



Province of Alberta

The 28th Legislature  
Third Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday, November 19, 2014

Issue 3

The Honourable Gene Zwozdesky, Speaker

# Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 28th Legislature

Third 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

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Amery, Moe, Calgary-East (PC)  
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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)  
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DeLong, Alana, Calgary-Bow (PC)  
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Donovan, Ian, Little Bow (W)  
Dorward, Hon. David C., Edmonton-Gold Bar (PC)  
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Rodney, Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC)  
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Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)  
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)  
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)  
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Woo-Paw, Hon. Teresa, Calgary-Northern Hills (PC)  
Xiao, David H., Edmonton-McClung (PC)  
Young, Steve, Edmonton-Riverview (PC)

## Party standings:

Progressive Conservative: 61      Wildrose: 16      Alberta Liberal: 5      New Democrat: 4      Independent: 1

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Hehr	Rogers
Horne	Rowe
Kennedy-Glans	Sarich
Lemke	Stier
Luan	

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Amery	Lukaszuk
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## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, November 19, 2014

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Good afternoon.

Let us pray. Holy and Great Creator, guide us in our discussions, our deliberations, and in our actions that they might exemplify what a democratic system looks like in its finest hour. Amen.

Please be seated.

### Introduction of Visitors

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

**Dr. Starke:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Parenthetically, I'd like to complain about the e-mail distribution centre that had only me getting the "wear native full costume" e-mail today. But thanks anyway.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I'm very, very pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly some of my guests. I'll start with the guests that are seated in the Speaker's gallery, but if you wish, I can go on to those that are also seated in the – we'll go with the Speaker's gallery first.

Mr. Speaker, it's my very great pleasure today to introduce, here to support my statement on the 25th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, the honorary consul for the Federal Republic of Germany from the Calgary office, Herr Hubertus Liebrecht, and his son Alexander. I ask that they rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Thank you. Others will be introduced shortly.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Let us begin now with school groups, starting with the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On your behalf I would like to introduce to you and through you 48 students from Julia Kiniski elementary school, located in your constituency of Edmonton-Mill Creek. They are accompanied by their teachers, Mr. Dale Mandryk and Ms Suzi Vladimirov, and parent helpers Mr. Doug Herbert, Mrs. Melissa Poppe, and Mrs. Cindy Dunphy. They are sitting in the members' gallery. I ask that they please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Associate Minister of Aboriginal Relations.

**Mr. Dorward:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two school groups to introduce. The first one is from St. James Catholic elementary school. There are about 35 visitors here, I believe in both galleries. Amongst the teaching assistants and also the teachers and parents are Mr. Robert Harris, Mrs. Sheila Janki, Mr. Raymond Bradshaw, and Ms Jacqueline Fabian. I wonder if those students and visitors from St. James could stand up and receive a welcome from the Assembly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In addition – I appreciate that, doing two – from St. Gabriel school, a school that is about four blocks away from my home, we have Mr. Guy Knight and Miss Louise

Kermath with 19 St. Gabriel school students as well. I wonder if they could stand and receive the welcome of the Assembly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Are there other school groups?

If not, let us revert to Introduction of Visitors.

### Introduction of Visitors

(continued)

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

**Mr. Dallas:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Jim McPherson. Jim was elected as an MLA for the constituency of Red Deer in 1982, which was the last election in which Red Deer was represented by a single MLA. Jim jokes that it now takes two of us to keep up with the work that he was doing. Jim continues to be a champion for our community and in 2012 was named the city of Red Deer citizen of the year. A chartered life underwriter, chartered financial consultant, and chartered financial planner, Jim is here today with the group from Advocis, meeting with members of this Assembly. Jim has obviously risen. Please provide the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

### Introduction of Guests

(continued)

**The Speaker:** Let us move on. I guess we're back to Vermilion-Lloydminster for the continuation of your guests.

**Dr. Starke :** Yes. Well, thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you several members of Alberta's German community who have joined us here today to provide support to my member's statement on the fall of the Berlin Wall. You'll notice they did get the memo, so this is just great. I'd like to first of all introduce Oswald Serlach, the prince, and Joan Armstrong, the princess, of the Mardi Gras Carnival festival put on by the Blauen Funken. I'd also like to introduce Ole Berger, the president of the Blauen Funken, and a long-time member of the Blauen Funken, Harald Bodenberger, who was born in the city of Berlin.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, it's my very great pleasure to introduce Karl Weidle, the president of the Victoria Soccer Club, 1st DFC, a long-time dominant club in club soccer, and I think Mr. Weidle has been president of that club for over 25 years; a good friend to many in the Assembly, Arnim Joop, the publisher of the *Albertaner*, the German-language newspaper; Arnim is behind me – excellent – and Karl as well; and other members of the German community that I'll ask to rise as I say their names: Horst Fleischhauer, Sylvia Kiel, Marvin Schaaf, Reiss Kruger, Elaine Monk, Wolfgang Haupt, Nadja Kunze, and Madeleine Streich.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all members join me in giving them the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly my guests Soraya Zaki Hafez and Maria Syed from the Canadian Council of Muslim Women. The CCMW is a national organization started 32 years ago in Edmonton by the late

Dr. Lila Fahlman. She travelled across Canada to promote the idea of empowering Canadian Muslim women and giving them the tools to be active members of Canadian society.

Sitting with my guests from the CCMW is Ms Zarqa Nawaz, who was the producer and director of the CBC series *Little Mosque on the Prairie*. She's recently released a book entitled *Laughing All the Way to the Mosque*.

I would like to ask my guests to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Associate Minister of Aboriginal Relations.

**Mr. Dorward:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm blessed in the constituency of Edmonton-Gold Bar to have Metro college's English as a second language program very close to my constituency office. I wanted to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly a group of students from Metro college accompanied by their instructor and teacher, Cheryl Thomas, who is always very engaged in the community with these students. I believe they're seated in both galleries, and I would like to have those students and Cheryl Thomas stand up and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly, please.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

**Mrs. Sarich:** Thank you, 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 three guests here in recognition of the flags of remembrance initiative, developed and hosted by Veterans Voices of Canada. On October 25, 2014, Veterans Voices of Canada provided Albertans with an opportunity to pay tribute and recognize the strength and sacrifice of Canadian armed forces men and women. One hundred and sixteen Canadian flags were displayed along highway 11 east of Sylvan Lake, and each one represented over 1,000 Canadian soldiers.

**1:40**

With pride I would like to ask my guests, who are seated in the members' gallery, to please rise and remain standing as I mention their names: Mr. Allan Cameron, founding CEO and president, Veterans Voices of Canada; my military hero, who I sponsored for the flags of remembrance, Warrant Officer (Retired) John Hofman, Canadian Army regular force and Canadian Army reserve force; Mrs. Josephine Hofman, married to Warrant Officer (Retired) John Hofman for 39 years. Heartfelt thanks and best wishes to these outstanding Albertans. Lest we forget. I would now ask the Assembly to please join me in providing the traditional warm welcome.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

### Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

### Provincial Fiscal Policies

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am an Albertan, and I am proud of it. I am proud that we routinely lead the nation in economic growth, I am proud that we as a people volunteer more time and donate more dollars to charity than any other province in Canada, and I am proud that we have the lowest tax regime in the entire country. We have no sales tax, no payroll tax, no capital tax, and no health premiums. That is indeed something to be proud of.

It puts us a cut above the rest of the country and indeed most of the world in economic freedom and opportunity.

The funny thing, Mr. Speaker, is that despite this wonderfully low tax environment Alberta collects more tax revenue from its citizens on a per capita basis than any other province in Canada, and there's a reason for this. Low taxes drive economic growth and job creation, which, in turn, leads to more people paying taxes.

I want to reiterate what the Wildrose has always stood by, that our low tax environment is our single greatest competitive edge and that it must be preserved at all costs. However, once again it appears that that competitive edge is under threat. With oil diving towards \$70 a barrel, there's all kinds of speculation that our new Premier is in the market for more money. It seems there is a belief that if the government only had more money to spend, everything would be all right.

Now, the Premier wasn't around for this, but his government couldn't pay for everything it did when oil was at \$100 a barrel without going into debt. I think he needs to consider that perhaps more revenue isn't the answer. Mr. Speaker, it's time for us to ditch the tax talk and start living within our considerable means. That means not reflexively spending every dollar that we happen to come into possession of, that means setting annual spending limits and prioritizing those funds accordingly, and it means identifying areas of wasteful spending and eliminating them. That's the Wildrose plan, and it's the plan that's right for Alberta.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, followed by Vermilion-Lloydminster.

### Energy Industry

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the U.S. Senate rejected the approval of the Keystone XL pipeline. Though there will be inevitably another vote on the matter, with a new Republican majority in the Senate, early next year, such a bill is likely to be vetoed by President Obama.

The government is clearly disappointed in this development, but it provides an opportunity to rethink the policy of exporting unprocessed bitumen and consider adopting a value-added strategy for our resources. We need to refine and upgrade products right here in Alberta instead of shipping raw resources and the jobs that go with them down pipelines to Texas. Pipelines and extraction produce relatively few good, long-term jobs. Upgrading and refining, by contrast, produce lots of high-paying and permanent jobs. A recent feasibility study concluded that upgrading bitumen in Alberta could increase the province's GDP by \$6 billion a year and create 18,000 new jobs.

Peter Lougheed challenged Albertans to think like owners. That means not only adding value but ensuring that we receive a fair share of royalties for the resources which we all own together. Under Lougheed Alberta set a goal of receiving 30 per cent of the value of the resources in royalties and taxes and sometimes exceeded that. The PC government is currently collecting 9 per cent, which is less than under the Social Credit government.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, since the days of Ralph Klein we have been warning that unless Alberta took its environmental obligations seriously, it would become increasingly difficult to find markets for our energy products. If this government is serious about improving Alberta's access to markets, Alberta needs environmental strategies that are more than just press releases and trips to Washington. Words need to be followed by real actions.

Like Premier Lougheed, New Democrats stand for adding value, making sure we get our fair share, and high standards of environmental stewardship.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster, followed by Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

#### Fall of the Berlin Wall 25th Anniversary

**Dr. Starke:** [Remarks in German] Most honoured Mr. Speaker of the Assembly, 10 days ago, on the 9th of November, the entire world marked one of the most important and unforgettable events in our world history, the destruction of the Berlin Wall.

To the world the wall was the most obvious symbol of the tension between East and West during the Cold War, but for Germans and people of German ancestry it meant even more for the wall was a false border, a chasm that cruelly divided friends and families. Through high-risk escape attempts thousands managed to reach freedom in the West. About 200 lost their lives in the attempt.

For 28 years the wall stood, abhorred and mute testimony of the oppression of eastern Europe. For this reason, the whole world celebrated the destruction of the wall but nowhere more so than in Berlin.

Thousands of Germans, including my parents in the '50s, emigrated to Alberta. They sought freedom, peace, and freedom from fear and found it here. Many Albertans of German heritage have made significant contributions to our province: Horst Schmid, Reinhard Mühlendorf, and former Premiers William Aberhart and Ralph Klein. Widely known as people who promote a love of life and friendliness, we celebrate festivals like Carnival and Oktoberfest, and we are especially proud and prominent when we cheer on the German team during their frequent successes at the World Cup of soccer.

Mr. Speaker, the fall of the Berlin Wall was a genuine triumph not just for Germans but for the collective world humanity. It is a great honour for me to deliver this statement fully in German. To you and to my colleagues for their forbearance, I say a heartfelt thank you. [As submitted]

**The Speaker:** [Remarks in German] Thank you sincerely, and welcome, everyone. [As submitted]

Thank you for providing the English translation, which will appear in *Hansard* so that everyone can grasp the full gravity of that comment.

We'll move on to the hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park, followed by Lethbridge-West.

**Mr. Quest:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I recognized at least six of those words.

#### Value-added Energy Industries

**Mr. Quest:** It's an honour to rise and recognize today Alberta's Industrial Heartland. Alberta has been blessed with an abundance of natural resources, attracting global investors.

In 2013 the energy sector accounted for 74 per cent of Alberta's exports, producing nearly a quarter of the province's GDP. This translates into over \$82 billion for Alberta. The royalties we earn from the energy sector, of course, support the many programs and services that we enjoy here in Alberta and contribute greatly to the overall high quality of life that we enjoy.

The petrochemical and refining sector is a major component of Alberta's economy and our second-largest export product.

Exporting products that are further up the value chain offers Albertans improved resource royalties, a larger tax base, increased skilled jobs, and a better proportion of higher value product exports.

Despite this, crude oil currently makes up 62 per cent of our province's energy exports. In order to maximize the value from our natural resources, it's essential that we produce value-added exports, and this is best achieved through the use of integrated hydrocarbon processing clusters. Comprised of interconnected businesses, suppliers, and institutions, a processing cluster provides improved synergies, reduced capital and operation costs, and a stable labour force over the long term.

Alberta has been a real model for implementing successful value-added policies that make sense, from Peter Lougheed's original programs to the recent incremental ethane extraction program, that has resulted in over \$3.5 billion in new investment in our province. These developments fuel a strong and diversified economy. Developments like the North West upgrader will help maximize the value of Alberta's bitumen resources by a range of cleaner, high-value products such as ultra-low-sulphur diesel and diluents.

We do face stiff competition in a very competitive market from all over the globe. Mr. Speaker, we just need to be aware and make sure that we continue to support in our policies value-added industry in Alberta.

1:50

#### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** First main set of questions. The Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

#### Provincial Fiscal Policies

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, yesterday I began the Premier's first question period by asking him the first question I asked Premier Redford. Unfortunately for Albertans, the new management is no better on fiscal matters than the old management. Let's see if the Premier has a clearer answer now that he's had a night to think about it. To the Premier: how will his government get out of the budget hole caused by oil heading down to \$70 a barrel? Will we see more debt, more taxes, or both?

**Mr. Prentice:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I listened to the hon. member's statement applauding the fiscal and competitive position of Alberta and the incredible achievements in terms of our tax advantages and competitive advantages, and I agree with her entirely. So I certainly assure her that in the week ahead she will see a fiscal update from the Minister of Finance which maintains that tradition, and I hope that she will be equally enthusiastic in supporting the ongoing work of this government.

**Ms Smith:** Well, Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Premier also made the point that Albertans have overall low taxes, but the implication seems to be that he has room to increase them. That's troubling. Since he's giving Albertans all sorts of mixed signals on this, I think some clarity is in order. Does the Premier believe his government has a spending problem that requires more discipline or a revenue problem that requires more taxes?

