can you ensure that plans will be conveyed in a reasonable manner so that Albertans can understand what they are buying into?

**Mr. Horner:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we have a limited number of ways that we can fan that out. There are 500 employers that are participants in these plans. That's a lot of employers. It's a lot of employees. So what we've done is that we have asked those employers to distribute a letter from the ministry to the individual plan members to tell them what those changes are. We've also communicated them through the websites that we have, both our department website as well as the plan websites and the APS website. We've actually put calculators out there. I'm very happy to say that the calculators are probably the most popular piece of what's on the legislation because it tells the employees exactly what's happening.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Chestermere-Rocky View, followed by Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

### School Construction in Calgary

**Mr. McAllister:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Calgary communities of Cougar Ridge, Aspen Woods, West Springs, and surrounding areas are desperately needing some schools. They're not alone on that front. In fact, a group of concerned parents and teachers have created a petition, which has received more than 4,000 signatures thus far, asking the minister for help. I'm sure he has seen it. The schools in these areas are bursting at the seams. They literally have no more room for kids. I'd like to ask the minister: will he offer them some help before 2016?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I think I said in this House a couple of days ago, the Premier gave me pretty direct instructions to get the approved schools open in 2016. I'm working diligently with my staff to do that. I would say to the hon. member that he should tell those constituents of his that they ought to be very glad that this government is there rather than anybody he's attached to be in control, because under this government, under this Premier we're building Alberta. We're providing those classrooms so that kids can prepare for the future.

**Mr. McAllister:** A couple of points to the Minister of Infrastructure. They're not my constituents. They have two PC MLAs as their representatives. Secondly, the difference between us and government: we'll build the schools, not put in the signs, Minister.

Given that parents, teachers, and students behind this petition deserve a new school as much as anybody else, will the minister commit to what Wildrose has been asking for all along, a full public and prioritized infrastructure list to put an end to these kind of guessing games so communities know when they are going to get the schools they so desperately need.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, Mr. Speaker, if I was to hold up a blank piece of paper, that would be a list of what they're going to build. The fact is that we have actually committed to a bunch of schools. They're on our website. After the budget today what's approved will be on the website if it's not already there. Rather than make statements, as the members of that party have in the past, about how up to a third of the schools approved aren't needed, they should perhaps actually be onside with Albertans and their children that need those schools. This Premier, this government, building Alberta: we're doing it; they would not.

**The Speaker:** Final supplemental.

**Mr. McAllister:** Mr. Speaker, this party on this side of the House would build 100 schools and honour every commitment made by that party. The only shovel that that minister has is the one that follows him around to the podiums when he makes announcements.

Given that this government is building a new school in Elbow Park for 200 students or thereabouts for up to \$20 million, I would ask the minister: has he considered building a bigger school at this site or a more appropriate site that would take the pressure off some of the surrounding Calgary communities and put more kids in a new school?

**Mr. J. Johnson:** Mr. Speaker, for a party that says that they want to respect local autonomy, I find this line of questioning almost comical. We respect the good work that the local school boards do. We respect their capital plans when we have situations like we did through the flood. When they build the regular capital plans,

we take direction from them, and we try to respond to them because they're on the ground. It's funny how now we're criticized for not building fast enough the schools that they didn't actually want us to build.

2:20

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw, your point of order has been noted at 2:19 p.m.

Let us move on to Bonnyville-Cold Lake, followed by Edmonton-Centre.

Please, no preamble to your supplementals. We let a couple go there. I'm not going to let much more go on. No supplementals with preambles.

### Labour Shortage in Bonnyville-Cold Lake

**Mrs. Leskiw:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently I heard from my constituents of Bonnyville-Cold Lake about the serious challenge of labour shortage in the hospitality sector. With the high-paying oil sands so close our local businesses are having a hard time finding workers. These issues affect not only the local economy but our quality of life. My question is to the hon. Minister of Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour. What are you doing to help employers in Bonnyville-Cold Lake find workers in sectors other than oil and gas?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Indeed, that is a problem that businesses not only in the region of Cold Lake but throughout the province are suffering from. It's a problem that most jurisdictions would love to have. Nonetheless, it's a problem. We are working with groups that are currently underemployed or unemployed, marginalized groups. We are working with our aboriginal communities, persons with disabilities. Often women find it difficult to re-engage themselves in employment. We are focusing on Albertans and Canadians and trying to merge them into our workforce in all parts of the province.

**Mrs. Leskiw:** To the same minister: with Kehewin First Nations so close why aren't we doing more to help the aboriginal people fill in these jobs?

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our aboriginal community is, obviously, one of our priorities. We have business and industry liaisons throughout the province working with aboriginal communities and businesses and trying to match skill sets with the jobs available. Also, the Minister of Human Services has 59 offices throughout the province of Alberta Works, where job fairs are being put on, where resumés are being built, where linkages between people who are unemployed or underemployed are made with businesses, so no effort is being spared to make sure that every single Albertan and Canadian gets to work to the maximum of their ability.

**Mrs. Leskiw:** To the same minister: if the employer cannot find any Albertans to do this job, how will you help them to assure that they will get workers that they desperately need?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Lukaszuk:** Well, that's a good question, Mr. Speaker. Let me be perfectly frank on this. It is the position of this government that

any and all jobs available in Alberta have to be offered and made available to Canadians first. Canadians should have the first right of refusal; however, in cases where there are no workers ready or willing to take on the jobs that are available, there is the federal program of temporary foreign workers, which has been a lifesaver to Alberta industry for a number of years already, and we will probably end up continuing to rely on this program for many years to come.

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

### Alberta Energy Regulator Investigations

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have been watching and waiting to see if the performance of the new Energy Regulator actually does balance environmental protection and oil development. In 2012 Plains Midstream had a pipeline spill of crude oil into the Red Deer River and the Gleniffer reservoir. The Energy Regulator has just ruled that the company didn't inspect the pipeline, didn't follow up on government warnings, and failed to mitigate once the oil started leaking. One would expect some severe, memorable sanctions, right? No. Does the environment minister support the regulator's sanctions for Plains Midstream's incompetence and repeated breaches of directive 019?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Campbell:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are aware that the Energy Regulator has completed their investigation. I can tell you that my department is currently finishing our investigation. Once the investigation is complete, we will determine if charges need to be laid.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms Blakeman:** Well, thanks very much. To the same minister: what happened to polluter pays? How is requiring Plains Midstream to develop emergency responses – wow; tough – to audit past actions, really tough, and to develop resident contact plans a vigorous sanction?

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Campbell:** Well, again, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said, the Energy Regulator has done their due diligence. They came up with their recommendations. I can tell you that my department is now continuing to look at the investigation, and we will do the appropriate thing. That could include prosecution. But at this point in time it's premature for me to say what we are going to do, as our investigation is not complete at the department level.

**Ms Blakeman:** Well, Mr. Minister, either you or the regulator can put those sanctions through.

But let me ask if the minister is able to give me three examples – okay; how about one example – of where the regulator put the environment first, ahead of industry's interests. Just one example.

**Mr. Campbell:** Well, Mr. Speaker, being that the regulator just started to be in the process of doing its business in the last eight weeks, I can't give an example at this period in time.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder, followed by Medicine Hat.

### Seniors' Drug Coverage

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In 2008 private health insurance dealers, big pharma, and other hangers-on were lined up to cash in on this PC government's plan to charge seniors more for prescription drugs. Albertans responded and hit back that blatant attack on universal health care so far that it took this government four years to find it again. My question to the Health minister is this. Why did you think that you could dust off this dirty, old policy to make seniors pay more for their prescriptions and not expect that sensible and caring Albertans would make you stand down on this once again?

**Mr. Horne:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to talk about our policy with respect to how we're making drug and supplementary health benefit programs accessible to more Albertans. What surprises me on a continual basis is the lack of recognition on the opposite side of the House of the fact that 20 per cent of Albertans have absolutely no access to drug coverage in this province. We are seeing drug costs grow at a rate like never before. Albertans continue to enjoy the broadest, best drug coverage in the country. We intend to keep it that way. What we have said is that we will pursue this by consolidating our 18 programs into one and a number of other measures.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, given that this PC government has now twice tried to defy common sense to make seniors pay millions more for their prescriptions, why won't this minister stop putting his hands on the burners of the stove, smarten up, and stop rolling out this sort of two-tier, American-style private health care and put in a universal pharmacy plan?