**Mr. Prentice:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the only confusion on this matter, I think, is from the side opposite. Albertans are already the lowest-taxed citizens in this country. As the hon. member said herself in her opening statement, this is a subject of enormous pride to all of us as Albertans. Our low taxes put us at an incredible competitive advantage. We'll continue to invest, as we

have promised, in the priorities of Albertans – that includes health, it includes taking care of senior citizens, and it includes the construction of new schools – but we will maintain our low tax advantage and no sales tax in this province.

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, clarity does not seem to be the Premier's strong suit. Albertans are proud of the tax structure we have in Alberta. Here in Alberta a dollar is a dollar and is taxed like a dollar and at a reasonable 10 per cent single rate of tax. It is one of the ways in which Alberta leads. It is, in fact, what has resulted in allowing us to have more per capita revenue from personal income tax than any other province. Here is an easy question for the Premier. Will he commit right here, right now that his government will keep the 10 per cent single rate for personal income tax?

**Mr. Prentice:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the government's fiscal update will be delivered next week. The government's commitment relative to this fiscal year is very clear, and the government is on target in terms of achieving the fiscal expectations that have been put forward to Albertans. Albertans, as I say, expect prudence. They expect discipline. They expect spending discipline from their government. Every single Albertan understands that we are in a low-price environment for oil, \$75 per barrel or thereabouts. They expect discipline from their government in these circumstances, and they will see that.

**The Speaker:** Second main set of questions. Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition leader.

**Ms Smith:** I guess we'll try to get a clearer answer tomorrow, Mr. Speaker.

#### School Modular Construction in Calgary-Elbow

**Ms Smith:** Yesterday I asked the Premier about progress as well. You see, he declared that Albertans should judge his government on the progress it made. He also declared that Albertans should judge his government on integrity. Last month the Education minister used his position to fast-track modular schools in the constituency that he was seeking a seat in. Even his campaign manager admitted it was done to win the seat. Does the Premier think that this is an act worthy of his high standards of integrity?

**Mr. Prentice:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the member is simply wrong in her assertions. The minister has been responding to the needs of Albertans in the clearest of terms. He has been listening to Albertans. He was listening to individuals in a number of constituencies relative to the need for modular schools and other school construction in communities that need them. The hon. member should simply look to the response from stakeholders across this province about the progress that has been made in terms of listening by this minister.

**Ms Smith:** Yesterday, Mr. Speaker, the Education minister was hardly forthcoming on how that decision was made. He dutifully stuck to his talking points, no doubt provided to him by the Premier's office, when he was asked tough questions. But Albertans deserve more than canned answers. They deserve the truth. To the Education minister: how did he decide that modulars for a school in the constituency where he was seeking a seat was a higher priority than the six other projects ahead of it on the priority list?

**Mr. Dirks:** Mr. Speaker, we are responding to the interests and the concerns of parents. One of the member's colleagues sitting

behind her wrote me a letter in the middle of the election campaign asking for support for modulars to be approved in his particular riding for the particular school that he was concerned about. It was for the same reason that modulars were approved for that school. When parents had a desperate need, they were approved for the school that the member opposite mentioned and every other school that we've approved modulars for.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Hon. leader, final supplemental.

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, I was asking about the constituency of Calgary-Elbow, and I don't think I got an answer to that question.

In the throne speech we were told that the role of government is to serve Albertans honourably, respectfully, and ethically. I think Albertans will be hard-pressed to view the Education minister's actions with regard to these particular modulars as honourable, respectful, and ethical. The Premier said that Albertans should judge his government by the integrity it has shown. To the Premier: is this the kind of government he's going to run, where projects only get built when there are elections to be won?

**Mr. Dirks:** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is simply wrong. We are responding to what parents are saying are priorities for their children. The member opposite's colleague wrote this particular letter and in the letter said, "I am writing to request information and action to address the . . . badly needed portables in this province." That's exactly what the parents in Calgary were asking for, the members of Rocky View were asking for, the parents across the province have been asking for, and that's exactly what we have been responding to.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition for her third and final set of questions.

**Ms Smith:** That's another question we'll have to go back to again tomorrow, Mr. Speaker.

#### Landowner Property Rights Legislation

**Ms Smith:** Yesterday we saw that Bill 1, which was supposed to be a landmark bill, is really just a half-hearted attempt to placate landowners that doesn't get to the real issues of legal recourse and compensation. Bill 19, the Land Assembly Project Area Act, is a bad law. It should go. But I'm a little perplexed because the Premier has claimed that nobody understands this issue better than he does, having spoken with so many Albertans during the summer about it. My question is a simple one: Did Albertans really tell the Premier that getting rid of just one bad law was enough to protect property rights in this province?

**Mr. Prentice:** Well, Mr. Speaker, firstly, speaking of listening to Albertans, I think that letter should be tabled in front of the Legislature.

But let's deal with property rights, Mr. Speaker. I certainly do not want the hon. member opposite to be perplexed, so I certainly hope that they will find their way clear to support Bill 1. If they do so, it will be the end of the land assembly act, which in their own assertions has been an overreaching piece of legislation that is tantamount to de facto expropriation. It's for that reason that Bill 1 has been brought forward, Mr. Speaker.

**Ms Smith:** The Premier said yesterday that Albertans need not worry about full, fair, and timely compensation when the government takes their property because such matters are regulated by



the Alberta Expropriation Act and the Surface Rights Act. Is the Premier aware that his government has passed several laws such as the Land Stewardship Act that override the compensation provisions of these two laws and that that is precisely why property rights need more protection in this province?

**Mr. Prentice:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the most extreme circumstances in which a landowner can be deprived of their property rights is, in fact, the land assembly act, which is a resuscitation of provisions which were taken out of the Department of the Environment Act many years ago, quite properly so, that amounted to constructive expropriation or de facto expropriation. It's for that reason that the land assembly act is being removed.

In terms of the Land Stewardship Act it actually confers rights upon a landowner which are supplementary to the rights that a landowner has under the Expropriation Act, and I would not have repealed it on that basis.

**Ms Smith:** Well, Mr. Speaker, that's certainly not how landowners see it, and I'm sure they'll be telling the Premier so.

I asked the Premier to demonstrate his sincerity on this issue by supporting the motion of the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka which would entrench property rights in the Constitution and guarantee full, fair, and timely compensation. As I pointed out yesterday, this motion is on the Order Paper. Surely by now the Premier has had time to read it. Will he support it?

**Mr. Prentice:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'll certainly speak to that motion when it is put forward in the House and we have an opportunity to examine it and examine all of the specific recommendations that have been made relative to the Expropriation Act and to the Constitution.

2:00

**The Speaker:** The hon. leader of the Liberal opposition.

### Menthol Cigarettes

**Dr. Sherman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta Medical Association now supports including menthol in the ban on flavoured tobacco. The Health minister says that they're entitled to their opinion. Well, their opinion is also shared by the World Health Organization, the Canadian Medical Association, the Heart and Stroke Foundation, the Canadian Cancer Society, Action on Smoking and Health, and even this Assembly, which approved Bill 206 in the first place. To the Premier: whom do you agree with, these expert organizations or your novice Minister of Health, who refuses to include menthol in the ban?

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

**Mr. Mandel:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have two priorities when it comes to tobacco: first of all, protecting children – and we've done that by eliminating a variety of smoking in cars, sizes of packages, various flavoured tobaccos – as well as making sure that we align ourselves with the rest of the country.

Thank you.

**Dr. Sherman:** I guess they want to lead by following again, Mr. Speaker.

If the opinion of experts wasn't enough, I question why this supposedly new management team is also ignoring the advice of its own Health ministry, Alberta Health Services, chief medical officer of health as well as the former Health minister and the associate minister of wellness, all of whom recommended a

complete ban on all flavoured tobacco, including menthol cigarettes. The minister is still looking for a second opinion, apparently. To the Health minister: the facts are in. Who else do you need to consult?

**Mr. Mandel:** Mr. Speaker, when we reviewed these particular regulations, we looked at the possibility of banning a variety of other products. The fact of the matter is that tobacco is a legal product, people do have the right to use menthol, and we believe public rights do prevail on this issue.

**Dr. Sherman:** And the majority of the old management team actually voted to ban it.

Mr. Speaker, they say that birds of a feather flock together. The Health minister's former campaign manager and his former chief of staff, who's now the Premier's principal secretary, both have close ties to tobacco lobbyists, yet the minister claims that he's never met them. Clearly, health policy is being set by lobbyists and not health experts. To the Minister of Health: whom is the Minister of Health working for, our children or big tobacco?

**Mr. Mandel:** Mr. Speaker, we're working for children.

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

### School Modular Construction in Calgary-Elbow (continued)

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. When we rose last spring, this government over there had a problem with integrity, so much so that we have a bill coming forward to deal with it. But that bill will not address a problem that arises from the spectre of an Education minister who queue-jumps for political reasons on a decisions around modulars. My question is to the Premier. Does the Premier understand that by his failure to deal with his Education minister's conduct during the by-elections, his caucus's integrity problem is now his integrity problem?

**Mr. Dirks:** I fundamentally disagree with the member opposite. The concern of Albertans is that we respond to the needs of parents in our fast-growing communities and in particular in areas of our cities. Whether it's Calgary, whether it's Westgate school, whether it's William Reid school, whether it's in Rocky View at East Lake school, all of these communities need additional modulars to respond to growing enrolment pressures. That's exactly what parents want the Education minister to respond to, and that's exactly what we've done, Mr. Speaker.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, Manitoba and Saskatchewan both have election laws that would prohibit the kind of government spending that went on during the by-elections, that was done by your Education minister. My question to the Premier is: to regain integrity and trust with Alberta voters, will he commit to amending our elections law so that this can't ever happen again, and if he won't commit to it, why won't he?

**Mr. Prentice:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I can certainly understand why with the member opposite the by-elections are a sore topic.

Moving forward, Mr. Speaker, we've been very clear in terms of ethics and ethical accountability. I've indicated that we will be bringing forward ethics legislation in this House that will deal with accountability, entitlements, and will make very specific provisions relative to the matters that people have been concerned about in this province.

**The Speaker:** Final supplemental.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question is to the Minister of Education. He talks about receiving letters from families around the province. Well, the fact of the matter is that families around the province have been writing to this government over and over and over about how they don't have modulars and portables where they need them, yet only Calgary-Elbow received the by-election bonus. So why will you not explain to this Assembly how you made that decision? Alberta voters deserve to hear the explanation.

**Mr. Dirks:** Well, Mr. Speaker, for the second time I have to say that the member opposite is entirely wrong. Portables have been approved for a number of schools in Calgary – William Reid, Westgate – and Rocky View. Across the province we have been responding to the growing enrolment pressures and the capital needs that parents expect us to respond to. Ensuring that we have a quality education system is on the top of the marquee of our priorities for this government, and we're going to continue to respond as Albertans would wish us to.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Those are the first five main questions. I'd appreciate your cooperation to please curtail any preambles to supplementals from here on in so we can get more members up with their important questions.

Let's start with Calgary-Shaw, followed by Calgary-North West.

#### Municipal Charter Framework Agreement

**Mr. Wilson:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government has taken cities on a roller coaster ride over the past few years. They've had four – four – ministers of Municipal Affairs in the past year alone, and they've signed not one but two MOUs promising to deliver a big-city charter. Now, the second MOU does offer a bit more clarity, specifically around revenue sources, stating, "A key element going forward will be consideration of the adequacy and form of current revenue streams." To the Premier: everyone knows a revenue stream is simply a code for a tax, so what new revenue streams are being considered?

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

**Mrs. McQueen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise on this. We're very happy to have very early, within 21 days, in our mandate with our new Premier and under new management signed a charter framework with both Edmonton and Calgary that, I have to say, they are very happy about. This brings us to be able to move forward with the charter and into three different phases. I'm sure we'll have another question, and I'll be able to explain those phases for the hon. member.

**Mr. Wilson:** And I look forward to hearing the talking points that the Premier's office provided her.

The most recent MOU also states that this relationship will ensure that the cities are provided with new and/or enhanced economic tools: more code for taxes. Can the Premier clarify what this means if it isn't referring to more taxes for Albertans?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Mrs. McQueen:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The two big-city mayors have really been very happy to see us signing this city framework. Phase 1 will address matters specific to the two cities and Municipal Affairs by the spring of 2015. In phase 2 we will address matters between the two cities, Municipal Affairs,

and any other GOA ministry that we want to chat about with them. Then and only then phase 3 will address the development of a new fiscal framework for the two cities by 2016.

**The Speaker:** Final supplemental.

**Mr. Wilson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're all adults here. Mr. Premier, can you just stand up and tell this House one way or the other: will the new city charter framework, that you proudly claim to have signed with our cities, involve new taxation powers for Calgary and Edmonton?

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

**Mrs. McQueen:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I said, we have three different phases. You won't know what that will look like until we've actually gone through the consultation, the respectful consultation we'll have with our two big-city mayors on the phases that they've talked about, phases 1 and 2, making sure that they have the chance to talk crossministerially, and then, finally, as they brought forward these phases in order, which those two big cities did, we'll look at revenue or fiscal framework, but not until then.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### School Construction

**Ms Jansen:** Mr. Speaker, I was so excited to hear about news of a middle school that was going to be built in the community of Royal Oak in Calgary-North West. I often actually drive by that site and say: I can't wait. But I do wait and wait. I'm wondering if I can pose this question to the Minister of Infrastructure. How much longer am I and the people who live in Calgary-North West going to have to wait for that middle school?

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

**Mr. Bhullar:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Upon becoming the Minister of Infrastructure, I was actually quite surprised to learn that the first year to year and a half of the time that it takes to construct a school is actually doing things like design work and permitting. Those are things that I choose to change. We want to close the time frame. We want to get that work done sooner, but we need work and consultation with our school board partners, with our municipalities. I don't think it's acceptable to have five-, six-, eight-month delays for building permits, and we're going to work to address this issue.

2:10

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

**Ms Jansen:** Mr. Speaker, I'm just wondering if the minister can help me a little bit with the math. First of all, how many schools were promised, and how many bums are in seats right now?

**Mr. Bhullar:** Mr. Speaker, of the 35 schools that were promised in 2011, 31 of those students occupy today. Of the four remaining schools one of them had issues with respect to the Calgary flood, two of them had site problems and environmental challenges that had to be rectified, and the last one is a school being used by two jurisdictions and one college, and therefore they required more time to work on . . .

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

**Ms Jansen:** Finally, Mr. Speaker, to the same minister. I'm just wondering, and I think that the people of Calgary-North West

would like to know this: at what stage are we in the development of the schools? Considering the schools like mine, we still have empty plots of land. Have the designs been done? Are the bulldozers ready? Where are we?

**Mr. Bhullar:** Mr. Speaker, the fact remains that at present, of our 230 school projects, as I said, 31 of them are complete. Of phase 2 we have 11 schools that are under construction today, 78 in the planning stage, 52 undergoing the design work, and 56 that have gone out to tender. So we still expect that these schools in phase 2 will be complete by 2016. For some of the high schools it takes six to eight months longer to construct, so in 2017 they will be done.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner, followed by Banff-Cochrane.

### Small-business Regulations

**Mr. Bikman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The most common request we receive in our constituency offices is for help navigating the halls of bureaucracy, whether it's AHS, with its eight layers of management, or finding someone willing and able to provide clear, honest answers to a request about the prioritized status of a promised project. The government completed a study on reducing regulations and red tape, but we've seen little positive action. Will the minister please advise us when we may expect this to improve?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister – which minister are you going toward, please?

**Mr. Bikman:** Whoever is supposed to be doing this. Probably nobody.

**Mr. Mandel:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question. The province is very dynamic in delivering its services. As a result of that, buildings are built, they're renovated, they're changed, and it takes time to put programs in place. As a result of that, I can't give the hon. member any specifics about what's happening in his particular area, but we are trying as of now to reduce the red tape in Alberta Health Services so that we can deal with the people of his constituency and all the other ones in this province.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.  
First supplemental.

**Mr. Bikman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The absence of someone responsible for doing this is an answer itself, isn't it?

Given that it's been nearly three years since the report came out, can someone advise us on just how many fewer regulations we now have, remembering to include all the ones that have been added since the report was written?

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, it is customary to direct your question to a specific person although any front-bencher can answer.

**Mr. Bikman:** Well, it would be nice to know who.

**The Speaker:** Is there someone who wishes to answer? The Premier, please.

**Mr. Prentice:** Certainly. The hon. member may have missed this, but in fact there was a very important announcement made about five weeks, six weeks ago relative to the small-business strategy

by the minister of innovation and myself that dealt quite specifically with red tape, the reduction of red tape, introducing a new portal that would allow small businesses in this province to deal with exactly the problem that the hon. member is raising, which is accessing readily government information, avoiding red tape, and getting quickly to the bottom line, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Bikman:** I read and received that, Mr. Speaker, and thought it was good news, but I have some questions about it. Given that if just half of the unnecessary and redundant rules were torched, I suspect we'd have a three-alarm fire, does anyone over there have a goal and a timeline for meaningful, substantive reductions in regulations and red tape, and if so, where can we find the list of the rules and regulations that are headed for the shredder?

**Mr. Scott:** Thank you for the question. I think you need to get your facts right. We are in fact working with Albertans to make sure that they have the best access to information. The small-business strategy was a perfect example of that. Any Albertan can go and within three clicks get the information they need. That's why Alberta is such a great place to run a small business. That's the kind of work that we on this side of the House are doing, and we are going to continue to do it.

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

### Calgary Area Flood Mitigation

**Mr. Casey:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Three flood mitigation projects are currently under consideration by our government to protect the city of Calgary from flooding in the future. The status of these projects is of particular importance to the residents of Banff-Cochrane, particularly Bragg Creek, who suffered the devastating effects of the 2013 flooding of the Elbow River. To the Minister of Environment and Sustainable Resource Development: is it your department's intention to proceed with the Springbank room for the river project on a priority basis, and if so, what was the rationale?

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Minister of Environment and Sustainable Resource Development.

**Mr. Fawcett:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I thank the hon. member for that question. We are moving on the Springbank room for the river project after 17 months of consideration of different projects. We are moving under the leadership of this Premier on this project because at this point in time it is the most actionable project that we have looked at over the last 17 months to provide the necessary and sufficient protection for Calgary communities from flooding.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Casey:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: why was the McLean Creek project not given priority as it would have mitigated the flood risk of Bragg Creek and Redwood Meadows as well as the city of Calgary?

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

**Mr. Fawcett:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. That's a very good question. While we continue to do a more in-depth review of the environmental implications of that project, preliminary indications have shown us that there are significant environmental

challenges with that project, which would really increase the timeline it would take to actually implement that project. Our Premier was very clear. He wanted us to move to protect the communities of Calgary, and that's what we're doing.

**The Speaker:** Final supplemental.

**Mr. Casey:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: if McLean Creek does not proceed, then what is the long-term plan to protect Bragg Creek and Redwood Meadows?

**Mr. Fawcett:** Well, Mr. Speaker, again a very good question. Our flood mitigation strategy has multiple layers of protection for communities, one of which is that we're working with Rocky View county to follow up on recommendations made by AMEC, who was the consultant that worked on that watershed, to build about \$6 million worth of dykes and berms in that community. We've provided them a grant of \$880,000 to do that, and we will be providing the money for those projects, when that study is complete, through the Alberta community resiliency program.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, followed by Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

### Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction

**Ms Blakeman:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. The government has for years given the excuse that they can't do anything more to reduce greenhouse gas emissions because it would make Alberta less competitive with the U.S., and putting out a media release today reannouncing a program that's been in place since 2009 is a perfect example. Well, now both U.S. and China have signed a joint agreement to curb and reduce carbon emissions, so the ball is in our court. To the environment minister: has this joint agreement made any difference in the specifics or timelines for Alberta reducing greenhouse gas emissions, anything at all?

**Mr. Prentice:** Mr. Speaker, the matter of greenhouse gas emissions reduction is important to all of us. It's certainly important to a province such as ours which is in the energy business and which produced in excess of 2.6 million barrels of oil per day over the course of this year. So we need to be careful that we balance protecting the environment, on the one hand, with our economy, on the other. Certainly, the government is very focused on environmental action, on being a leader with respect to these issues. We are reviewing the agreement that's been reached between the Americans and the Chinese with interest, and at this point the timelines and the goals and objectives are clear but not the specifics.

2:20

**Ms Blakeman:** Okay. Well, back to either the Premier or the environment minister. I mean, given that this government loves to talk about instituting the first carbon levy, but first isn't best anymore, and given that talk about a 40 per cent or \$40 plan went the way of the sky palace and given that the government has already said that there will be no movement on intensity of emissions or the levy, is there anything new for climate change under this new management, under this new Premier?

**Mr. Prentice:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I would certainly encourage the hon. member opposite to take more pride in the policies that we have in Alberta. She refers to the first carbon levy. In fact, the architecture of the industrial emitters policy that we have in the

province of Alberta has been emulated in the province of British Columbia with respect to their carbon policies for their new LNG projects. It's also being followed in Saskatchewan. In fact, if you talk to Americans, they are looking at the specific architecture that we have in our province as a model.

**Ms Blakeman:** Yeah, but BC's is actually a carbon tax, and everyone pays it. We're not looking very good on that side.

So back to the Premier or the environment minister: I mean, really, does this government, this minister not understand that Alberta's lack of success in finding access to markets for our oil is a direct result of their inaction on climate change and reducing greenhouse gas emissions? It has an effect.

**Mr. Prentice:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is quite correct. I'm not talking about a consumer carbon tax; that's the province of that particular party. I'll let them deal with that. From my perspective I am speaking about industrial carbon levies. The carbon levy that we assess in Alberta has become the model for the LNG policy that's being followed by the government of British Columbia and also the government of Saskatchewan. So in terms of large industrial emitters Alberta has been leading the way for many years. The policies that we've put in place are being adhered to and followed across North America.

### Gay-straight Alliances in Schools

**Mr. Bilous:** Mr. Speaker, this week is National Bullying Awareness Week, and there's much talk about creating safe spaces. It's time for action. Gay-straight alliances, or GSAs, are student-driven, school-based groups that promote welcoming, caring, respectful, safe, and inclusive learning environments for sexual and gender minority students and their allies. To the Minister of Education: will you commit to ensuring that students who wish to form a GSA in their school will not be prevented by schools or their administrators?

**Mr. Prentice:** Mr. Speaker, we are deeply committed to, certainly, the safe, respectable learning environments in our schooling system. There is no room for intolerance in our education system. The hon. member is obviously referring to the private member's bill that will be brought forward by the Member for Edmonton-Centre. We look forward to seeing that bill. I fully support gay-straight alliances in our schools. We are also respectful and mindful of the particular constitutional jurisdiction of school boards in this province.

**Mr. Bilous:** Mr. Speaker, given that generic antibullying clubs don't go far enough to protect LGBTQ students and ensure that schools are safe spaces and given that there are schools in Alberta that have codes of conduct which discriminate against students based on their sexual orientation and which do not allow students to form GSAs, will the minister stop school boards from having a no-GSA policy?

**Mr. Prentice:** Mr. Speaker, we certainly look forward to reviewing the bill that has been put forward by the Member for Edmonton-Centre. I understand it's on the Order Paper. Clearly, there is no room for intolerance in our education system. The Minister of Education himself has been extremely clear about this. We advocate, we support, and we will fight for at every corner respectful, safe learning environments in our schools.

**The Speaker:** Final supplemental.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that students in schools without GSAs are more likely to report low grades, drink alcohol or use drugs, become victims of violence, or seriously consider suicide and given that the evidence proves that GSAs increase self-esteem, school attendance, mental health, and literally save lives, will the minister commit to supporting GSAs in every school where students want them? Yes or no?

**Mr. Prentice:** Mr. Speaker, in the clearest of terms, we will commit to safe, dignified, and respectful educational institutions, and that is to ensure that we have no room for intolerance in our school systems, including bullying towards gay and lesbian children. We are fully supportive of gay-straight alliances in our schools, we are mindful of the complexities of this, and we look forward to seeing the specific bill that is put forward by the Member for Edmonton-Centre.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Little Bow, followed by Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

#### Feeder Association Loan Guarantee Program

**Mr. Donovan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On October 28 the Premier released his rural economic development action plan changes to the feeder association loan guarantee program, which will double the maximum individual loan limit to \$1 million per feeder. With the increased operating costs this will help with greater capital, but the government has failed to increase the total amount of the guarantee program. Can the minister of agriculture please explain why they have not increased the total loan amount guaranteed?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister of agriculture.

**Mr. Olson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the hon. member for the question. This feeder association program has a great and grand history in Alberta. It's over 77 years old. It was born in the depths of the Depression, when people needed some help to buy cattle. It has lasted for a long time and has been very successful and very effective in helping our beef producers. It has adapted from time to time, and that's something that we were trying to do when we made the announcement regarding the rural economic development action plan to double up on the individual loan limits.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Donovan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that over 77 years the ratio has been only .01 per cent for loss versus loan and given that these are not handouts or guarantees, why did the government not increase the total amount of the loan guarantee to help out? Otherwise, we're just cutting into half the people that can get it.

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

**Mr. Olson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would challenge the hon. member. It is, in fact, a guarantee. I spent 30 years as a lawyer counselling people about guarantees. A guarantee is not something that's just symbolic and without legal effect. The person who gives the guarantee, in this case the government of Alberta, is on the hook even though it's not writing the cheque at that time. Being fiscally conservative, we're being very careful about taking on additional obligations like that. This program has been very successful, and it has adapted as it's gone along. We're not at this time ready to increase the guarantee.

**Mr. Donovan:** Mr. Speaker, given that the throne speech talked about putting money back in rural Alberta and helping agriculture, I'd really hoped that through some process the President of Treasury Board could increase the guarantee through an order in council. We've seen it happen before. I don't see where the problem would be. Will the Minister of Finance commit to at least an urgent review of this as the end of the year is coming up and this is when most of the cattle sales are?

**Mr. Olson:** Mr. Speaker, we are constantly reviewing this. As a matter of fact, the changes that were announced just several weeks ago are the result of consultations with the feeder association. They told us that they wanted more flexibility in their program, and that's what we've provided them. I would also mention that financial institutions who would actually provide the loans to the feeder association have it within their power to also increase their flexibility. We've taken a step in that direction, and we'd certainly like to see financial institutions consider it, but we are continuing in our discussions and our review of this program.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, followed by Calgary-Fish Creek.

#### Maternal Health Services

**Mr. Allen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we're all aware, Alberta's population is growing significantly. My constituency of Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo has certainly experienced that growth at an amplified rate. On average we are now seeing approximately 150 to 160 babies born every month in our single hospital. Recently the MaternityCare Consumers of Alberta Network released a report which outlined several major concerns based on the experiences of more than 1,200 individuals that were surveyed. Given these concerns my question is to the Minister of Health. Given the significant population growth has your ministry measured that impact on the births in our province?

**Mr. Mandel:** Mr. Speaker, first of all, the population of Alberta is growing in an incredibly rapid way, and for babies it's no different. In 2013 we had 53,000 births in the province of Alberta versus 10 years before when we had just barely 40,000. Birth rates in Fort McMurray and Northern Lights have doubled over the last year, and it's making a big difference in the community up there. We need as a province to develop province-wide programs that deal with maternal-infant health plans that are focusing on ensuring that our mothers and their infants are taken care of in an effective way. We will be doing that.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

**Mr. Allen:** To the same minister: what is the government doing to accommodate that growth in terms of recruiting doctors and hospital capacity?

2:30

**Mr. Mandel:** Mr. Speaker, we are doing that. We're improving the number with a 33 per cent increase in midwives through the rural physician action plan. We're encouraging doctors to get out in the rural areas and encouraging them to participate in programs in northern Alberta. We even had last May midwives start off in La Crête and High Level, so they have their own services now for midwifery. We're trying everything we can.

**The Speaker:** Final supplemental.

**Mr. Allen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. That leads to my final supplemental. To the same minister: can we actually make more use of midwives; for example, by using community-based birthing centres?

**Mr. Mandel:** Yes, we can, and I think we need to do everything possible in all areas of the province to make sure that we use all the birthing opportunities we can have with midwives and other opportunities.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek, followed by Calgary-Currie.

### Hospital Occupancy Rates

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The CEO of AHS is on record saying that the best that Albertans can expect are hospitals that are 98 per cent full. The Health Quality Council says that it should never be more than 85 per cent to protect patient safety. To the Minister of Health. This is a serious discrepancy. Continually running hospitals so dangerously close to capacity puts patients, staff, and the entire health care system at risk. What further actions are you going to take to reduce hospital occupancy to levels deemed safe by the Health Quality Council?

**Mr. Mandel:** Mr. Speaker, several weeks ago the province of Alberta put in place a program to free up 750 acute-care beds in co-operation with the Minister of Seniors by beginning to build 1,500 new long-term care and continuing care beds. We've also found 446 beds within the system that we can move our acute-care people into. This will open up opportunities within our system to have a greater degree of opportunity for beds for our acute-care needs.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Thank you, Speaker. Minister, given that ambulances are regularly being told to stay away from the Rockyview hospital in Calgary due to lack of beds even after your so-called emergency measures were implemented, will the minister acknowledge that his plan is not working, and when will you do something to immediately alleviate the severe overcrowding of hospitals across this province?