**Mr. Horne:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is welcome, if he wants to, to raise the ire of Albertans, or at least attempt to, by talking about the United States. What we're interested in is Alberta and coverage for Albertans. We will continue with our program to consolidate those 18 separate programs into one. We will continue to push the federal government, join our other provincial colleagues in pressing for national catastrophic drug coverage for Canadians, and we will continue to capitalize on our very good success in the last year in lowering drug prices that are paid by Albertans, both by taxpayers and out of pocket.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, given that in 2009 the income-based seniors' pharmacy plan was shot down and that in 2014 the scheme to make seniors pay more for their prescriptions went up in flames, too, is this a pattern that you intend to follow, to attack seniors specifically and universal health care in general? Mind you, maybe your PC government won't be here next time to pull these sorts of tricks.

**Mr. Horne:** Mr. Speaker, it's hardly a question of government policy, but I'll give him an answer on government policy. It would be very refreshing, actually – and maybe we'll hear it in estimates – for this hon. member to demonstrate what knowledge he has, if any, about the very broad drug coverage that's offered in Alberta; about some of the very specific drug cost pressures, including drugs to which this hon. member and his colleagues and all members of this House are advocating access for Albertans; his knowledge about the efforts of provinces and territories to work together to address this issue, to see Canada pool our population health risk and our financial resources to deliver a better level of coverage for Canadians. Maybe he's interested in that.

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

### Emergency Medical Dispatch Services

**Mr. Pedersen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Slowly but surely the Minister of Health is retreating on his failed one-size-fits-all approach to emergency dispatch. The minister is now letting some communities keep their local services. It's good to see him coming around to the Wildrose point of view, and we support these changes. There is a growing opinion that the minister is cherry-picking these communities based on petty partisanship. Now, I won't jump to conclusions, but something is not right here. Minister, why are some communities like Lethbridge and Red Deer allowed to hold on to their dispatch services while others like Medicine Hat are not?

**Mr. Horne:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has already jumped to one conclusion by suggesting that we have moved away from our commitment to consolidate dispatch services across the province. What we have done and what was reflected on this morning at the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association breakfast by our Premier is that we have successfully worked out arrangements with Lethbridge, Red Deer, and Fort McMurray to have them operate as satellites of the provincial dispatch system.

What this means, among other things, is that any of those three satellites will be able to run the entire provincial system in the event of a natural disaster or another emergency. They will be able to better serve their own citizens by accessing ambulances across borders.

2:30

**Mr. Pedersen:** Given that this government likes to talk about local decision-making and supporting local autonomy, why is the minister listening to some communities but still ignoring others?

**Mr. Horne:** Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member wants to wax nostalgic about jurisdiction in Alberta, municipal versus provincial, he's welcome to do that. What we're interested in is building a state-of-the-art emergency medical services system for the citizens of this province by adhering to a dispatch system which recognizes the principle of borderless ambulance services. What that means is that the closest ambulance to any emergency will be the ambulance that responds to the emergency anywhere in this province.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Pedersen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that countless community leaders from Medicine Hat have been loud and clear about wanting to keep our regional dispatch services because the service you offer is not as good as what we had, why is the minister ignoring locally elected officials and proceeding with central dispatch, that our community just doesn't want?

**Mr. Horne:** Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member wants to talk about these sorts of jurisdictional issues, he's welcome to pursue those questions with my colleague the Minister of Municipal Affairs. What happened here is that three very large dispatch providers that provided integrated dispatch services – fire, ambulance, and, in some cases, police – have become satellites of our provincial dispatch system, allowing us to complete the remaining 5 per cent of dispatch services in this province and bring them into the provincial system. The common technology that will be used, the borderless ambulance principle that I talked about earlier, all of

those other improvements are going to be made possible because these municipalities co-operated with a provincial . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley, followed by Strathmore-Brooks.

### Elk Population in Northern Alberta

**Mr. Goudreau:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Farmers in my constituency of Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley and other north-western constituencies have seen significant stored grain crop damage from elk over the past few years, with no government herd culling or financial compensation programs in place. This is a problem our government created in 1968, when elk was first transported into the area by our provincial government. The damage is also compounded by the fact that we are experiencing poor grain-delivery opportunities. My first question is to the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development. Given that the Alberta government introduced elk into farming communities, will financial compensation be offered to the numerous farmers who have suffered increased, severe financial hardship?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Olson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We do have a compensation program for farmers who suffer damages to unharvested crops. It appears that the issue here relates to harvested crops. By the way, for the unharvested crops you don't have to have insurance to be covered by this program. On the issue of harvested crops I think that as a policy decision one would have expected that those crops are protected, they're in storage, and so on. It appears that there is an emerging issue relating to the stored crops. I'd be happy to speak with the member further, and I have already alerted my department.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Goudreau:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Environment and Sustainable Resource Development: given that the elk population is well over 5,000 head in the Spirit River area alone, will we see the launch of a herd-culling program?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Campbell:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a timely question for the member. I was just up in Rycroft a couple of weeks ago and had a chance to talk to a number of municipal officials and farmers in the area, and they did raise their concerns about the number of elk in the area and the fact that there was eaten grain. So we have two issues. One, we've got to get the railcars on the roads so we can get the grain out of there. The second thing we have to do is reduce the elk population. Right now hunting allocations for elk will be determined this spring, and multiple seasons will be available for hunters to help reduce the number of elk in the area through hunting.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Goudreau:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: when are we going to change those hunting regulations, maybe going possibly from a draw system to an open system that allows anyone to purchase an elk licence and to have maybe a longer hunting season?

**Mr. Campbell:** Well, Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, we're still not the Wild West, so we have to do some things and have some order. We believe that the elk population will be successfully managed through a draw system, where the number of hunters are limited and multiple hunting seasons are available. Allowing a smaller number of hunters at one time and more hunting seasons will result in more elk being removed. What we will do through the draw season is that we will have my staff contact hunters with elk licences and pair them up with farmers with elk problems. That's something that we can do to help reduce those issues.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks, followed by Grande Prairie-Smoky.

#### Health Facilities in Strathmore

**Mr. Hale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Strathmore hospital is the second-busiest rural hospital in Alberta, seeing over 33,000 patients a year in the emergency room alone. Despite rising populations and the broadening of their service area the facility has not expanded to meet our community's growth. In fact, since construction in 1985 the facility has not met the growing needs and could be putting patients at risk. Given that AHS's capital plan says that, and I quote, many of these facilities are functionally and physically obsolete, to the Minister of Health: what are you going to do to address this?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Horne:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll answer the first question, and my colleague may wish to supplement. As the hon. member knows, the Strathmore hospital redevelopment is referenced in AHS's five-year capital plan. It is currently an unfunded project. It is one of several across the province. I am aware of the importance of Strathmore to serving not only residents in that area but also to providing overflow for Calgary. I visited the facility myself. We'll continue to work toward completing the necessary needs assessment for this, but as I'm sure the hon. member will appreciate, our capital dollars are limited.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Hale:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that last year the government forced the Strathmore hospital to close the functional 25-bed unit and given the much-needed demand for facility expansion, why is it taking the Health minister so long to address this important issue?

**Mr. Horne:** Mr. Speaker, that is absolutely not the case. Neither the government nor AHS forced the Strathmore hospital to close the long-term bed unit. What happened, of course, was that across the street a brand new facility developed by the operator Age Care opened, a state-of-the-art continuing care facility that provided state-of-the-art housing for those residents and the residents that were to follow. We call that progress.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Hale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Would this minister be willing to meet with myself, the local council, medical professionals, and AHS to address the critical need for the expanded and up-to-date facility our community requires now?