**Mr. Mandel:** Mr. Speaker, the program we are putting in place with freeing up the 750 beds will begin to do that. We're looking right now at the acute-care beds and the way we can move patients from emergency rooms into the hospitals. We're looking at a variety of different options. I think that as time progresses, we'll begin to put in place transition beds, which are one way to free up some of the emergency space so that people can get into the hospitals.

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Minister, we're weeks away from the peak of a flu season and the pressure it brings, and already the Rockyview is full. The eight beds opened last month are already full. It's at 110 per cent capacity. Patients are being placed in the hallways, patients are being placed in patient lounges, and they're being placed wherever you can stack them. Soon we'll be bringing bunk beds in. Minister, do you understand that overcapacity puts huge pressure on our dedicated health care professionals? What are you going to do to fix it now?

**Mr. Mandel:** Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would encourage everybody to get a flu shot. Second of all, we're looking at a variety of ways to invest in hospitals. This is a problem that's been in

existence for quite a while. It will not be fixed overnight. We need to work with hospitals like Rockyview and all over the province to increase the number of acute-care beds. We'll be doing that with our plan as we move forward.

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

### Westgate School Modular Construction

**Ms Cusanelli:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently this government has responded to overcrowding issues that impact Calgary-Currie. Westgate elementary is to receive eight moduls as students await an alternate site for its Spanish bilingual program. While this is reassuring to know, that this government has committed to investing in new schools and modernizations, some Westgate parents are also concerned that rather than mitigate a current problem, moduls are destined to become a long-term solution. To the Minister of Education: what can you tell the parents of Westgate about the rationale for these eight portables when their worry is that this is simply a Band-Aid solution to a rapidly . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

**Mr. Dirks:** I thank the member behind me for the question. Westgate is really a great success story in Calgary. Wonderful programs, bilingual programs there. Growing enrolments, unprecedented growth in that school and across Alberta, ballooning school enrolments. We have had no option but to respond to those, and in consultation with the school board we did provide them with facilities through portables that would respond to those particular needs. We leave it up to the school board to determine best how to use those.

**Ms Cusanelli:** Again to the same minister: given the transitional nature of moduls as solutions to enrolment pressures, what is the expectation of Westgate moduls once the new site for the Spanish bilingual program is available? Will they remain at Westgate, thereby not alleviating the principal issue of schools in my constituency being over capacity?

**Mr. Dirks:** I thank the member for the supplemental question. As I indicated, at the Calgary board of education's request we provided these eight moduls for students at Westgate. It's important for students not to be relocated multiple times over a four-year period, and that's why the portables were provided. That being said, it's up to the school board to decide the makeup and the programming at Westgate school. Just how many modular classrooms will remain there at some point in the future remains for the school board to decide. We trust them to make the decision that's in the best interests of those children.

**Ms Cusanelli:** Lastly, to the Minister of Education: would you be open to decreasing the utilization rate to a lower figure in order to indicate high areas of enrolment sooner?

**Mr. Dirks:** I thank the member for the question. I'm pleased to say, Mr. Speaker, that work is actively under way to implement a new approach to determining the utilization rate in our schools. This is an important matter for parents and school boards. The new formula focuses on usable space, takes into account nontraditional and emerging school designs. The formula was approved late last year, and since then school jurisdictions' education staff have been working together to examine the smaller scale plans of every school and recalculate their capacities. Work

should be completed by January. We'll have more accurate, reliable data that we can use for capital planning then.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka, followed by Lesser Slave Lake.

#### Water for Life Program in Central Alberta

**Mr. Fox:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans are telling us that this government is failing to meet the water needs of our growing municipalities. For example, the water for life program was established to manage our province's water resources to benefit all Albertans, but due to this government's inability to prioritize the waste-water portion of this program, it has fallen behind in central Alberta. To the Minister of Transportation: what is this government going to do to ensure that the water for life program in central Alberta is brought back on schedule?

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

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government is committed to ensuring that all Albertans have access to clean water and reliable drinking water. Budget 2014 allocates a total of \$75 million contributing to water for life projects in Alberta, but that budget is way oversubscribed. There are always more requests than there is money.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Fox:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Albertans are telling us that the government has failed to advance many of these turnkey regional transmission and treatment projects, when will this government start to take seriously the immense growth pressures in central Alberta and work to advance the water for life projects like the central Alberta regional waste-water commission north leg?

**Mr. Drysdale:** Well, Mr. Speaker, you know, as I said, there are many valuable projects across this province for water and waste-water projects. Right now an AAMD and C convention is going on and meeting with some 20 municipalities. Lots of those municipalities have requests for water, sewer systems. We've granted a couple of new water lines here in the last few weeks, and we'll continue to look at the priorities and balance the requests with the number of dollars we have in our budget.

**The Speaker:** Final supplemental.

**Mr. Fox:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans in the constituency of Lacombe-Ponoka want to know what other solutions the province can offer now because they are facing issues now. Noting that in most of these areas the preliminary upgrades have already been completed based on your government's promise, when is the government going to fulfill its commitment to this waste-water project?

2:40

**Mr. Drysdale:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I have met several times with the leaders in the municipalities from Lacombe-Ponoka, and I very much support their efforts in getting that done, but, as I've said, we have limited dollars. There's a balance between the number of dollars and the projects we have. That's a very important project. I'm very hopeful that we'll be able to divert some of the building Canada fund money to the waste-water and

the water for life projects, and if we're successful in doing that, we'll be able to complete some of these projects.

#### Statement by the Speaker

##### Supplementary Questions

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. members. That concludes Oral Question Period.

We'll move on with Members' Statements in a moment, but just two advisories. One, could you please ensure that your supplemental questions are in fact properly phrased questions from the standpoint of being sequitur questions. Yesterday some members wrote to me asking about whether or not some of the sups offered during question period were non sequitur. I ask you all to just bear that in mind. I know you all know that. Also, please curtail the preambles to supplementals. We left several people who had questions today on the altar. They didn't get a chance to get up. That would speed things up as well.

Thank you very much.

#### Members' Statements

(continued)

**The Speaker:** Let's go on to Lethbridge-West, followed by Drumheller-Stettler, for private members' statements.

#### University of Lethbridge Achievements Medicine Hat Regional Hospital Anniversary

**Mr. Weadick:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. When I was studying at the University of Lethbridge some 40 years ago, I honestly could never have imagined that this brand new school would someday be ranked amongst the top three institutions of its size in all of Canada, let alone three years in a row.

I rise today to recognize the passion and effort of the faculty and staff at the U of L who work so hard to create one of the top university experiences in this country. This has been proven time and again, most recently by *Maclean's* magazine, where the U of L achieved a first-place ranking in terms of average size and number of peer-adjudicated research grants. Basically, this means students have unprecedented access to leading faculty members and their research programs. The U of L is also ranked fourth of 19 primarily undergraduate universities in all of Canada. Mr. Speaker, I would ask that we recognize and honour the achievements of everyone involved in these milestone achievements by the University of Lethbridge.

Another milestone in southern Alberta recently is the 125th anniversary of the Medicine Hat regional hospital, and it's my honour to thank the dedicated staff and health professionals who have provided exceptional care and comfort to Albertans from Medicine Hat and surrounding areas throughout the decades. Today a new chapter is being written as the hospital undergoes a major \$220 million redevelopment and expansion project. This redevelopment will provide people in Medicine Hat with improved access to specialized care; emergency, surgical, outpatient, maternal/newborn services; and a six-storey addition to the hospital that will add 23,000 square metres. Mr. Speaker, this is the size of three CFL football fields. This expansion of Medicine Hat regional hospital is one of the many major health capital projects under way in our province as the Alberta government continues to invest wisely in health infrastructure to meet the needs of Albertans today and in the future.

On behalf of all Albertans and in the Alberta spirit congratulations to the staff and health professionals at the Medicine Hat regional hospital and everyone in the community who has played a part in the hospital's past and bright future.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, just before we go to Drumheller-Stettler, we have a request for unanimous consent to revert briefly to Introduction of Guests.

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Introduction of Guests (continued)

**The Speaker:** Hon. President of Treasury Board, would you proceed, please.

**Mr. Campbell:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the House members of Advocis, the Financial Advisors Association of Canada. For more than 100 years Advocis members have delivered financial security and peace of mind through high ethical and professional standards. Small-business professional financial advisers are critical to Alberta's economy as this industry represents \$2.4 billion in annual GDP and supports 22,000 jobs. Advocis is hosting a reception for members this evening at the Royal Glenora Club, and I hope you will be able to attend. On behalf of all members of the Legislative Assembly I would ask the members of Advocis to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

### Members' Statements (continued)

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Drumheller-Stettler, for co-operating with that brief intro. Now let's hear your private member's statement.

#### Canadian Election Observation Mission to Ukraine

**Mr. Strankman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak about democracy and the promotion of Alberta's democratic values abroad. This past October my legislative assistant volunteered and was chosen as a long-term elections observer with the Canadian election observation mission in Ukraine for the early parliamentary elections in that country. He spent five weeks there to observe Ukraine's move towards a true democracy after years of corrupt governance by a thug, who fled to Russia when his people decided that they had had enough.

Former Wildrose candidate Paul Nemetchek and Drumheller mayor Terry Yemen also joined the observation mission. With our large Ukrainian-Canadian population here in Alberta, including you, Mr. Speaker, we should all be grateful to the government of Canada for funding a Canadian observation mission to Ukraine. Our brave Canadian observers were the only observation mission to deploy to the Ukrainian oblasts, close to the conflict area, where the Russian military has invaded parts of eastern Ukraine with the aid of separatist terrorist extremists.

Unlike the stolen election Canadians observed in 2012, the Canadian election observation mission's main conclusions found that the democratic will of the people was reflected in these 2014

results in accordance with the laws of Ukraine and international laws and standards.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the people of Ukraine and the new people's rada for a free, open, and transparent election. May Ukraine continue down its path to freedom. Slava Ukraini.

**The Speaker:** The response would be Herojam Slava. Thank you.

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Transportation, followed by Calgary-Mountain View.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to table the required number of copies of the government's response to the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future report on the feasibility of high-speed rail in Alberta.

Thank you.

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

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have 10 tablings today in relation to menthol and tobacco. This government has said that they want to serve children, but 39,000 children between the ages of grade 6 and grade 12 are already hooked on tobacco.

The first tabling is Flavoured Tobacco Use among Canadian Youth, evidence from the 2012-13 youth survey. It denotes that 35 per cent of grades 9 to 12 kids that smoke use menthol. But that's just one opinion, Mr. Speaker.

The second tabling has to do with a strategic brief, A Comprehensive Tobacco Flavour Additive Ban Is Needed to Prevent and Reduce Youth Tobacco Use, produced by Alberta Health Services. You may have heard of them. It was dated November 15, 2012, and recommends a comprehensive tobacco flavour additive ban. But that's just another opinion, Mr. Speaker.

Third is the President's Letter from the Alberta Medical Association dated November 18, 2014. Dr. Johnston expresses his disappointment since the AMA strongly supports the inclusion of menthol as a banned substance and it was not included. Another opinion, Mr. Speaker.

Next, the Canadian Medical Association policy on tobacco control, updated 2008. The policy says that the government "should exercise its legislative power to regulate the content of tobacco products," including banning flavouring such as menthol. Again, just another opinion, Mr. Speaker.

Number 5, Partial Guidelines for Implementation of Articles 9 and 10 of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, stating that from the perspective of public health there's no justification for permitting such ingredients as flavouring agents, including menthol. Again, just another opinion, Mr. Speaker.

Number 6 is an editorial here in the *Edmonton Journal* dated November 15, 2014. Ms Simons calls the minister's decision "illogical and hypocritical." She continues to say that we need to educate youth on "how Big Tobacco specifically uses menthol to entrap teens and minorities." One more opinion, Mr. Speaker.

The seventh has to do with copies of an article from the *Edmonton Sun* where "Alberta touts legislation to ban flavoured smokes" but the minister states that "the legislation is about public health, not money." Just another opinion on what this act is all about.

Number 8, copies of Smoke-Free Alberta's web page on tobacco flavourings. This is a coalition including the Canadian Cancer Society, the Alberta public coalition on cancer prevention, the Lung Association, the Heart and Stroke Foundation, the Alberta



Public Health Association, and Action on Smoking and Health. They recommend a ban on all flavourings, including menthol. Another opinion, Mr. Speaker.

2:50

Number 9, copies of a news release from the Campaign for a Smoke-Free Alberta dated October 20, 2014. In it Angeline Webb with the Canadian Cancer Society states that exempting menthol from the ban will leave thousands of children without protection. Another opinion, Mr. Speaker.

Number 10 is copies of Alberta Registered Lobbyists – Tobacco/Smoking, dated March 2014. Here is a list of 26 individuals, including Hal Danchilla, a friend of the minister, lobbying to keep the status quo on tobacco regulations. Finally, an opinion the minister agrees with.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Are there others? Hon. Minister of Education, you have something quickly? Okay. Go ahead.

**Mr. Dirks:** Mr. Speaker, earlier today in question period I mentioned a letter that I had received during the month of October from a member of the Assembly referencing the need for urgent action by the government on portables in our schools. I'd like to table five copies of that letter.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday in question period I mentioned 11,605 signatures that were gained online and in person in about a month in Cypress-Medicine Hat over concern that a medical laboratory that has been servicing us very, very well for approximately 50 years is being closed by the government with no business plan and no proper testing procedures in place that will actually serve the citizens of Medicine Hat better. Eleven thousand signatures in about a month.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there others? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today. The first is five copies of the manifest that I referenced yesterday during my point of order. All the other references are already part of the public record.

The second tabling is a copy of an e-mail from one of my constituents to the then Minister of Health raising the point that vaccinations for hepatitis A and hepatitis B are not covered if you are on a barriers to employment program. He makes the point that the most vulnerable and the most likely to be on those programs are people that are incarcerated or recently released from incarceration and that they would be making the choice between paying for a vaccination or paying for food, and he asked the government to work together to try and relieve that problem.

Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** Are there others?

If not, I have one tabling myself. If you'll permit me, I'd like to table five copies of the Child and Youth Advocate annual report 2013-14 in accordance with section 21(2) of the Child and Youth Advocate Act.

Thank you.

We have no points of order today, and we're still reviewing the point of privilege, so we will move on.

## Orders of the Day

### Consideration of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor's Speech

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

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

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

[Debate adjourned November 18: Mr. Bikman speaking]

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner, you have six minutes left in your speaking time.

**Mr. Bikman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was speaking, when the time expired, about reasonable restrictions on property and mentioned some examples. For example, I mentioned that you can't build your house too close to your neighbour's or the sidewalk or have view-obstructing fences or trees on a corner lot and so on. Maybe the style is restricted by the community or neighbourhood association, but these rules are in place. If changes are contemplated, you have a right to a say or to the courts for redress or appeal.