**Mr. Horne:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I believe that both my colleague and I have visited the Strathmore hospital. I know that I certainly

have talked to the mayor on a number of occasions, other stakeholders in the community. I believe we have a handle on the situation, as I said. We certainly understand the need and the desire of the community, and we will continue to work to do our best to make this occur. But, as I said, it's one of several projects across the province that we continue to try to complete.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Grande Prairie-Smoky, followed by Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

#### Grain Rail Transportation Backlog

**Mr. McDonald:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since last year's unbelievable harvest in northern Alberta our farmers have been trying to get their grain to market, and it seems to me that we are having some backlogs in the railroad industry. Could the minister of agriculture please explain what his department is doing to help us with this?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Olson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member quite properly raises an issue that's probably the forefront issue in my department right now and a topic of lots of discussion around rural Alberta. The fact is that this is a matter of federal jurisdiction. The federal government is responsible for the railways. We have been a loud advocate with the federal ministers both of agriculture and of transport regarding this issue as have other provinces. I was in Winnipeg last week speaking with Minister Ritz and provincial counterparts. My deputy has been engaged in conversations with provincial deputies across western Canada and the federal government as well as the transportation deputies we're working on.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. McDonald:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, these tracks have many different commodities on them, and we're hearing that a lot of these tracks are being used with oil right now. Could the minister tell me: are we taking a back seat to the oil industry as grain producers in this province?

2:40

**Mr. Olson:** Mr. Speaker, that's a comment that we also hear quite a bit, and we've been making inquiries not only with the rail companies but also with experts who are independent observers. My understanding and information is that there has been an uptick in some of the traffic in terms of moving oil, but the numbers are pretty small. They're only about 2 per cent of the rail traffic compared to 16, 17 per cent for the grain traffic. It's interesting, though. When you look at our province's submission to the rail freight review in 2010, we said then that only 20 per cent of shippers of all kinds were happy with rail service. So it's not just the grain people.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

One more supplemental, please.

**Mr. McDonald:** Well, thank you. Just one more: could the minister actually tell me if, in his discussions with the rail companies, they're going to be adding any more grain cars to supplement the fleet?

**Mr. Olson:** Well, Mr. Speaker, there's a lot of talk about railcars. I think that may be a simplistic suggested solution. I think that

there's an agreement and a consensus that it's really the power, the locomotives, and the crews that are probably the bigger issue. Also, on the question of grain cars – and I had a discussion with Minister Ritz about this last week – it's not just the number of cars; it's where they're spotted and when they're spotted, and that's a huge issue for our producers and our grain companies. So all of those are details that we're encouraging the federal government to deal with.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, followed by Calgary-Glenmore.

### Lyme Disease

**Mr. Rowe:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Lyme disease is a serious illness that is hurting Albertans, not only with debilitating symptoms but also with a chronic lack of support from provincial health services. Anyone at any age can get it through contact with deer ticks. And while the disease is best remedied in early phases, symptoms increase in severity over time. Several of my constituents have expressed their dismay at not being able to access diagnostic services and the treatment they need to cope with Lyme disease. To the Health minister: why is AHS denying access to testing for Lyme disease?

**Mr. Horne:** Well, Mr. Speaker, Lyme disease is, in fact, a very serious disease. I agree with the hon. member. I am not aware of any circumstances where AHS is denying testing for this. It's actually a public health matter. The tests are conducted through AHS public health in co-operation with the chief medical officer of health for Alberta and the staff in my ministry. But I'm certainly not aware in any case that we are denying testing.

**Mr. Rowe:** I will be happy to provide the minister with evidence that that is indeed happening.

Given that many of my constituents are having to pay thousands of dollars out of pocket for testing alone and then must pay for their own treatment, when will this government take Lyme disease seriously and ensure Albertans have access to the best available diagnostic services and treatment?

**Mr. Horne:** Well, Mr. Speaker, as I'm sure the hon. member appreciates, neither he nor I requisition tests for Lyme disease. Those tests should be and are requisitioned by physicians. I'd be happy to look at the information that the hon. member refers to and see if there is any irregularity or anything that needs to be done in order to improve access to testing for Lyme disease. We take it seriously as do our partners to the east and the west.

**Mr. Rowe:** Thank you for that, Minister. I will provide that evidence.

Considering that the severity of symptoms increases over time, does the minister agree that early diagnosis must be available for Lyme disease so that Albertans are assured that such serious illnesses are addressed and alleviated as soon as possible instead of being left on their own to suffer without hope of assistance from this government?

**Mr. Horne:** Mr. Speaker, I would be speculating in trying to answer that question, and I don't want to do that. As I said, I'd be happy to look at whatever information the hon. member has that pertains to the experience of his constituents. I repeat that we take the disease very seriously. I know there are a variety of tests that are available to detect Lyme disease, and I said that I'd be happy

to look into it further upon review of the information provided by my colleague.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

### Calgary Southwest Ring Road

**Ms L. Johnson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last fall, after many years of negotiations, an agreement was signed to allow for the construction of the southwest section of the Calgary ring road. My questions are all for the Minister of Transportation. Minister, many of my constituents are questioning the design of the bridges crossing the Elbow River. Can the minister confirm that the designs will be reviewed in light of the water levels and flow rates that were experienced during the flood of 2013?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to this member. She is always advocating hard for her constituents. Last June's floods in southern Alberta resulted in an unprecedented amount of damage to many provincial roads, highways, and bridges. Part of the recovery effort includes making sure new transportation infrastructure like the south Calgary ring road can withstand the low flow rates and increased water levels experienced last spring. All design requirements for proposed bridges over the Elbow and Bow rivers will indeed be reviewed and will incorporate the high water levels that are based on the latest flood maps.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Ms L. Johnson:** Thank you very much. My constituents are also concerned about the impact of construction and traffic on the Weaselhead environmental park. What measures will be taken by your department to address these concerns?

**Mr. Drysdale:** Mr. Speaker, this government is committed to building Alberta's transportation infrastructure in a way that is responsible for our natural environment. My department will continue to work closely with the city of Calgary and interested stakeholders to ensure that there is minimal impact on the Weaselhead environmental park. The road design will follow all legislated environmental requirements.

**Ms L. Johnson:** My final question: when and where is the construction expected to begin on the final section of the southwest ring road?

**Mr. Drysdale:** Mr. Speaker, completing the Calgary ring road is just one of the many examples of how we are building Alberta to increase market access for our province's goods and services while supporting growth in local communities. Currently we are considering building the final stages of the Calgary ring road in two segments, using a P3 model. Project updates will be posted regularly on the Alberta Transportation website.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the formal time for question period has expired, but we do have a request for a point of clarification, which we are going to hear from the Deputy Premier, regarding an issue that arose during question period. That will entitle the opposition to ask a supplemental question, to which an answer will then be expected.

The Deputy Premier.



### Premier's Travel Expenses

(continued)

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Premier, in responding to a question earlier today, subsequently realized that she had not been responding specifically with respect to the flight that the question was about.

To correct the record, commercial flight options were considered, but there were reports of significant challenges with getting passengers out of Palm Springs at the time. The decision was made to send the government plane to ensure with a degree of certainty that the Premier would be in Calgary in time for Premier Klein's memorial.

That's the correct answer to the question that was addressed earlier. The Premier realized subsequently that she was not addressing the flight that was requested about.\*

**The Speaker:** The hon. Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Wilson:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the Deputy Premier clarifying on behalf of – oh, pardon me.

**The Speaker:** I'm sorry. Is this in response to the Official Opposition or to the ND opposition?

**Mr. Horner:** The ND opposition.

**The Speaker:** My apologies, Calgary-Shaw.  
Edmonton-Calder.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, clearly, Mr. Speaker, there were plenty of options available during that time between Palm Springs and coming back. So if there is some obfuscation or some smoke that's being blown there – clearly, the planes were there. Why didn't the Premier choose to ride a commercial plane instead of spending \$9,000 of public money on this flight unnecessarily?

**Mr. Hancock:** Mr. Speaker, it's easy for the opposition or others to take specific decisions out of their context, without all the information, and then make these types of character-slighting allegations. The reality is that people make difficult decisions every day, use their best judgment, using the information that they have at the time.

### Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we're fighting the clock here, so to speak, but let's give it a go. Let's start with Edmonton-Decore, private member's statement, followed by Edmonton-Centre.