But what if the government said that you could no longer access water or sewer lines in your home? Would that affect your use and enjoyment? No showers or hot tubs, no toilets: what would happen to the value of what for most of us is our largest investment? Do you think you could find a buyer if he knew he could never use the bathroom? You'd hope that you could get the courts to straighten this out, wouldn't you?

Imagine how you'd feel if you found out that your provincial government, the one that had been looking after you for over 40 years, unbelievably passed a law that said that you no longer had the right to go to court. Would you be upset? Would you hire a lawyer to look into this for you? Would you be calling your MLA, like my friend Sharon Unger did, to ask: what's up? Would you be calling the media to say, "Hey, this isn't fair or ethical or honourable; you need to make this a headline event"?

Well, urban dwellers, there are laws like this that have been passed in recent years. That they haven't affected you yet and may not any time soon does not mean that you should ignore them. Property right laws aren't just relevant to farmers and ranchers. Mrs. Unger isn't a farmer. She just happened to live outside of a town. These laws are affecting the folks who raise the beef you eat as steaks, roasts, and hamburgers or grow the grains and vegetables used to make your salads, your breads and rolls, and even some of the beverages you drink. These people and some who work in the city and live in the country risk having the value of their property decline and in some cases become unsalable. When they've gone to the courts for redress, they've been told: "You don't have a right to legal correction of this problem. Your provincial government has written clauses into legislation that prevent you from getting any relief." You thought you lived in a free country, where rule of law protected you. Well, it used to throughout history until bills like 19, 24, 36, 50, and 2 were passed by the government you voted for or didn't vote for.

To his credit, our new Premier has promised action to correct this unjust, unconscionable action. With fanfare the Premier

introduced Bill 1 to an eager, informed group of thousands of Albertans, but all it does is repeal Bill 19, the Land Assembly Project Area Act. It's a bill that hadn't even ever been proclaimed. This isn't enough. It's a start, and we appreciate it, but there's lots of work left to do. Through you, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Premier for this important first step.

We want to help the Premier. We believe he's serious and self-aware enough to realize help and good solutions are available from other sources like the Wildrose Official Opposition. When we spoke Monday, he told me that he knew his party didn't have a monopoly on good ideas. That's humility, and that's encouraging. Bill 1 is a beginning. Passing and implementing Motion 501 is the next step in entrenching Alberta property rights into the Constitution through section 43 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

We have one or two more ideas we'd like to share with the new Premier. They'll help him be the man of honour and integrity all Albertans want him to be, a pleasant change in that position, and that we're sure he intends being. Motion 501 will put flesh on the skeleton of Bill 1 and make it a living, enduring correction and protection. It will make this and all future governments respect private property, and when that property is needed for the greater good, the Albertans affected will have to be fairly and justly compensated for any action that impacts their use and enjoyment or reduces its value and their ability to sell it.

Welcome to Wild Rose Country, Mr. Premier. We're all MLAs, and we really are here to help you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

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

Seeing none, let's move on to the hon. leader of the ND opposition.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to respond to the Speech from the Throne. You know, Monday's Speech from the Throne was the first throne speech of a new Premier, a Premier who has been put in place by his political party, not by the people of this province. The Premier is in his position as a result of an internal leadership process and as a result of the selection of the people of Calgary-Foothills, and for that I congratulate him. However, that in and of itself does not create the authority to completely abandon a very clear change in direction that had been committed to Albertans by this PC government.

In the last election Albertans voted for a platform that focused on increased funding for education, increased access to postsecondary education, a commitment to eliminating child poverty, and improved access to public health care through 140 family care clinics. Frankly, Mr. Speaker, what they voted for was a government that promised to invest in public services, to build schools, and not to be the things that they scared Albertans with about the Wildrose Party. But thus far it's clear that this Premier is pursuing a direction that is an absolute repudiation of the vision put forward by his own party in the last election. In fact, it appears to me so far that he's kind of trying to be the Wildrose – you know, more power to him – but that's not what they ran on.

3:00

Nonetheless, Mr. Speaker, this was and is the Premier's first throne speech, and one might have expected the Premier to have put forward a more clear and innovative vision. What we got instead was legalese with a less than compelling dose of bureaucratese sprinkled with lots of verbiage that clearly lacked definitions and timelines and a plan. There was no vision. There was no true plan to implement the promises that the PCs have put

forward in the past. Rather, we've been given an agenda that, in my mind, is mostly about trying to undo the many, many, many mistakes that this government made over the course of the last two and a half years.

Really, in my view, Alberta is not actually looking for new management; I think that Alberta is looking for new leadership, completely new leadership. New leadership would answer the questions that I heard repeatedly throughout my leadership campaign this summer. We travelled the province from Fort McMurray to Red Deer to southern Alberta to the Peace Country and everywhere in between. Albertans told me that they're frustrated with being told by their government to expect less. Albertans are hard working and optimistic. They understand that they live in a province that has been blessed with natural resource wealth and a beautiful natural environment, but they don't understand why their government can't convert that to a stable, equitable, successful way of life for all citizens. They don't understand why more and more of them have less, why they struggle so much to pay their bills, why this province is falling behind in our health care, our education, and our care for vulnerable Albertans.

Albertans are young, Mr. Speaker, they're diverse, and they have incredible hope and potential. But by failing to deliver affordable and accessible postsecondary education, by letting the size of our kids' classrooms balloon, by allowing too many kids to go to school hungry, by standing by and watching as they commute for far too long to and from their schools, by underfunding schools to the point where school fees start to look like school tuition, this government is letting Albertans down. In the last election they promised a 2 per cent increase every year for education as a bare minimum, which would have gone a long way to solving some of the problems I've just outlined. However, they didn't come through with that. Albertans just don't understand why we would not want to invest more in our schools to improve the educational opportunities for young Albertans.

The other thing that's going on, of course, is that Alberta families are concerned about what happens as they age. Their parents are aging, and they're also planning for their own retirement, and they're also worried about their future and their ability to secure affordable long-term care for themselves and their loved ones. Now, in the last election the PCs promised 5,000 more spaces in continuing care. We don't argue with the need for more spaces for seniors; we do think that they should be publicly funded, publicly delivered. They should be affordable. But we also believe that continuing care is not the right answer, that, in fact, we need to be talking about long-term care or nursing care or nursing homes because long-term care is the difference between being asked to pay for health care out of your pocket, as you would with continuing care, versus enjoying the benefits of our much-treasured system of medicare.

Not too long ago, Mr. Speaker, I spoke with a paramedic who told me about attending a resident in a continuing care facility. He assured the staffperson that there was no immediate need to take the patient to the ER but said that every few hours the patient's vitals should be monitored. He was shocked to be told about how that would require roughly \$40 per assessment of the monitoring. That's the difference between long-term care and continuing care, my friends, and as more and more Albertans learn about that difference, they become increasingly suspicious of a government that intentionally maintains a strategy of misleading Albertans about what their plan is for seniors care going forward. But now not only is this government failing to deliver on public long-term care; they're only delivering on half of the spaces that they promised in the last election.

The long-term care that we do have is also in crisis, and the government is failing to fund that properly. A couple of months ago I met with constituents who were worried about the care that her mother and his wife received. They described being called to a publicly administered long-term care facility repeatedly in the middle of the night because there weren't enough staff there to keep their mother safe. They talked about the staff telling them how there's a tremendous increase in the number of fall injuries in long-term care after a certain time of day because the number of staff on shift goes down.

They said that the only way they could be sure that their mother or their wife would be safe would be if they hired somebody themselves to come in and watch over them during the night. A very helpful caregiver pointed them to several other families and said: "See that person there? That person isn't paid by us; that person is paid by the family. See that person over there? That person is not paid by us; they're paid by the family." They're paid privately to come into publicly run long-term care because we no longer fund that to provide the service that is necessary to keep aging Albertans safe and secure and healthy in the way we all expect. This is what our Conservative government is doing to our health care system.

While Alberta's economy has continued to thrive, Albertans themselves are falling behind. There is a rapidly growing level of inequality in our province. We've heard just recently about a troubling increase in the number of Alberta families who are relying on food banks, and indeed the rate of food bank usage is growing faster in Alberta than in any other part of the country. On top of that, we hear about a shortage of affordable housing, and we hear about how in homeless shelters in Calgary almost half the people are actually working full time but can't find a place to live. Then again, we also know statistically that almost half a million Albertans are paid a wage that prevents them from earning a living wage as defined by people who look at the bare minimum that people require to put a roof over their heads, to raise their kids, and to feed them healthy food.

This is what's happening in our province, and this is not a vision that Albertans are telling me that they understand given the prosperity that we have in this province. Rather, this is a picture of a government that is failing, failing in a repeated number of areas.

We have a government, of course, that got elected by talking about a plan to eliminate child poverty in five years. Yesterday the Premier kind of acknowledged that his throne speech failed to deal with that issue at all and said: well, we're talking about indigenous Albertans, so we're kind of dealing with poverty. Well, that's kind of true, but it's really not. The fact of the matter is that a comprehensive antipoverty program, one on which this government engaged many Albertans across the province over the last two or three years, has many elements to it, many components, and none of those components will be addressed through the paltry reference to the issue that was included in the throne speech by our new Premier. So what it says to me is that they have abandoned that fundamental and very symbolic promise and commitment that they made to Albertans and their families in the last election.

These broken promises on health care and on education and on equality are not the kind of future and don't provide for the kind of opportunity that Albertans anticipate and expect in a province as wealthy as ours. Instead, what we saw in the throne speech was warnings about how what we needed to do was to be ready to sacrifice some more and to compromise some more and to pull back our expectations some more because, heaven forbid, you know, we're not actually a province that has the greatest nonrenewable resource wealth of pretty much any jurisdiction in

the world. We're not, apparently. Instead, we are a province that needs to tamp down our expectations and ensure that we don't have any great hopes for the ability of our kids or our kids' kids to enjoy true equality of opportunity in the future.

And why is that? Why is it that we have a new Premier who is quietly warning us that we should temper our expectations and that we shouldn't expect all Albertans to take part in our prosperity? Well, the reason for that is that we are sacrificing these ideas of ensuring that everybody shares in our prosperity. We are sacrificing these things for the value of pursuing low taxes for the very wealthy and for multinational oil companies in our province. That's what it comes down to. It is a choice. Every day this government makes a choice. Do they ask Albertans to pay their fair share based on the level of wealth they enjoy, or do we cut back on education, cut back on health care, reduce people's expectations so that we can be sure that the very, very wealthy pay the lowest, lowest taxes? That's a choice, and this government is clearly making the latter choice. But I would argue that most Albertans don't agree with that choice anymore. They have a much more innovative, hopeful view of the way our province can go forward.

### 3:10

What do Albertans want, and what should we be seeing? Well, Albertans deserve better than more broken promises because, at the end of the day, it's not just about the, quote, unquote, province doing well. It's about kids, about seniors, about families, and about communities, about them doing well. Albertans believe in opportunity, innovation, diversity, and optimism, and that's what they want their government to focus on, too. They want their children to grow up in a province where they're given a chance to attend university or pursue a trade regardless of who their parents are and how much they earn. Albertans want opportunities for good, permanent, well-paid jobs, and they know that the government has a role to play in both of those objectives.

An NDP government would pursue a value-added strategy to ensure that our resources are upgraded more here in the province because we know that that's how you build long-term, sustainable employment opportunities for Albertans going forward. We want to work towards increasing the amount of upgrading that happens in this province because we know that that would go a long way to ensuring the future prosperity of this province.

Albertans are also innovative and hard-working people, and they believe in tackling challenges head-on with new strategies and new ways of thinking. We're forward looking. We're hopeful about the future. That's who we are, and that's why an NDP government in Alberta would embrace innovative technologies and new ways of doing things, because we know that there is a huge untapped potential for clean jobs and renewable energy in this province. But we know that we also need a government that prioritizes it.

We're not that far, Mr. Speaker, from being able to move away from the dirty, outdated fuels of the past, and we know that we need to do it. An Alberta NDP government would stop lagging behind the rest of the country, and instead we would genuinely lead the country in those kinds of strategies by taking real action as opposed to simply putting out press releases with descriptions of vague action or, in more cases than not, inaction.

The other thing we know, Mr. Speaker, about our province is that the values of many Albertans are moving well beyond the values that are held and reflected in this House by many of the conservative members of this Assembly. In particular, Albertans support diversity and inclusion, and Albertans are frustrated and losing patience with a government and an Official Opposition

which appear unwilling to take the steps that are necessary to truly embrace people from all communities and all minority groups, including and especially Albertans who are members of sexual minority groups. It is time for us to move into, dare I say it, the 21st century. Well, let's try the 20th because, really, many of us were there in the 20th.

But even if we go with the 21st, it's time for the rest of the folks here to join us and to take real action to ensure that we genuinely protect the rights of these Albertans in every public institution that we can, which includes every school in the province which receives public dollars from this Assembly. No school should be allowed to prevent those initiatives.

Thank you.

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

Under 29(2)(a)? There have been no take-ups.

We'll go to Calgary-Buffalo next and then to Medicine Hat. Carry on, please, Calgary-Buffalo.

**Mr. Hehr:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to respond to the throne speech, and I'd like to start by congratulating the hon. Premier and the new members – the Minister of Health, the Minister of Education, and the Member for Calgary-West – on their by-election victories. I will note that I was particularly moved by the Member for Calgary-West's maiden speech, shall we say, which noted public service and commitment to a sense of community and a sense of building Alberta. It was an excellent job and one that I was very moved by.

But if we look at the throne speech, there's no doubt that we are, I guess, being told that we are under new management, yet the same problems exist here in Alberta for this government and, actually, for a population that existed under the old management. These problems have not magically gone away or disappeared or been made less important than they were under the leadership of our former Premier and the like.

If we look at the throne speech, it seems to concentrate on five different areas: focused commitment to sound, conservative fiscal principles; ending entitlements and restoring public trust; maximizing the value of our natural resources; respecting property rights; establishing our province as an environmental leader; and increasing Albertans' quality of life by being a leader in the areas of health, education, seniors' care, and skills training.

That and, I guess, \$1.86 gets you a cup of coffee at Tim Hortons, because throne speeches, although nice and long on rhetoric, don't appear to be offering many solutions, and I can't seem to find any contained in this document or any solutions that have been presented on the Order Paper to date that actually address the fundamental concerns that face everyday Albertans, from children going to our school system and young adults going to postsecondary to seniors needing long-term care in this province. None of these things have been addressed in any real, substantial manner that we will make people's lives better today or into the future.