#### 200th Anniversary of Taras Shevchenko

**Mrs. Sarich:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour and privilege to rise today to help commemorate the bicentenary anniversary of the birth of an eminent Ukrainian national poet, accomplished artist, and humanist of global stature and significance in Ukrainian history, namely Taras Shevchenko. On March 9, 2014, and over the course of the year Ukrainians from all over the world will pay tribute, through festivals, presentations, and activities, to the 200th anniversary of Taras Shevchenko's birth.

Shevchenko was born a serf, orphaned at 12, grew up in poverty and misery, but died as Ukraine's national bard. For his satirical political poetry he was arrested, punished with military service, exiled to a remote region, and was forbidden by Czar Nicholas I to write, draw, and paint, an edict he patently ignored. Taras Shevchenko was never allowed to live in Ukraine. However,

shortly after his death his remains were transported from St. Petersburg to Ukraine and reburied on Chernecha Hora, known as Monk's mountain, in Kaniv.

2:50

The importance of Shevchenko's poetry about Ukrainian culture and society has garnered a unique place in Ukrainian history. His uncompromising poems exposed the terrible conditions under which the Ukrainian nation was suffering. This resulted in a reawakening of Ukrainian national identity, which is unprecedented in the history of any nation. Also, his artistic works laid the foundations for the use of Ukrainian as a language of modern Ukrainian literature.

Taras Shevchenko was revered as an ardent fighter for freedom and liberty. He was a great hero, who dreamed of a time when his country would be a free, sovereign state in which the Ukrainian people, their language, culture, and history would be respected and valued for all time.

Mr. Speaker, God bless the Ukrainian people. Glory to Ukraine. [Remarks in Ukrainian] Glory to the heroes. [Remarks in Ukrainian]

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Edmonton-Centre, followed by Edmonton-South West.

### Women's Issues

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As we approach March 8, International Women's Day, I set aside time to take stock, to review how far women in Alberta have come and how far we still have to go to achieve the full and equal participation of women in the life of the province. Now, this week we had both the throne speech and a budget speech, so I thought it would be an appropriate time or opportunity to see if the provincial government is making the grade. Is it moving toward that equal participation?

Well, there's still a wage gap between men and women, no matter the education or upbringing. Women running single-parent households continue to be more likely to be living in poverty. Immigrant and new Canadian women are still less able to access ESL training, leaving them behind their spouses and their children in language skills. We look longingly at Quebec's \$10-a-day child care fees. Minimum wage still disproportionately affects women workers.

While government has added advisory councils and policy commissions of every possible shape and size, it closed both the Advisory Council on Women's Issues and the women's secretariat after starving them of funding for years. Now, there is no mention of the concept of consent in the health or sex ed curriculum, nor do we store sexual assault kits so survivors can recover and then consider whether they wish to contact the police. Rather than increasing the number of provincially elected women to reach a critical mass, Alberta has steadily declined in the numbers elected. This government still does not adequately, never mind fully, fund shelters for survivors of violence against women nor sexual assault centres nor agencies for pregnant and parenting teens nor any other NGO that provides services primarily for women. Alberta has made disgraceful progress in cases of missing and murdered indigenous women.

There is no question that women have made progress, but like so many things in Alberta, it could be so much better. Women are an untapped resource for us, one that Alberta needs more each day, and I will continue to press for this government to take

\*See page 92, right column, paragraph 7

leadership roles in achieving economic, social, and legal equality for women.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Edmonton-South West, followed by Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

### Youth Engagement Think Tank

**Mr. Jeneroux:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As chair of the Alberta Youth Secretariat I'm very excited to rise today in recognition of the second youth engagement think tank, which is set to take place on Saturday, March 15. The core principle behind this undertaking is the importance of getting youth actively involved in engaging and improving their communities. The first think tank took place in December 2013, and its great success led to the decision that a follow-up discussion ought to take place.

Mr. Speaker, the second think tank will allow for a more in-depth exploration of ways to maximize engagement opportunities for youth. In particular, four fundamental questions have been selected for discussion. What principles should guide youth engagement moving forward? How should family and community engagement councils engage youth? Are youth being sufficiently represented in the draft children's charter's principles? How can youth be engaged in the development of a bullying prevention strategy? Exploring these four questions is an essential task for the young Albertans that will be gathering on March 15. By doing so, they will be taking another step in cultivating themselves as future leaders in their communities and in our great province.

Occasions such as this truly highlight the importance of emphasizing the role of youth as we seek to build upon our strong families and communities. Informed and motivated youth are the lifeblood of a bright and prosperous future. This is why I'm immensely excited whenever I get the opportunity to participate first-hand in encouraging their enthusiasm to make a difference in the lives of those around them.

Mr. Speaker, for this reason I know that all hon. members in this House will join me in wishing these young Albertans well when they convene at the youth engagement think tank next weekend.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake, followed by Livingstone-Macleod.

### Events in Ukraine

**Mrs. Leskiw:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As chair of the Advisory Council on Alberta-Ukraine Relations I want to speak to you about something near and dear to my heart, the situation in Ukraine. On behalf of ACAUR, my family, and the Ukrainian community in Alberta I want to say thank you to our Premier, the Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations, the Minister of Culture, and our Prime Minister for the support given to the people of Ukraine.

Our government is stepping up to provide aid to Ukraine and continues to stand with the government of Canada in opposing all efforts to undermine democracy and freedom in Ukraine. As we stand beside the people of Ukraine, we are hopeful that a peaceful resolution will soon be found. We honour the 100 Ukrainians who gave up their lives so future generations would experience freedom and democracy. Ukrainians around our province have held memorial services to pray for those who've lost their lives in the struggle for freedom.

We live in the greatest province and country in the world. The freedoms we take for granted are those same freedoms I hope and

dream Ukrainians in Ukraine will one day experience regardless of what language they speak or in what part of the country they live.

Once again, the Ukrainian community of Alberta thanks the Premier and all members of this Legislature for the unified support and understanding of the difficulties facing Ukraine today and for bringing this issue to the forefront.

Thank you to all.

**The Speaker:** Livingstone-Macleod, followed by Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley.

### Highway 3

**Mr. Stier:** Good afternoon. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently, at a meeting of the mayors and reeves of southern Alberta, significant concerns were once again expressed regarding the lack of attention to the highway 3 twinning upgrades and improvements that were promised several years ago by the government of Alberta. Communities across southern Alberta have looked forward to these improvements to highway 3 as that road system connects dozens of communities with one another and also forms the key connecting corridor to the province of British Columbia and the northwestern United States.

Stretching across the province, the road serves many small towns and rural areas plus Medicine Hat, Lethbridge, Fort Macleod, Pincher Creek, and the Crowsnest Pass communities. It is the main transportation route into and out of the southern tip of the province that carries Canadian products to foreign markets via the nearby U.S. border and to the west coast terminals in Vancouver. This road was extensively studied, had several recommended new alignments to eliminate the frequent bottlenecks, and was approved several years ago for significant upgrades, including the twinning west of Fort Macleod, by Premier Stelmach himself in May 2007. Yet despite the fact that this corridor is so vitally important to Alberta's economy and an obvious crucial link to our entire transportation network, it still today remains a two-lane road in most areas, full of bottlenecks, with only slightly altered areas that have had only minor improvements.

As the mayors and reeves of southern Alberta are deeply concerned that the provincial government has been ignoring this issue for far too long and fear that without added attention to this matter the economies in the region will continue to be hampered, on their behalf I'm asking for immediate attention by the Minister of Transportation and for this government to please act now. Make this project a chief priority by putting it on the major highway construction plan just as soon as it may be possible, please.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I hesitate to interject here, but it's 3 o'clock, and unanimous consent to proceed with the conclusion of the daily Routine has not been asked for, so I must go directly to points of order.

The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Campbell:** Yes. Mr. Speaker, I'd ask for unanimous consent to hear the last member's statement, to extend the Routine today for one more member's statement.

**The Speaker:** Well, I'll ask for it, but just so you know, I still have to deal with points of order after that.

**Mr. Campbell:** Yeah. It's only two minutes.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Speaker:** Then let us hear, please, from Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley.

### 3:00 National Lymphedema Awareness Day

**Mr. Goudreau:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, colleagues, for allowing me to provide my member's statement.

On behalf of our colleague the MLA for Calgary-Foothills I wish to draw to your attention that National Lymphedema Awareness Day is today, March 6.

Lymphedema is recognized as one of the most feared side effects of cancer treatment, yet public awareness of it remains minimal. We have chosen this day as the day to draw attention to the problem, whether it is primary or secondary, cancer related or not. Lymphedema is a chronic, long-term condition in which excess fluid collects in tissues, causing swelling. It commonly affects but is not limited to the arms and legs and can affect people of all ages. According to the proclamation of Lymphedema Awareness Day over 100 million people worldwide are affected by some form of this condition. It is often a consequence of surgically removing the lymph nodes or due to damage caused by radiotherapy.

Founded in 2003, the Alberta Lymphedema Association is a not-for-profit charitable organization. This dedicated team of people recognized the need to help people living with and affected by this. The association serves as a learning one, committed to ongoing education and awareness about lymphedema. They act as a resource to empower affected individuals and their families in managing this condition.

This date unites the entire lymphedema community to take action and to raise awareness of this underrecognized condition. Mr. Speaker, today is a day for therapists to honour their patients and for patients to honour their therapists and for all of us to understand lymphedema a little better.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Hon. members, I must proceed directly now to points of order. There was a point of order raised at around 1:56 p.m. by the hon. Minister of Justice, and perhaps he's not wanting to pursue it, or is he?

**Mr. Campbell:** No. We'll withdraw it, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** That is officially withdrawn on his behalf by the Government House Leader.

A second point of order was raised by the Government House Leader at 2:09 p.m., and I've received a note indicating that you wish to withdraw. Is that correct? Okay. The Government House Leader says that that is correct.

So we have one point of order left. It was raised at 2:19 p.m. It was Calgary-Shaw with respect to an answer being given by the Minister of Infrastructure.

### Point of Order Factual Accuracy

**Mr. Wilson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will, in the interest of time, do this as quickly as possible. I'll give the minister, hopefully, the opportunity to do the honourable thing and be a team player for his own team and just simply withdraw the remark.

But we've heard it in this House before – it probably will not, unfortunately, be the last time – this whole idea that our party, Mr. Speaker, will build nothing or, as he suggested, that he could hold up a blank piece of paper, and that is what our infrastructure plan

would be. It is a fabrication. It's a manifestation of a communications director who thought that it would be a great talking point. It is patently false. I would just simply ask the minister to do the honourable thing and under 23(h), (i), and (j), please, to just withdraw the remark.

**The Speaker:** Let's be quick about this. Hon. minister, do you wish to rethink this or withdraw it?

**Mr. Campbell:** No, Mr. Speaker. There was no point of order. We had a question from the opposition to the hon. minister. The hon. minister gave his answer. This was a policy discussion. We disagree with their policy. You look on their website and see what their policy is, and we patently disagree with what the Wildrose is doing. There's no list. There's no point of order.

**The Speaker:** Well, I suppose that clarifies the position that the government has on this matter. I think you've indicated what the Wildrose has. If you have something that clarifies this further by way of a tabling, then why don't you bring it into the House and table it on the next sitting day, and that will clear this matter up even more formally.

All right. With that, we will observe the necessity to recess the session until 3:15 p.m. to allow adequate time for the set-up of the budget speech itself. Accordingly, the House stands recessed until 3:15.

[The Assembly adjourned from 3:04 p.m. to 3:15 p.m.]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, let's take our chairs, please. Quickly.

## Orders of the Day Transmittal of Estimates

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

**The Sergeant-at-Arms:** Order!

**The Speaker:** The Lieutenant Governor transmits estimates of certain sums required by the offices of the Legislative Assembly for the service of the province for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2015, and recommends the same to the Legislative Assembly.

The Lieutenant Governor transmits these estimates of certain sums that are required for that year and recommends them to all.

Please be seated.

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

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the 2014-15 offices of the Legislative Assembly estimates as well as the 2014-15 government estimates. Further, I now wish to table the government's business plan, titled Strategic Plan, and the ministry business plans.

**The Speaker:** Hon. President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance, just before you deliver your comments, I wonder if we could take a moment and congratulate someone who's celebrating her birthday today, and we'll just see what the President of Treasury Board has in mind for her and for all Albertans.

Hon. Premier, happy birthday.

## Government Motions

**Mr. Horner:** I now wish to table the government's Budget 2014 fiscal plan, which contains the operational plan, savings plan,

capital plan, and major economic assumptions used in developing these plans.

### Budget Address

11. Mr. Horner moved:

Be it resolved that the Assembly approve in general the business plans and fiscal policies of the government.

**The Speaker:** Thank you. Please proceed.

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my privilege today to present the government of Alberta's proposed budget for the fiscal year 2014-15, a budget that is fully balanced. Before this one, 100 provincial budgets have been tabled in this House. No two budgets have been identical, and each one has reflected the times in which it was being presented, whether it's supporting the tens of thousands of Albertans impacted by major flooding in southern Alberta or helping Albertans cope with the devastating drought in the midst of the Great Depression or working to maintain a fiscal balance in the face of rising and falling revenues, the price we pay for being an energy economy.

Change and adversity are not new to this province, to its people, or any of the governments before this one. One of the constants over our history is the resilience of Albertans and our ability to recover from whatever challenges may arise. Albertans have always been defined by their irrepressible spirit, right from those early days when a handful of fearless western Canadians decided to call Alberta home. This is despite what George Simpson, governor of the Hudson's Bay Company, said in the 19th century: "The west should be left to the trapper and trader. Forever."

Albertans have never been afraid of a challenge. We've never been afraid of rolling up our sleeves, whether it's to tackle adversity or to work towards our dreams. It's this commitment to the future and the courage to shape it that has allowed Alberta to evolve over the last century and become the remarkable province that it is today.

We've been building Alberta from day one. This is why people chose Alberta more than 100 years ago, and it's why they continue to choose Alberta today. We stand out among provinces and we always will. In fact, in spite of what early detractors like George Simpson said, many people, including economists and other experts, point to Alberta as the place to be now and in the future.

3:20

Mr. Speaker, there are some good reasons for this. As we enter a new fiscal year, Alberta is outperforming Canada and the United States. Alberta has led all provinces in economic growth for the last two years, and many forecasters estimate Alberta is Canada's economic growth leader for 2013 as well. And we keep going. The big five Canadian banks expect Alberta to top all provinces again in 2014.

We led all provinces in job growth in 2011 and 2012. Over the past 12 months Alberta created nearly 70,000 jobs, accounting for just under half of the jobs added in all of Canada over this period. Last year Alberta's unemployment rate was 4.6 per cent, the same as it was in 2012 and well below the national rate of 7.1 per cent. This speaks to just how good our job opportunities are when we can boast such a low unemployment rate in the face of such high population growth.

More than 105,000 people moved to Alberta last year. That's like adding a city the size of Red Deer. The numbers do tell the story. For living and raising a family, for working or starting a business, and for playing and enjoying the good life that Alberta has to offer, Alberta is the people's choice.

Now, Mr. Speaker, our government has also made choices. Some of them have been tough choices. All of them have been the right ones. I'll talk about some of the choices we've made in this budget, but first I'll speak about how decisions we made over the last fiscal year have set Alberta on a course for success. A year ago almost to the day I stood in the same spot and tabled a budget that represented a once-in-a-generation shift for our province, and it set a new direction for our government. It had to. The actions we took in Budget 2013 were necessary to address numbers that were substantially different than what we are seeing today. At this time last year we were facing a potential \$6 billion shortfall in revenue thanks to volatile energy prices and the lower price Alberta producers were getting for their bitumen.

Budget 2013 included some hard but necessary decisions. It forced us to not just scrutinize our spending but to rein it in. It was one of the toughest budgets we'd seen in a while. It included a zero per cent increase in operating expense, and that wasn't easy, not when for the past 10 years the average increase in operating expense had been 7.3 per cent. It wasn't easy as well, Mr. Speaker, when population growth plus inflation was 4.3 per cent, but we did it.

Budget 2013 brought responsible change to how our government does business in this province. For example, we brought together some of the best and brightest minds from across Canada to discuss Alberta's economic future. Last year we hosted two economic summits and two forecasting summits. We tapped into the expertise of leading economists from Canada's top banks to get us the most accurate forecast we could.