But let's just talk about this, a focused commitment to sound, conservative fiscal principles. To be honest, from this side of the House, I am befuddled by what this actually means. At one time in my life in this Legislature it was that the party across the aisle believed that we will never go in debt again. In fact, I believe they passed a law on this, and that was supposed to be sound conservative principles. Now we get to a place in 2012 where sound conservative principles are taking on a large amount of debt to build Alberta going forward and dividing things out in that way.

To be honest with you, I guess "fiscally responsible" should be the word that we actually go forward with. In my view, being

fiscally responsible is paying for what you use in taxes. I think that is a generally accepted definition by political parties and economists as a reasonable way to go forward. Now, we use debt instruments from time to time to build things that matter to Albertans and to other people, but that doesn't get away from the basic principle of fiscal responsibility, paying for what you use in taxes.

We in Alberta here have taken the easy way out. We don't tax anybody, and we spend all the oil wealth in one generation, which I think – so would anyone if they spend two minutes thinking about that as a public policy position to base this province on – is simply lunacy. I'll repeat that. The principles that we're currently governing under on our fiscal management are lunacy. Not taxing anyone and spending all of the oil wealth in one generation is not a plan for success. We can see that. A reasonable position would be whether you want small government or large government, to have your citizens pay for what you use in taxes, and save the oil wealth for future generations.

Well, that principle has not been followed through on. In fact, if we haven't learned that by now, that what we have done here in this province is simply silly, I do not know when we will learn that lesson. No one sitting in this Legislature can look at what has transpired over the last 25 years and say that this has been a reasonable, prudent fiscal plan going forward.

I'll remind everyone where we are and what this society needs, and I think it was laid out very well in the Progressive Conservative election platform, one that I was, frankly, quite hopeful about, one that I hope your government would be still trying to fulfill, which doesn't seem to be the case, looking at this throne speech. The needs addressed in that platform were the needs that needed covering. You know, we can go forward and look at it.

3:20

We needed 50 new schools. In fact, we probably needed 87 just to keep up with population growth. Where are we on that promise? Well, not very far, Mr. Speaker. From what I've seen here since we've been back in the Legislature under new management, it is no further along. We will not see these schools until long after 2016. By the way, people are still moving to this province in droves, and the problem doesn't get better. It only exacerbates. The longer we wait, the longer kids are going to have to be jammed into classrooms that are full, bused for hours across the way, and the like. We're not moving forward on this; we're treading water.

I know this government sees a magical payday happening in 2018, when oil sands projects reach payout and the like, but remember what you've done here since '08. You have essentially sacrificed the opportunity of little kids to get the education they need going forward, in light of some magical payday that may be coming in 2018, because that's the only way your numbers work and that you can build anything. I think we all know that. The fiscal structure is broken. Simply put, you haven't addressed that, and maybe we haven't addressed it for a long time in this province. But those problems are still there that were outlined in the platform in 2012.

Look, there were some other good things in that platform, and the hon. leader of the New Democrats brought them up. Eliminating child poverty in five years: well, that was a pretty good start. Right now in this province we have over 90,000 children who are living in poverty. We have not made one iota of progress on that file since it was promised in the last election, and we heard very little of what we're going to do for those families in this throne speech.

You know, to exacerbate where our fiscal structure has gotten us, we look at how to support families that are truly in need. We have the lowest welfare payments in Canada, okay? How is it that a single mom with two kids can make a go of it when we have the lowest rates in Canada? Is this fair to those children? Is it fair to providing them some opportunity for success in the future? I don't know. It doesn't seem like a good way to go. For me, it's actually empowering people to try to succeed, allowing their kids some decency and some semblance of being able to go forward. It doesn't appear that that is a way forward, to me.

If we look to further issues that are going on in this province, not only in education but in postsecondary, we have the lowest university participation rate in the nation. That, to me, does not seem like a good long-term trend to be going on. In fact, only 17 per cent of Alberta's youth go to our postsecondary system right now, compared to Ontario, that has roughly 25 per cent of their population engaged in some sort of postsecondary education. Is that a good long-term trend, Mr. Speaker? I don't think so.

The clearest path to economic success for individuals and students and, in fact, for our society is a knowledge-based economy. For those students who get postsecondary degrees, the statistics bear out that they receive higher incomes, contribute more to the public good, and lead more successful lives. Why do we have the lowest university participation rate in the nation? It's because we don't have the university spaces for them to go to. It is the direct responsibility of this government for not fixing a fiscal structure that has long been broken. These are the facts.

If we look further down where we are going and we look at our long-term care spaces, there is a tremendous need, and it has been built up over the course of some time now. We have not invested in public spaces for people to go to get the care they need. Instead, we have gone down the path of a complicated system of four different levels of privatized care, that either you can afford or you can't afford, which simply goes against the principle that we have followed in this country since 1967, that health care would be made available to you on a timely basis based on your need, not on the amount of money you have in your bank account.

We have many seniors now who have reached that age that simply can't afford \$1,800 a month at a continuing care space or something to that effect. We need to go back and revisit whether this policy we have followed truly enables Albertans to age in a reasonable, legitimate fashion and what actually makes sense for our society going forward. In fact, if you look at other provinces that have not gone down the path of Alberta, their outcomes on seniors' care are less costly and actually enable seniors to, I guess, age in a more reasonable fashion. We have to look at these systems we've put in in Alberta and assess whether we're truly doing what's in our best interests for the long run.

Hey, you guys might have the politics right, you know. You guys may have the politics right with being the lowest taxed jurisdiction by a country mile and not building schools, not building long-term care spaces, not moving on things like full-day kindergarten, which are necessary in this province, not moving on to an early childhood care system that actually embraces and frees up families to do what they need to do to succeed, and the like. I think we need some of that thinking here in Alberta as to what can actually move more people to the middle-class lifestyle.

We also look at what's happening out there in Alberta. I think we've reached a crisis point with where we are in our affordable housing situation. Yes, we did institute a 10-year plan to end homelessness, but it's simply not moving the ball forward as much as we can. I think it's time for us to revisit what many MLAs in this Legislature did in 2006 and 2007, when they came up with a good framework of 72 recommendations, that went to the then

Premier, on how to really have an affordable housing strategy. I would encourage people to look into that. It was a whole comprehensive list of various things that would have actually moved the meter and alleviated many of the problems we have now.

Instead, we chose the low-hanging fruit from that list of 72 and instituted things that I think supported the existing framework of the building community and served their needs but didn't address the fundamental root causes of where we need to go on an affordable housing strategy. If we would have done the politically difficult thing at that time and instituted those 72 things, my goodness, we would not be where we are now.

Oftentimes the solutions are not necessarily innovative; you just have to look at what actually works. Sometimes bringing in revenue to pay for the services that Albertans use, need, and, in fact, want would be a reasonable place to succeed. Right now if we can't figure out that our fiscal structure is broken when we can't build schools, when we can't get long-term care spaces, if we spend all the oil wealth in one generation, my goodness, when are we going to act? When are we going to put this province's future first instead of our political bacon?

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see no one wishing to take it up.

Let's move on to Cypress-Medicine Hat, followed by Edmonton-Calder, followed by Calgary-McCall, followed by Medicine Hat, and there will be others after that.

3:30

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, would like to add my congratulations to the Premier and the Members for Edmonton-Whitemud, Calgary-West, and Calgary-Elbow on their recent by-election victories.

The Premier's first throne speech is somewhere around the 44th throne speech of this PC government. Who knows how many. I guess I just want to say that my overwhelming feeling is disappointed, very, very disappointed that in a province of 4 million hard-working people, in a province so rich in commodities, so rich in natural beauty, with so many things going for it, on the edge of being such a leader in Canada that our new Premier and our 44-year government didn't have a stronger vision, a stronger idea that would encompass some new ideas, some individualism, some chances to work together, some chances to grow together.

There were three things I did like about it, though. First of all, somewhere on the last or the second-last page it mentioned a new volunteerism strategy. My goodness, is this overdue. Alberta and Cypress-Medicine Hat are absolutely full of capable, hard-working, caring Albertans who do so much for their neighbours, for their communities, their friends.

The Wildrose in the full campaign two and a half years ago had an idea to increase the tax credit for volunteerism. Totally optional. If somebody wanted to do it out of the goodness of their heart or if somebody didn't feel it was necessary, totally optional. But what a great way to expand the opportunity for people who needed to do more that needed a little bit of help. What a great opportunity to take care of a family member or take care of a neighbour, to do some work in the community, make our community stronger on a very efficient, caring basis. I hope this government will actually do something with that in the next year or so.

Hey, I found the words "no sales tax" in there. Very nice to see that. Medicine Hat and Cypress-Medicine Hat, we're very conscious of the fact that we pay our share through royalties on natural gas, Albertans having the highest average income tax, but

we're also very, very conscious of the fact that on Saturdays and Sundays our mall parking lots, our downtown parking lots are full of cars with green-and-white licence plates. It's partly because of the sales tax. Glad to see it in writing, but in two and a half years I've seen the PC Party across the floor break several promises, right back to two and a half years ago: campaigned on the left and then, possibly because of good ideas of the Wildrose opposition, decided to govern more on the right, breaking all their promises, leading to six months off in here, anyway, as a new Premier was selected. So I'm a little concerned about the no-sales-tax promise.

I've recently heard about the new Premier talking about looking into a progressive tax. Again, we pay the highest average income tax. Albertans already pay the most tax. And, of course, a month or so ago the Associate Minister of Aboriginal Relations openly mused about how members opposite were looking at all taxes. Couple this with the broken promises I've seen, and we'll see where we go. I hope Albertans will hold you accountable for it.

The third part I liked, again a Wildrose idea, a Wildrose platform, in education: a return to the education basics of literacy and numeracy. We've seen this gallery full of people with the same ideas. We've all had several phone calls, e-mails, and letters from constituents, parents, grandparents, concerned Albertans about what new education policies did to cause a decline in our kids' scores and ability. The saving grace was how good our professionals were, how caring Albertans were to immediately step in and make sure something was done.

Like the Member for Calgary-Buffalo, I too thought there were five themes. The first two I clearly remember from two Premiers ago, the throne speech a year ago: reducing interprovincial trade barriers. I bet if we dug that one up, it might be on all 44 of them, so it makes me wonder how seriously our government means this or if it is just politics. As we've heard time and time again, Alberta's bureaucracy is onerous. It slows business down. It slows the movement of money and the creation of wealth and the creation of jobs. I was reminded on the weekend about a guy who has a ranch in the Rocky Mountain House area who needed to get hay into B.C., and the easiest way to do it was to take it down to Montana and up around that way. I'm thinking: "My goodness, this is progress? This is how a country with this commodity base, with its hard-working people base works?" I hope the government really means that, and I hope they do something about it.

Number two, again in the throne speech two Premiers ago, a year or so ago, access to markets for oil and gas. As a matter of fact, I think this Premier said that 16 months from now we could hold him accountable on access to markets for oil and gas because of his past experience and past background. I hope he makes it. I hope he makes it. It's good for Alberta to get this access that we need to have more markets for our valuable commodities, to have more wealth and more markets for the hard work that Albertans do. I hope this new hire that he was bragging about yesterday after the vote didn't work out can explain what happened, be held accountable, do a better job in the future.

The Premier today mentioned that we had the balance right between the environment's rules and regulations and the tremendous value of Alberta's commodities while, once again, the lack of progress on Keystone, the zero progress on Gateway. Line 9 and Energy East don't seem to be moving too quickly either. I would hope that real, legitimate work be done on this. Let's remind Canadians, let's remind the world how important, how valuable cheap energy for the whole world is and the tremendous wealth and opportunities for all Albertans and all Canadians that our commodities in this province can provide. Let's all do what we can to tell the world the great work that these companies do and to increase the wealth opportunities.

The third theme I saw in the throne speech was schools: build schools, build schools, build schools. A year and a half ago we had 19 schools that were going to be built. It looked like Alberta Infrastructure did nothing but plan 19 schools for a year. My goodness, I don't know what it would cost to have Alberta Infrastructure just do that for a year. Even though the government was told at the outset that it couldn't happen, that the industry didn't have the capacity, that it wouldn't happen, that all went ahead, and not a single one of those schools was built. I think it was the last two Premiers, certainly was the last two Infrastructure ministers, as they flip-flopped and flip-flopped and everybody got moved around, that stood up and said: "We'll make it. We'll make it. We'll have them done." Well, that turned quick to none of them done.

My understanding is that 50 schools are supposed to be due by September 2016, which means that they have to be done by June 2016 for teachers and maintenance people and the final touches to be put on through the summer of 2016. Guys, I'm hearing loud and clear from the industry: "You can't make it. You can't do the design. You can't build it. You won't have the 50 schools." I hope you don't stand up and insult Albertans' intelligence in the next year and a half telling us they're going to be done when it's clear that the answer is there that they can't be. Let's build schools when and where we need them, let's build them in an efficient manner, and let's try to have the Alberta government return to be a preferred client in the eyes of Alberta Infrastructure and construction companies so the taxpayer can get the most value, so the taxpayer can get the most schools.

Sorry that I have to bring it up: \$375 million on the federal building. How much on the suite that was there, isn't there, still is there? It's just furnished with office furniture instead of bedroom furniture and household furniture. I'm sorry I brought it up, but, guys, that's 20 schools.

**3:40**

Another thing in the throne speech that caught my eye that I liked: the government is going to hold the rate of increase on spending for government operations. It will be kept below population growth and the rate of inflation. Marvellous. I hope you do it. It makes total sense. And partly it makes total sense – I want to reference an excellent report that Mark Milke from the Fraser Institute put out called Alberta's \$22-billion Lost Opportunity.

I'll just quickly give you a summary. Since 2005-2006 the PC Alberta government has spent 54 per cent more – 54 per cent more – on operating and programs than inflation and population growth warranted or would have suggested or whatever the right word is. So from 2005-2006 that's \$22 billion that has been spent on operating and programs from the baseline in '05, adding inflation and adding population growth, \$22 billion dollars that could have gone to infrastructure, could have gone to the heritage trust fund, could have prevented the \$10 billion in debt that your government has added to our next generation's tax problem, or could have gone to reduce our current tax, a \$22 billion lost opportunity. Even though the new Premier in this government's sentence seems to refer only to government operations and not program spending, it is very, very much a step in the right direction.

The fourth theme I want to talk about is property rights. The new Premier said: it is so important that it'll be the first bill; I understand the importance of property rights; I understand that the earlier PC government crossed the line and things have to be changed. There are 28 words in the throne speech that talk about what your government is going to do for property rights. Bill 1, the one we were all waiting for since the PC leadership, is seven words.

Repealing Bill 19, which was never proclaimed and leaves a big, big rural base – and I think maybe someday the urban base will understand how infringement on property rights will affect them, whether it's the right to work, the right to earn, intellectual property rights, all of these things that are so comprised in the individuality that I cherish and that many people in Cypress-Medicine Hat cherish in life. It wasn't touched at all. It's going to a committee, I think, even though it's been four or five years in the making.