Of course, we know that even with their expertise, as soon as our forecast goes to print, there's a high chance it's already off, and of course there's a hundred per cent certainty someone will tell us we're wrong. In any forecast there are many unknowns. We don't know what the Canadian dollar will do. We don't know what the energy market will do. That's why we base our forecast on what we hear from those experts. We don't pick and choose to meet a certain objective. We don't forecast high to justify extra spending just as we don't forecast low to justify lower spending.

Last year, based on the most accurate information available to us, we held the line on our spending. It was the right decision, one that's helping us turn a corner. To be clear, Mr. Speaker, we haven't quite finished turning that corner. We can't see everything that's around the bend, but we need to be prepared for whatever is there.

It is in that same spirit of optimism and caution that I announce an operational surplus of \$2.6 billion in Budget 2014. Happy birthday. Mr. Speaker, you can be sure this government has a plan for this money. Even more than a plan, we have legislation. Last March we introduced the Fiscal Management Act, or the FMA, along with Budget 2013. The FMA ensures that each year before we do anything else with our revenue, we take money off the top and we put it into savings. Because of the surplus we will reach the \$5 billion in our contingency account in this budget. With more savings in the bank we'll be ready should we need to deal with another significant or unexpected challenge in the future.

Stronger revenue has put us in a much better fiscal position this year, and improvements to our revenue are due to a few factors. For example, we've seen a healthy return on our investments. In fact, we expect investment income in 2014-15 to be the fourth-highest ever. A lower Canadian dollar has also made a difference. The drop in the exchange rate has brought more money for our energy resources, which, of course, are priced in U.S. dollars.

More significant is the increase in tax revenue. With more than 100,000 people moving to Alberta in the last year and no sign of that slowing down, there are more Albertans paying personal

income tax and corporate tax. Tax revenue accounts for nearly half of total revenue, so that has an effect on provincial coffers. We've seen a 5 per cent increase from last year, Mr. Speaker.

Nonrenewable resource revenue accounts for 21 per cent of total revenue, so when prices are up or, conversely, when prices are down, you can bet Alberta's bottom line feels the impact. Unlike in Budget 2013, prices are up, and in 2014-15 we expect resource revenue to be \$9.2 billion, more than 6 per cent higher than last year. This demonstrates quite clearly just how much Alberta's revenue is affected by the ups and downs of the global market.

Indeed, Mr. Speaker, energy has brought Alberta both rewards and challenges since the Dingman discovery well put Turner Valley on the map a century ago, in 1914. That marked the beginning of Alberta's new identity as an energy province, a label that continues to attract job seekers, innovators, and entrepreneurs to Alberta today.

Last summer Alberta's population surpassed 4 million people, and our population continues to grow faster than all other provinces. In fact, we've tripled the national growth rate. This isn't the first time that Alberta has experienced tremendous growth. Canada's first census showed that Alberta's population jumped from 73,000 in 1901 to nearly 375,000 in 1911. That's an increase of 413 per cent in just one decade, Mr. Speaker. When Leduc No. 1 was discovered in 1947, another big moment in Alberta's energy story, it led to another rapid population boom. Now, here in 2014, a century away from the Dingman discovery, we're feeling it again.

There's no question that population growth has its economic benefits. When more people choose Alberta, more people pay income tax, more people spend money in our shops and businesses, and, of course, more people use government services. Alberta is expected to reach 5 million people in the next decade or so. That's about the time that my grandsons will be graduating high school, Mr. Speaker. So not just as Finance minister but as a grandfather and father I want to make sure this province can continue to provide a high quality of life for future Albertans. I want to be sure that when my grandsons are adults, maybe even with their own kids, they have access to the schools, roads, and health facilities their families will need.

Mr. Speaker, I'm sure that Albertans want the same for their children and their grandchildren. They've told us public infrastructure is a priority. We know it's essential to our quality of life. That's why building Alberta for today and for tomorrow will continue to be the focus of the year ahead. With Budget 2014 we will continue to implement the building Alberta plan. I'm excited about the progress that we've made over the last year, and we will continue our work under the plan's three priorities: investing in families and communities, living within our means, and opening new markets for our resources.

Since the beginning, Alberta's cities, towns, and communities have thrived because of the strength and determination of the people who live in them. Families and communities are the backbone of Alberta. That's why 60 per cent of the operational expense is allocated to support the ongoing success and quality of life of Albertans across this province.

We've made a number of promises to Albertans, and we've kept them. For example, we're working with 24 communities to establish family care clinics across the province. We're building the first wave of 50 new schools and 70 modernizations. We're on track to finish the Calgary ring road. That's the realization of an agreement 50 years in the making, Mr. Speaker. We're also on our way to completing the Edmonton ring road ahead of schedule. We don't believe Albertans should have to wait years for us to build

and maintain public infrastructure, especially when our province is growing faster than any other.

Albertans should not have to drive on unsafe roads, and families should not have to drive miles out of their way because the schools in their neighbourhoods are too small for the number of students or nonexistent. Why should we make Albertans wait for adequate infrastructure when we are in a position to build now?

3:30

Our capital plan delivers the right infrastructure in the right place at the right time. We're investing more than \$19 billion over the next three years through the building Alberta plan. We will ensure Albertans today and in the future continue to have the schools, the health facilities, and the municipal capital projects they've told us are important to them.

We are investing \$3.7 billion under the municipal sustainability initiative so municipalities can continue to build strong communities by meeting local infrastructure priorities. Mr. Speaker, that's a \$150 million increase over three years from Budget 2013.

We are investing \$1.4 billion to support other municipal infrastructure, including \$667 million that honours our commitment to the green transit incentives program, also known as GreenTRIP. I'm sure the mayors will be happy.

We are investing \$2.6 billion over three years for building, maintaining, and renovating health care facilities. This allows us to complete the work on health facility projects in Edson, High Prairie, Lethbridge, and Medicine Hat, to name a few, Mr. Speaker.

Our three-year capital plan also includes \$5 billion over the next three years to build, expand, and maintain Alberta's provincial highway network. That's nearly 28,000 kilometres of paved roadway that moves goods to market, gets kids to school, and takes Albertans to work. It also brings tourists and new Albertans to our province.

Mr. Speaker, we are investing \$2.7 billion over the next three years for the Edmonton and Calgary ring roads. We're investing \$735 million over three years to rehabilitate more than 2,500 kilometres of existing provincial highways. That's nearly a 65 per cent increase over last year's capital plan. We are investing \$691 million over three years to finish twinning highway 63 from Grassland to Fort McMurray. We promised Albertans we would enhance their safety on highway 63, and we are keeping that promise.

With \$1.8 billion budgeted over the next three years for school capital projects, we are also keeping the Premier's promise to complete 50 new schools and modernize another 70 facilities. We are investing three-quarters of a billion dollars for postsecondary facilities over the next three years, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, Budget 2014 includes \$4.9 billion in new direct borrowing for capital. We're not hiding it. Alberta's strong economy and our positive economic outlook mean we've got a triple-A credit rating. That's an excellent position to be in, and it means we can access interest rates still close to 50-year lows. Albertans and financial experts alike have told us that borrowing for capital makes good financial sense. What doesn't make sense is spending our savings, which are currently earning over 11 per cent interest, when we are borrowing at less than 4 per cent. It doesn't make sense to wait a couple of years to build a school, for example, when over those two years the building costs will escalate, and Alberta taxpayers would end up paying 10 per cent more than what we would have paid if we'd built today. In the meantime during those two years our families would still have trouble finding new schools for their children.

We will not sit idly by because of some ideology against debt at all costs because, Mr. Speaker, there is always a cost. In the mid-90s the Alberta government didn't invest in capital because of the circumstances of the day. The decision to delay investment in infrastructure may have been the right one for the time. In 1996, for example, interest rates were about 9 per cent, quite a bit higher than they are today, and the province was feeling the pressure of an accumulated debt from previous deficits.

We are living in different times, Mr. Speaker. Consider this: the population of Alberta was 2.6 million in 1994. In 20 years – 20 years – we've added a city larger than Calgary to our province. That's more than a million new people who need access to schools, who drive on our roads, who use our health facilities. Over the last 20 years government has struggled to catch up with our province's infrastructure needs, and today public infrastructure is the number one priority for us and for our municipalities. Our borrowing plan ensures Albertans continue to have the infrastructure they need today and into the future.

A critical part of our borrowing plan is our debt repayment plan. Just as we have economists, we also have experts who are focused on how we borrow, including how we repay our debt. We make sure money comes off the top each year to pay the interest costs on our capital, and we are setting money aside now to repay this debt when it comes due in the future, more than half a billion dollars in this business plan alone, Mr. Speaker.

Our borrowing plan also includes a cap on debt-servicing costs that limits how much we can borrow. Interest paid on debt cannot exceed 3 per cent of our operational revenue. So let me be clear. We are borrowing only for capital projects. We've borrowed zero dollars for operations, and, Mr. Speaker, this is how it will continue to be. I would like to add that our borrowing plan does differentiate us from other provinces. While other provinces borrow to keep the lights on, to deliver services, or to pay off accumulated deficits, Alberta is only borrowing to build the future of our province. This will result in tangible assets Albertans will use and enjoy for decades.

Without borrowing any money for operational spending, Budget 2014 provides \$40.4 billion for government operations. It brings an increase of more than \$1 billion in spending for health, education, postsecondary, and support for vulnerable Albertans. We are investing in healthy families, communities, and seniors. We are increasing the Ministry of Health's operational budget to \$18.3 billion, Mr. Speaker. That's an increase of more than \$600 million.

Budget 2014 provides \$805 million for community programs and other services, including community-based health and wellness programs, tissue and blood services, and enhanced home-care and rehabilitation services. We are investing \$271 million to support primary care networks and family care clinics. We are increasing the Alberta Health Services base operating grant to \$10.7 billion. We're also providing \$393 million per year over the next three years to support new health care capacity at the South Health Campus in Calgary, the Kaye Edmonton clinic, and the Strathcona community hospital.

We know that health care providers are a cornerstone of our health system, and we are providing \$4 billion in 2014-15 for compensation and development programs for the almost 9,200 physicians and 1,500 medical students in our province. We're investing \$1.5 billion in drug and supplemental health benefits for Albertans. This budget provides \$353 million for the Alberta seniors' benefit in 2014-15, an increase of more than 6 per cent from last year.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta has one of the most comprehensive packages of seniors' benefits in the country. Building Alberta

means strengthening programs and services that support children, families, and vulnerable Albertans. Budget 2014 is increasing the operational budget of the Ministry of Human Services by more than 5 per cent from last year. This includes providing \$967 million for programs that encourage independence and community involvement for over 10,000 adults with developmental disabilities. It also supports the families of children with disabilities as well as fetal alcohol spectrum disorder initiatives. This is an increase of almost 6 per cent. We're investing \$703 million in programs that help underemployed and unemployed people find and keep jobs and help eligible Albertans cover their basic cost of living.

Budget 2014 invests \$735 million in child intervention. That's a 6 per cent increase from last year and includes \$199 million for foster care support, funding about 5,000 child placements. We are also investing \$288 million in 2014-15 for child care programs, also an increase of more than 6 per cent.

We're investing 6 and a half billion dollars in our kindergarten to grade 12 education system so that Alberta's kids will continue to have access to leading-edge learning opportunities and so we can continue to strengthen the best education system in Canada, Mr. Speaker.

We are increasing Alberta Education's operating budget to accommodate the booming student enrolments and changing student demographics. This reflects our government's commitment to enhance funding in priority areas like small class sizes, inclusive education, and for school infrastructure.

3:40

Mr. Speaker, Alberta's universities, colleges, and polytechnics are a great source of pride for Alberta. With Budget 2014 we will continue to place a high priority on advanced education, including entrepreneurship and innovation, so more Albertans can find their passion and maximize their potential.

We're improving access for students, using our savings to support scholarships, and helping entrepreneurs and innovators get their ideas off the ground. We are also unfreezing the access to the future fund, which supports innovation and excellence within Alberta's advanced learning system by matching the generous philanthropy of Albertans and world-wide donors.

Postsecondary institutions will receive more than \$2.1 billion in operating grants. With \$50 million from the access to the future fund, postsecondary institutions will receive \$106 million more in operating support in 2014-15 than we projected at this time last year. We recognize the important role that learning and innovation play in our future, and Budget 2014 provides more than \$2.8 billion in 2014-15 for this ministry. That's more than a 5 per cent increase from last year, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it is a priority of this government and this Premier to honour Alberta's communities, ensuring the safety of families and the resiliency of those communities. Last year's flood in southern Alberta tested that resilience, and Albertans were quick to prove that we remain strong when overcoming adversity. We continue to recover from the devastation of the floods, and Budget 2014 provides nearly \$1.1 billion in operational expense and capital spending over the next three years to address flood recovery initiatives. This money is in addition to the \$3.8 billion in spending forecast in 2013-14, which was mostly related to the disaster recovery program. Flood recovery funding in 2014-15 will complete the floodway relocation program, it will provide property tax relief to affected municipalities, it will continue addiction and mental health supports for Albertans affected by the flooding, and it will support the Alberta flood recovery interest rebate program to assist small businesses in affected areas.

Budget 2014 also shows this government's support for safe communities and our commitment to fighting crime. We are investing \$500 million in public security programs, more than 5 per cent more than the 2013 forecast. This includes an increase in funding for the provincial policing contract, providing for 40 new front-line RCMP officers in this fiscal year.

A second pillar under our building Alberta plan is living within our means. Mr. Speaker, this is about restructuring our priorities and spending smarter. We will live within our means by challenging how our government spends, investing wisely, saving for the future, and changing processes where we need to. In Budget 2014 operating expense is increasing by 3.7 per cent. That is less than population plus inflation, which is 5 per cent, but higher than what was in last year's budget.

Budget 2013 was a hold-the-line budget. It focused on fiscal prudence, spending restraint, and getting our own house in order. That meant and still means challenging every dollar we spend. We've been doing that, Mr. Speaker, through the results-based budgeting process, which continues to review every government program and service to ensure relevance, efficiency, and effectiveness.

We will be reviewing how we regulate the financial sector in Alberta. The financial sector is an important part of our economy and of Albertans' lives, and this review will ensure that we continue to be a leader in the regulation of pensions, insurance, and financial institutions.

In Budget 2013 we also bent the line when it comes to spending growth. As I said, in the 10 years prior on average we had increased operating expenses by 7.3 per cent per year, much more than population plus inflation. That kind of growth had become unsustainable, so we reined it in. That's why we have a determination to control wage growth in the public sector. Salaries make up around half of government's operating expense. We implemented management salary freezes and are working towards a 10 per cent reduction in the number of managers.

We reached successful agreements with doctors and teachers, and we're working to secure a wage agreement with government workers, one that's fair to both the employees and to the taxpayers, Mr. Speaker. We want to ensure government offers competitive salaries. We want to continue to attract the best people, but it isn't for government to lead the pack. To protect the defined benefit plans of our workers, a pension promise, we are also making changes to our public-sector pension plans.

We need to ensure the plans are sustainable for the long term. It's become increasingly clear that when it comes to pensions, as the Auditor General has stated, the status quo is not the way to go.

Living within our means also means investing wisely. We know what we need to invest in to be successful in the future: a knowledge-inspired, innovative, and diversified economy; a resilient workforce with the right skills to participate in a dynamic economy; and a sustainable education system that meets the lifelong learning needs of Albertans and the needs of the province. With an eye on our future, Budget 2014 invests approximately one-third of the operational budget in programs and services aimed at securing Alberta's economic future.

Securing our economic future also means saving for our future. With last year's budget we established the first legislated savings plan this government has had in decades. Our plan dictates that we save in good times and in challenging times. Before we do anything with our revenues, we take money off the top, and we put it into savings each and every year.

Our savings plan is for the long term. Alberta's heritage savings trust fund will grow from just over \$15 billion today to over \$17 billion by 2017. As I said earlier, thanks to our approach to

savings and our commitment to controlled spending, Alberta's rainy-day fund, the fund that helped us during the challenge of the flood, the contingency fund, will reach \$5 billion in this year's budget. Overall, Mr. Speaker, our savings will grow to nearly \$24 billion by the end of the fiscal year and to \$26 billion by the end of this fiscal plan.