Statutory consents that make up the value of property, statutory consents that include water licences, feedlot operations, the right to grazing leases, can still be removed by cabinet, can still be removed without access to courts, can still be removed without fair, timely compensation. Incredible. I recall from some of the meetings before the last election that no other western democracy anywhere has this.

If our new Premier, our new reset on the government's first look at changing property rights, is eliminating a bill that was never proclaimed and two Premiers ago had some significant changes done to it – guys, I think you're going to have to keep going. You're going to have to keep going to win back the hearts and the votes of rural voters, never mind the regulatory takings that I want to talk about next.

I want to take a second to talk about Cypress-Medicine Hat. I am so fortunate to represent Cypress-Medicine Hat.

**The Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Let's go to Chestermere-Rocky View.

**Mr. McAllister:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm so curious as to why this member is so proud to represent Cypress-Medicine Hat.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you very much. People are wonderful; quality of life is great. The scenery is beautiful: the Cypress Hills, the wide-open spaces, ranches that are a township or bigger. The great, great stewardship that these ranchers and landowners have. They don't overgraze. Environmentally they take care of things for the next generation. I think that this Assembly needs to know, though, that our city is not growing. Our economy is not good. Unfortunately, our community foundation just put out a vital statistics report that showed we have the highest percentage of minimum wage and people working beneath the poverty line in all of Alberta.

We love our individualism. We love our economy; at times we rode very high. But I just want to remind everybody about two things that this government has done that have drastically hurt us. The 2008 royalty review drove countless service companies out of our area, drove countless jobs out of our area. Yeah, then the price of natural gas corrected, and maybe it wasn't totally the PC government's fault, but it certainly was a factor. Be careful what you do with rules and regulations.

Speaking of that, the federal government through the Species at Risk Act slapped a sage grouse protection order on the area in February. The federal government right now is doing a review of the horned lizard in the same area. The sage grouse protection order could have totally been prevented if the government of Alberta would have put in a provincial protection order. Ten out of 11 states that have the sage grouse have done this because they know it's better to protect the sage grouse, they know it's better to protect ranching, and they know it's better to protect the economy. We could have done the same and still can. Please work on it for us.

I was also surprised how little the throne speech talked about health care. My goodness, no specific promises, just that additional work is under way to address patient access, waiting times, the need to speed up, stuff we've heard for years and years; \$19 billion, 44 per cent of our budget, and hardly mentioned. As a matter of fact, in my constituency office the two calls I get the most are from people who have gone to Kalispell or Great Falls and paid \$23,000 to \$29,000 for a knee or a hip because they got tired of waiting three years in Alberta for a similar procedure. It doesn't seem right. We are a lot richer jurisdiction, lots of room for improvement.

A Medicine Hat emergency doctor, a very strong advocate for public health, Dr. Paul Parks, has talked time and time again that this government had dropped the ball on long-term beds, how each long-term bed saves \$1,000 to \$1,200 instead of having them in acute-care beds. It seems like such a no-brainer to build the proper number of long-term beds and save that \$1,000 to \$1,200 per patient per day in an acute bed and free up those beds for those that really need them.

The last thing I'd say is democratic accountability. If you really want to walk the walk or talk the talk, whatever the saying is, make the election laws that we just saw – make it so that during a by-election, like in Saskatchewan and Manitoba, you can't make spending promises. One of your ministers has now started off on the wrong foot. He has started off where people are concerned about things that were number seven on their priority list being done and done first. Four million Albertans deserve better.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is still available.

Seeing no one to take that up, let's move on to Edmonton-Calder, followed by Calgary-McCall.

3:50

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise with some interest to speak on the throne speech that we had here on Monday. Certainly, it's a great opportunity for Albertans to begin to re-engage in the political process. We haven't been using this Chamber for many months, so I think Albertans are very anxious to see action on so many different issues that concern them and concern their families.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

I would like to just offer my congratulations, before I begin my reply to the throne speech, to the four by-election winners. Certainly, it is a difficult thing to win any seat. Just a friendly reminder that it is a provisional issue when we do by-elections. Certainly, we as Alberta New Democrats engaged and found a lot of very interesting things to learn as well, particularly in Edmonton-Whitemud. We only had four weeks to organize and to come through, and we managed to increase our results by 13 percentage points, so we like to think that maybe we didn't lose the seat, really, but just ran out of time. Certainly, we'd look forward to doing that again soon. Dr. Turner was a very, very good candidate, and I think he engaged the political process very, very well.

As I said before, the Speech from the Throne was being awaited with bated breath by so many thousands of Albertans who were looking for direction on urgent issues that concern them and their families. While I certainly found some reason to be optimistic or to look for some points of interest in the speech, I really look at it more from the things that are absent in the throne speech rather than what is being said.

Certainly, we know from going through many elections and through polling and from what Albertans tell us anecdotally time and time again that they're most concerned about their economic well-being, their capacity to look after themselves and their families, the security that comes with being able to look after their families. They're concerned about the things that we own together, those things that are entrusted to us here in the Legislature to ensure that there's a public health system there when we need it for ourselves and our families and that that is a publicly delivered health system that is available to us. We look to education to ensure that everyone has an equal opportunity to get the very best education for themselves and for their children, both from K to 12 and through postsecondary. Finally, we look to build the infrastructure that's necessary to meet the needs of a very quickly growing economy and a very quickly growing population as well.

When I was listening to the throne speech here on Monday, I think a key sentence really jumped out at me, and that is that the government makes a commitment to keep government expenditures below the rate of population and below the rate of inflation. I realize that we have some philosophical differences about this, but certainly we cannot deny the fact that this commitment to keeping spending below the growth of population and the economy essentially means cuts to essential government services. You simply cannot pay for the needs of more than 4 million people – their public health concerns, their education concerns, and their infrastructure concerns – if you are in fact cutting or not meeting the needs of population growth.

Mr. Speaker, that's the reason, really, that this Legislature and this level of government exists in the first place. It's to look after those essential public needs and interests. If we choose to cut those, then, in fact, not only are we just not meeting those responsibilities, but we're not looking at reality squarely in the face. The fact is that the population is growing. We have more Alberta citizens, and the economy is still growing, too.

With that in mind, certainly I've seen not just a number of throne speeches in my tenure here in the Legislature but a number of budgets that come from this sort of attitude. While people say, "Oh, well, it'll be perhaps a flat budget," if you don't meet the needs of the growth of the economy and the population, then it effectively becomes a cut.

I find it interesting as well that built into this throne speech there seems to be some latent anxiety or a sort of paranoia, I think, that comes with this government. I know that they like to have this shingle, under new management, somehow tentatively nailed somewhere on the new government, but it seems as though they are still looking over their shoulder with this throne speech more than looking forward. I must say that this throne speech and the legislative agenda that I see before us, Mr. Speaker, could very easily have been brought forward by the Official Opposition, the Wildrose. I think that they would have buttressed, perhaps, Bill 1 in terms of property rights. They might have done some few minor adjustments, but really this throne speech and this legislative agenda before us is fully interchangeable, in my mind, to what we might have seen from the Official Opposition Wildrose if they'd had an opportunity to present both a throne speech and a budget.

You know, I don't see that as new management, really. I see that as politics and watching over one's shoulder with the idea that they can hear footsteps coming to get them. When you do choose to make a new direction, Mr. Speaker, I would think that you would go more to a wider vision of governance that looks to expand and strengthen public health care, looks to expand and strengthen our postsecondary education, and so forth. Rather, I see quite the opposite, and ultimately I feel disappointed and a little

bit hurt as well, I must say. You know, when people make promises, you know that it's probably not true, but you get all sort of teased by the possibility, and then, sure enough, inevitability – right, Member for Calgary-Mountain View? – we do in fact ultimately get disappointed.

Now, I mean, I realize that a throne speech is sort of setting broader strokes, but then we can only judge a government by its actions. What I'm looking at through the legislative agenda, which is the action that we would actually see on specific issues: again, very large gaps that make me really wonder exactly where we're going with the future of this province. I'm concerned about the inherent cuts that that might imply.

The absence in the throne speech and the legislative agenda of real, meaningful commitment to strengthening health care I think is one of the biggest concerns that I have. Certainly, in my own constituency of Edmonton-Calder I've been receiving a lot of specific information about individuals that are having a hard time accessing compassionate care. I've had several complaints from my constituents in Edmonton-Calder about not getting the adequate support, looking for compassionate care for family members – this is palliative care, where people are gravely ill – and not getting the care that they need. People want to stay in their homes, but they need another level of support in order to do so. On a number of occasions I see that compassionate palliative care simply fails people at the very most crucial, vulnerable moments of their lives, really.

Another issue which is very interesting is that people, again in my constituency, are always concerned about security and the capacity for police to provide that security. I know that's a direct municipal responsibility, but we see these things filter down very easily. I think that the current Minister of Health knows this very well. The municipal level of government has its hands tied to meet some of these needs because the provincial government collects so much more revenue and has so much more indirect influence on how things such as crime and policing can be actually delivered in this province.

I find it very interesting on a very, very local level that we used to have a community neighbourhood empowerment team that had very specific interrelationships with community-based police officers, yet the municipality has cut this program. The municipality tells me, my councilors tell me that that's because of inadequate provincial funding globally for large municipalities. Each thing has a cause and effect, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, my own constituency and I think that many urban constituencies around the province are feeling less secure because of the lack of adequate provincial funding that goes to things such as community police officers and, like I said, such innovative programs as the community neighbourhood empowerment team that we had but don't have anymore in Edmonton-Calder.

4:00

Another issue that is very close, I think, to many people's hearts around the province is just the high cost of monthly expenses here in the province of Alberta, that our rents, mortgage rates are inordinately high for regular working people to afford. They're paying much more of their monthly income for accommodation. Again, an absence in the throne speech and in substantive legislation to what might protect individuals from inordinate rental increases and so forth I think is a very obvious gap in this throne speech and in this legislative session as well.

Another issue that really, I think, is coming home to hit very hard in these winter months is the cost of utilities. Again, my constituency office in Edmonton-Calder has many, many, many anecdotal complaints about the high cost of utilities and the lack



of regulation and transparency around the billing of those utilities, too. We know that we can, in fact, in this legislative body enact regulation and laws that could make, at the very least, utility bills more transparent so that people can see where their money is going and how much they're spending per month.

Also, I would venture to say, Mr. Speaker, we have a responsibility in this Legislature to look for ways to make essential home heating and electricity bills more affordable for Albertans on a month-to-month basis. Certainly, by deregulating the electricity market, we've blown open and exposed individuals to inordinately high monthly power costs. So, too, I would say that we should consider the converse, which is to bring those prices back to something that people can more afford. If you don't even have your electricity on, people still have a substantial bill from line charges and other sorts of miscellaneous things that are neither clear nor fair, I would suggest, as monthly expenses put onto each family that requires electricity. And everybody does. It's not as though we have a choice to heat our homes or to have some power in our homes.

Education. Again, this is a very interesting issue for K to 12 infrastructure. My constituency, Edmonton-Calder, is like a cross-section of the history of the city of Edmonton. We have neighbourhoods close to the airport and so forth that are a hundred years old, and we are moving outwards to the very edge of the ring road, the Henday, where literally the houses are just being built today. All through that cross-section of concentric circles of the building of the city of Edmonton you see schools either not being utilized properly or utilized in the widest way possible or the absence of schools entirely as you move out towards the ring road to the Henday. Again, I reflect my constituents' frustration in not seeing the schools that should've been built and could've been built and will be built in a reasonable time for new neighbourhoods and the creative utilization of established schools as we move closer to the centre of the city.

You know, talk is cheap, right? We see this throne speech talking vaguely about schools, this government making, I think, unrealistic promises around schools. Let's not just build it into the vagaries of politics and the price of a barrel of oil; let's have a long-term, sustained plan to ensure that public schools are built where we need them, when we need them, on a timely basis, not just over the next couple of years but over the coming decades as well.

Again, Mr. Speaker, just in summary, then, I choose to define an individual and a government by their actions, and I certainly see vague intentions in this throne speech.

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

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

Seeing none, I'll recognize the next speaker. The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

**Mr. Kang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As with any Speech from the Throne it is indeed an honour and privilege to speak on behalf of my constituents of Calgary-McCall. Let me begin first by thanking all of my constituents in Calgary-McCall, who have continued to place their trust, confidence, and respect in me as their MLA. As their voice in this Assembly I am forever proud to represent them each and every day.

Alberta truly is a wonderful place to live, work, and raise a family, Mr. Speaker. I love to tell about when I came to Calgary in 1970. I was waiting at the bus stop – I've told this story before – and an older gentleman approached me and said, "Where are you from?" I said, "I'm from India." And he said, "Are you a student?" I said, "No, I'm not a student." He said, "Are you a doctor?" I said, "No, I'm not a doctor." He said, "Are you a teacher?" I said: "No,

I'm not a teacher. I just got here." And he said: "Welcome to Canada, God's country. Welcome to Alberta, the land of milk and honey." The gentleman was indeed correct. At the time I didn't know what he meant, but as time went along, I realized what he meant.

However, Mr. Speaker, having listened to the Speech from the Throne, I couldn't help but ask myself the question: how have things changed? I represent a fast-growing, dynamic, multicultural, and multilingual riding. My staff works tirelessly for my constituents, always delivering the best services and helping when required. But it is getting tougher. There are so many new Canadians, new Albertans, and most certainly new Calgarians. We need more from this government.

Mr. Speaker, I have had countless visitors to my office experiencing challenges with AINP, or the Alberta immigrant nominee program. This program is vital to our future. We are a country of immigrants. Canada was built by immigrants seeking the best and the brightest the world has to offer, yet we can't even help those who want to stay here legally and willingly. Thousands of temporary foreign workers have lost their chance to stay here permanently. Thousands. I can tell you how badly change is needed both in government policy and in programs such as AINP. Where was this mentioned in the Speech from the Throne? I didn't see it anywhere.

Our economy, Mr. Speaker, is only as strong as our workforce is. This, I feel, drastically needs improvement. Another big issue is temporary foreign workers. Lots of those temporary foreign workers' work visas are expiring, and employers cannot renew their work visas because they cannot get the LMOs. Lots of small businesses in Calgary have approached my office: "How are we going to survive? How are we going to grow? How are we going to run our businesses if these temporary foreign workers go back to their respective countries?"

Whether it is those applying under the AINP program or students trying hard to make ends meet, especially while dealing with ridiculous postsecondary tuition rates and graduating with enormous amounts of debt, Mr. Speaker, how are we helping our postsecondary education and those students who are graduating? We need a government that will work for all Albertans, not just the rich, the elite, or a favoured few. We need to support our students, not raise tuition, invest in postsecondary education, and give our next generation all the tools, skills, and resources to literally kick butt in life and in our economy. These young men and women are our future. Why not invest in them now, not tomorrow but today?