No one will argue with saving money, but the question we need to answer is: why do we save? It's an important question. Our savings plan involves putting aside a lot of money. It doesn't make sense to simply lock it away under the mattress with no long-term plan. In Budget 2013 we said that we would talk to Albertans about our long-term savings, and over the last year the Alberta government consulted with Albertans in a number of ways, including the two economic summits I mentioned, budget consultations in 11 Alberta communities, the online survey, and conversations with their MLAs. Albertans told us to find a balance between consistently saving for the future and using part of our savings now for strategic, future-oriented investments that would benefit Albertans and the Alberta economy, much as they do in their own homes and their own businesses, Mr. Speaker. We listened, and on Monday we introduced Bill 1, the Savings Management Act.

Under Bill 1 government is building upon its existing innovation infrastructure by committing \$1.4 billion to enhance Alberta's innovative and labour market capacities. The bill creates targeted endowments that won't just grow for Albertans but will work for them. These endowments are designed to foster innovation, strengthen our economy, help solve complex social problems, and position Alberta to capitalize on future strategic opportunities.

We've established two new innovation endowments. The social innovation endowment will bring more capacity to the social service and culture sector to innovate and collaborate when resolving challenging social issues. It will support new ideas, risk-sharing, and creative collaboration with the nonprofit sector. The agriculture and food innovation endowment has been established to promote sustained growth in the agriculture and food processing sector. This endowment will fund key activities such as expanding research grants and promoting value-added product development and commercialization. Agriculture is key to our province, Mr. Speaker.

Bill 1 also enhances the Alberta heritage scholarship fund to better address our major challenge of attaining skilled tradespeople when confronted with a critical labour shortage. The enhancements to the fund will be dedicated to trades-focused education and will help apprentices complete their programs, engage industry, and encourage excellence in the apprenticeship system.

We have also established the new Alberta future fund, which will support strategic investments that provide long-term benefits to Albertans and the Alberta economy. Now, Mr. Speaker, the Alberta future fund honours the legacy of Premier Peter Lougheed, who established the heritage fund in 1976 with three objectives: saving for the future, strengthening and diversifying the economy, and improving the quality of life for all Albertans. Through the heritage fund Premier Lougheed established the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research in 1980, which transformed medical research in this province. Today, nearly a quarter century later, we are following in his footsteps with new heritage-driven endowments.

3:50

Just as we are honouring Premier Lougheed with a 10-year, \$70 million commitment to create the Lougheed leadership institute, we are honouring his spirit with Bill 1, Mr. Speaker.

Success for future generations is also tied to the success of our energy industry. When I talk about the success, I'm not only referring to Alberta but to the entire country. All Canadians benefit from the revenue and the jobs created by Alberta's energy resources.

Our building Alberta plan makes real strides to further open new markets for these resources and other exports. Mr. Speaker, we need to find ways to go beyond our borders, across the ocean, and into new markets in order to get the best prices for Alberta's products. This continues to be job one for this government. Our Premier continues to lead the charge when it comes to opening these doors, whether it's advocating for approval of the Keystone XL pipeline in the U.S., building new opportunities in promising markets like India, or working with other Premiers to develop a Canadian energy strategy that would not just benefit Alberta but all of Canada.

In terms of our energy resources it's also vital that government and industry maintain a balance between economic success and environmental stewardship. We know that they are not mutually exclusive, and we will ensure that sustainable, environmentally responsible development goes hand in hand with the growth of our energy industry.

Budget 2014 allocates about 2 and a half billion per year in operational expense to advance Alberta's world-leading resource stewardship. We're focused on two critical areas: an integrated resource management system and expanded market access for Alberta's products. This funding includes \$59 million this year and a total of \$208 million over three years for Alberta's contribution to the new Alberta Environmental Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting Agency. It also includes \$230 million in 2014-15 for the first full fiscal year of operations for the Alberta Energy Regulator.

Building relationships is also critical to our success in opening new markets for Alberta products. This budget supports these efforts through investments in Alberta's international strategy, funding for agriculture support, and funding to enhance our relationship with and provide economic opportunities for our First Nations and Métis people in our province.

Mr. Speaker, I am excited about the work ahead, and I am very proud to be a part of this government at this time in our history as we present this budget, as we build a stronger Alberta for the future. I can predict with confidence that if we continue down the path we've set, Albertans will have the roads, the schools, and the hospitals they need. If we continue to follow this road around that bend, Alberta's economy will gain even greater rewards from our resources as we expand into new and emerging markets, and if we continue on this path, we will have a diverse economy built on

innovation, one that attracts investment from around the world and provides jobs and other opportunities, exciting opportunities, to all who choose Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, we are committed to moving Alberta into this future. Budget 2014 will drive the next phase of our building Alberta plan with an even sharper focus on expanding our economy, driving innovation, and working every day to create an even better quality of life for Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, we will make sure Alberta has the skilled workforce and the training opportunities to keep growing our economy, and we will build an innovative and diversified economy so we are well positioned for the future.

We will balance the budget by challenging every dollar we spend through the results-based budgeting process. We will continue to have surplus, Mr. Speaker, and we will strengthen front-line health care and drive down wait times by establishing more family care clinics. We will build the next phase of new and expanded schools in our fastest growing communities to keep class sizes low and rebuild in communities affected by floods, including undertaking projects to better protect communities from future flood damage.

Mr. Speaker, we will continue making streets safer and focusing on bullying and crime, and we will open new markets for Alberta's resources and products. With Budget 2014 we're preparing for bigger growth. We're preparing for success. Make no mistake: the government has a plan not just for today, not just for tomorrow but for the next generation or two of Albertans. Our commitment to the future is one of the reasons Albertans chose this government, and it's why more people from across Canada and from around the world are choosing to live here. We are the people's choice.

It's both an honour and a privilege to present Budget 2014 to the Assembly today, and I look forward to supporting this budget in this House. May God bless Alberta. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you very much.

The hon. opposition deputy House leader.

**Mr. Wilson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Campbell:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that the Assembly adjourn until 1:30, March 10, 2014.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 3:56 p.m. to Monday at 1:30 p.m.]



## **Bill Status Report for the 28th Legislature - 2nd Session (2014)**

**Activity to March 06, 2014**

The Bill sponsor's name is in brackets following the Bill title. If it is a money Bill, (\$) will appear between the title and the sponsor's name. Numbers following each Reading refer to Hansard pages where the text of debates is found; dates for each Reading are in brackets following the page numbers. Bills numbered 1 to 199 are Government Bills. Bills numbered 200 or higher are Private Members' Public Bills. Bills numbered with a "Pr" prefix are Private Bills.

\*An asterisk beside a Bill number indicates an amendment was passed to that Bill; the Committee line shows the precise date of the amendment.

The date a Bill comes into force is indicated in square brackets after the date of Royal Assent. If a Bill comes into force "on proclamation," "with exceptions," or "on various dates," please contact Legislative Counsel, Alberta Justice, for details at (780) 427-2217. The chapter number assigned to the Bill is entered immediately following the date the Bill comes into force. SA indicates Statutes of Alberta; this is followed by the year in which it is included in the statutes, and its chapter number. Please note, Private Bills are not assigned chapter numbers until the conclusion of the Fall Sitings.

- 1 Savings Management Act (\$) (Redford)**  
First Reading -- 4 (Mar. 3, 2014 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 47-50 (Mar. 4, 2014 eve.), 84-85 (Mar. 5, 2014 aft., adjourned)
- 2 Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2014 (\$) (Horner)**  
First Reading -- (Mar. 5, 2014 aft., passed)
- 3 Securities Amendment Act, 2014 (Horner)**  
First Reading -- 62 (Mar. 5, 2014 aft., passed)
- 4 Estate Administration Act (Kubinec)**  
First Reading -- 62-63 (Mar. 5, 2014 aft., passed)
- 201 Agricultural Pests (Fusarium Head Blight) Amendment Act, 2014 ()**  
First Reading -- 63 (Mar. 5, 2014 aft., passed)
- 202 Independent Budget Officer Act (Forsyth)**  
First Reading -- 63 (Mar. 5, 2014 aft., passed)



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