Mr. Speaker, I know the Speech from the Throne also mentioned infrastructure. For our growing province I cannot agree more. In Calgary-McCall I was the only MLA to fight for the airport tunnel. No other hon. member fought for this vital piece of infrastructure. With a newly expanded airport and a booming economy, businesses, visitors, and residents need the infrastructure to get the job done. The benefits of the airport tunnel are already being realized, which leads me to another point. The vast majority of Albertans live in urban areas. Whether they live in Calgary or Edmonton or in a suburban community nearby, they need the ability to get to and from work, school, and family activities. Albertans demand and, I would argue, deserve high-quality, modern infrastructure. Whether we are the province that invests in urban transit, ring roads, or one day even high-speed rail, we need the infrastructure in place to set up for the needs of the future. But this is not occurring.

**4:10**

Take, for example, the fast-growing community of Cochrane. The province and by extension this government has been promising

residents and businesses alike for over 16 years that important improvements to highway 22X and highway 1A are needed, but all that residents and businesses have heard about is delay after delay. The fastest growing communities such as Airdrie, Cochrane, Chestermere – you name it – SkyView, Redstone in Calgary need investments by this government in critical infrastructure, not Building Alberta signs, Mr. Speaker.

Actions speak louder than words, but in the end, for a government that claims to be under new management, we see the same members, the same party in power. All we see is a new Premier. As history will show us, keeping the PC brand alive is, first and foremost, their top priority.

Mr. Speaker, democracy is fragile. Every day as elected members of this Assembly we are here to represent our constituents and lead our great province of Alberta, but most importantly, we need leadership, new ideas, new direction. Sadly, despite having a new Premier and some new ministers changing portfolios, I remain unconvinced. Unconvinced.

Alberta is an amazing province, but we need a government that demonstrates leadership and starts treating all Albertans equally. We can't have second-class citizens. We need to invest today in education, social services, key infrastructure, health care, transportation needs. Mr. Speaker, programs facing massive backlogs such as AINP need proper funding and staffing. Communities like Cochrane desperately need highway improvements. Most importantly, we need a government that respects taxpayers and hard-working Albertans.

With the price of oil in decline, what is this government's plan to table a balanced budget? We heard before that the operational budget will be balanced, and I don't think that is a balanced budget. A balanced budget is money coming in, money going out, and if you have anything left over, that's surplus. If you're in deficit, that's a deficit. That is the budget. It is not a balanced budget if you have an operational budget imbalance. Then the other budget is not balanced.

The Premier, Mr. Speaker, has already ruled out a sales tax, but he has remained quiet on other means of taxation. Will this government hike user fees? Will it return to the pre-Klein days of progressive income tax? That remains to be seen. Most importantly, will this government be open, transparent, and honest with their citizens? Albertans are a tough lot. We work hard, play hard, and enjoy giving back to our community, but we need a government that is focused on diversifying our economy and saving for our future.

You can forgive me, Mr. Speaker, for raising doubts about the plan moving forward from this government. Although the PCs have elected a new leader and the constituents of Calgary-Foothills voted for the hon. member, have things really changed? It remains to be seen.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I wish to leave but one final thought for our new Premier and his recycled government. The city of Calgary is growing by over 40,000 residents a year. Our municipal government needs support and assistance from this government, but they can't do it alone. They need stable, predictable funding from the province. Our next generation is counting on the actions of this government. Do not let them down. Together let us show all Albertans that great things are possible, but we need real, committed, accountable leadership to accomplish all of this.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my constituents of Calgary-McCall and to all my colleagues in this Assembly, thank you very much. I remain steadfast in my love for, admiration of, and dedication to this wonderful province. Together I still believe we can accomplish many great things.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

Seeing none, I'll recognize the next speaker. The hon. Member for Medicine Hat.

**Mr. Pedersen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate this opportunity to respond to the Speech from the Throne. First, though, I'd like to welcome the four new members, the Premier and the other three members that are new to the Legislature. Welcome, and good luck with your new duties.

Typically the government uses a throne speech as a reset or as a tool to set a new direction or course and to announce new ideas, new plans, and new programs that are going to help move Alberta forward. I feel I'm pretty similar to most Albertans. I was never involved in politics before the last election, and I never want to be a career politician. We are a proud and hopeful society, hard working and caring, always looking for the best in ourselves, our friends, and our neighbours. We want our government to do the same.

Instead, we see an old and tired PC government that never ceases to amaze me with how much verbiage can be used, how many pages of paper can be consumed, and how much opportunity can be wasted all in the effort of saying nothing at all. No substance. No vision. No specific plans or ideas. It's just more of the same from this old and tired PC government.

This 43-year-old government likes to say that the province is under new management. Well, everyone, meet the new boss. He's just like the old boss. I guess we can add "new management" to the other PC phrases made infamous through their unending use. New management can be placed on the shelf right beside such beauties as the bitumen bubble and the gold standard. Don't forget the sky palace either. Saying "new management" over and over won't make it true, but actions can be the gauge of whether this reincarnation of the PC government can achieve their very important stated goals.

**Mr. McAllister:** I like the "bitumen bubble."

**Mr. Pedersen:** Yeah. It's pretty good.

While there are promises to follow a number of similar Wildrose policies like fiscal responsibility, ending entitlements, maximizing value of natural resources while strengthening environmental protections, protecting property rights, and addressing problems in health care, education, seniors' care, and skills and training, there are still no clear plans. If the new management wants some help with how to implement these Wildrose ideas, just let us know. We won't even ask for a bonus or a private plane. We'll do it for free.

What is obvious when one reads this throne speech is the incredible amount of backtracking the new Premier has done on previous PC policy and actions that were taken and supported wholeheartedly by almost every current PC MLA. It's the same crew with the same old ideas. How uncomfortable it must be to be sitting in the Legislature at this moment.

During the by-elections promises were made to all Albertans for what could easily be viewed as buying votes. Even our new Education minister used his appointed, unelected position to reward his own constituents with modulars for a school in the riding that he was running in. To be fair, these modulars were a need in Calgary-Elbow, but they were only seventh on the list for all of Calgary.

For a new Premier touting a new government under new management, with an emphasis on accountability and transparency, this is a huge fail for him personally as well as his now-elected Education minister. The trust has already been broken,

even before either sat a single day in the Legislature, trust that the Premier vowed the PC party was determined to earn back.

With actions like this early in the new management mandate, why should any other promise mentioned in the throne speech be taken seriously? The job of the government has now been made harder with Albertans' trust broken. Take the statement around operational budget spending being held below the rate of population growth and inflation. This will be the classic robbing of Peter to pay Paul, except Peter is almost broke. This expense and probable debt will be downloaded into the infrastructure portion of the budget, and the current savings plans will again be drained to cover this spending.

4:20

These debts will be borne and carried by generations to come, and since the need for infrastructure will not end, this government policy of borrowing has no plan of ending, leaving Albertans facing an increasing debt load. This debt, growing on a daily basis, will take away increasing amounts of operational spending just in order to service the debt, operational money that could fund programs across the spectrum from health to culture, funding that will never meet the growing needs of Albertans but will instead be allocated for projects already built. Better yet, maybe we could stop spending so much money and pay off the debt.

We in the Wildrose are always challenged on what we wouldn't build if we were in government, but with skyrocketing debt and so many promises we really have to wonder: what is it that the PCs are not going to build? Are they not going to pay off debt, are they not going to balance the budget, are they not going to build every school they're promising, or are they going to take the easy way out and raise taxes?

Property rights are raised. Bill 1 addresses the PC version of correction of bad legislation but does not go far enough to correct past indiscretions to those affected. Wildrose Motion 501 takes the appropriate steps to entrench property rights for the benefit of all owners in Alberta. I know the Premier says that he's committed to protecting property rights, and if that's the case, then I do look forward to him voting in favour of the motion brought forward by my colleague from Lacombe-Ponoka.

I appreciate the identification that there are educational challenges in K to 12, which do roll over into postsecondary, and I do look forward to working with the new Innovation and Advanced Education minister in bringing forward positive changes for students, whether young or older adults; parents; educators; institutions; and Alberta taxpayers.

The environment is of utmost importance to all Albertans, and it ties directly not only to their quality of life but to those across Canada and around the world. Our environment is theirs and theirs is ours in a global economy, and we need to be the best stewards possible. I hope Alberta gets there sooner rather than later. We have brought forward concrete ideas to protect the environment, and I hope this government follows suit.

Identifying First Nations, the Métis, and Inuit is another great step forward, but this can't be another olive branch held out without a true desire to right past wrongs, to be left unaddressed for the next Premier and cabinet to deal with. It's not enough for the Premier to just mention them in a speech, and it's not enough for him to meet with them and then fly back home. The Premier needs to fix the issues that are facing our First Nations communities, and he needs to work with our Métis neighbours and friends as equal partners.

There are still many issues from the floods of 2013. The way the DRP and LandLink were allowed to function through this as well as the 2010 floods was and is an embarrassment to this

government, and everything should be done to resolve all open files and appeals for the individuals affected. This is still an issue in Medicine Hat, and I know it's an issue elsewhere.

There are concerns around the Premier's announcement of flood mitigation projects that have not been soundly studied and evaluated for efficiency, environmentalism, and financially, and these types of decisions almost never work out the way they were intended. I do hope that the Premier and his government review this decision so that a full assessment is done before moving forward without guidance, direction, or sound advice.

I do take great pride as a member of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition as it is and has been our job to hold the government to account. If what we have contributed to the process of opposing, exposing, and proposing has been in any way an improvement to the way Alberta is governed, then we have all done our jobs as elected officials in being accountable to the people who have sent us here.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

Seeing none, I'll recognize the next speaker. The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to the throne speech of 2014. My congratulations also to the new members of the Legislature and the new Premier.

You'll have to forgive me that after four Premiers in 10 years and eight throne speeches I'm left a little jaded hearing much the same messages rewarmed for this particular event – good ideas, high-sounding principles, and statements of intent – while I've seen in the last 10 years in the Legislature a government that plays catch-up and crisis management in one of the most challenging times of our history, with the recognition that we are a boom-bust economy.

And we still don't seem to have learned the lessons of what a boom-bust economy must do to plan better and provide for stable, dependable funding so that we're not hiring nurses one year and firing them the next, hiring teachers one year and firing them the next, establishing new programs for monitoring the oil sands one year and disbanding them the next, and, most recently, this climate change strategy of setting up a new program to support municipalities in their climate change attempts when we just disbanded Climate Change Central last year, a sterling organization that was doing good work both for communities and municipalities, also for individuals, to help them to reduce their carbon impacts. I look forward to the time when this government will stop creating change for change's sake and honour some of the commitments to the long-term well-being of the province.

[The Speaker in the chair]

It was a typical throne speech, I guess I would say, and nothing could be said about the good sentiments that were expressed. It would have been a little more believable if it was truly a new government, but in truth it is the same old government that happens to have a new Premier and a few new cabinet ministers and that new backbench individual all elected in the by-elections. But we spell by-elections "buy-elections." These elections in some ways were bought, as has been talked about repeatedly in this House, by announcements that were timed and, clearly, in a very cynical way meant to influence voters and that succeeded as they often do in our society.

This, of course, is contrary to other provinces' election rulings where there is a law, in fact, that there can be no new spending announcements. There can be no budgetary announcements during a writ period. Unfortunately, this is another deficit in our democracy where you can announce all you want in a writ period because we have no law to limit that. That along with very high donations from corporations and unions enables a very wealthy governing party to sustain its very strong campaign spending. Unfortunately, we see the result of that with a 43-year-old government that has been in power, with lots of resources to deal with, as a result of this continuing cycle of advantage and monies, giving us the best democracy money can buy, Mr. Speaker.

The vast majority of the government caucus are people elected under the previous Premier, and they made many of the mistakes and scandals that we continue to deal with and will continue over this next year to address. I would have hoped not so much for a government under new management as for new leadership, real leadership, leadership that reflects on doing the right things as opposed to management, which is focused on doing things right. Leadership has to deal with doing both, doing the right things and doing them in the most cost-effective and efficient way.

People in my constituency of Calgary-Mountain View, including those from the corporate boardrooms of Calgary, have raised a number of issues calling for a larger vision for Alberta, a more diverse economy, and a stronger commitment to renewables, to alternate energy and clean technology, to energy conservation, to policies that incent both retrofits in our commercial and residential buildings but also encourage the development of entrepreneurial investments in renewable energy that in many other countries are actually returning on the investment and providing profits to the producers of renewable energy.

We continue to see a government that's struggling with a revenue stream that is inadequate to the demands of our current population. The level of commitment to improving the care of especially our most vulnerable people in this province is lacking.

Alberta could bring in \$10 billion more in revenue a year and still be the lowest taxing province in the country. It could provide for those independent and strong monitoring systems that the world is watching for in our environment. It could provide for our disabled populations, that are still getting marginal care at best, our seniors who are struggling with inadequate care both in terms of quality and affordability. It could help with hungry kids going to school. It could help with many of the demands that, obviously, a four-million-population province is going to need with the kind of growth that we've had over the past decade.

4:30

The fear of taxes, the fear of the Wildrose continue to stymie this government and hold it in a decade-old stalemate, trying to say: we can do more with less. Well, we've done a lot more with too little, and many people are suffering in this province as a result: single parents; some of our most vulnerable kids, who need learning and behavioural and emotional help; or mental health challenges that we hear about frequently not only from the health professions but from the criminal justice system.

Some of us spent the morning hearing from some in the safe and caring schools, that they're dealing with a tremendous number of young people who are feeling discriminated against, bullied, and needing help with some of their emotional and social needs. All of these could be prevented with early intervention, appropriate professional supports, family supports, actually getting at root causes of social and poverty issues. It's ironic that this government continues to talk about its social policy framework but has failed to deliver even a definition of poverty that we can

actually work with and then hold ourselves accountable for making progress on.

There's a lot to be expected from this government, especially a government that calls itself under new management. Well, new isn't good enough, and change for change's sake isn't good enough. Where is the vision? Where is the real commitment to the long-term public interest as opposed to short-term crisis management, and where is the funding to provide for the kind of province we deserve and that we want for our children?

In that respect it's still not clear how much commitment this government does have to future generations when we are going to be passing on not only financial debt in terms of very high tuitions and financial debt in relation to the many infrastructure projects that are needed, but we are also talking about significant environmental debt with a potential for stranded assets and a failure or inability of some companies to clean up their particular developments, especially the tailings ponds, should they go under financially.

We have not taken in nearly the protective bond that's needed to ensure that we can reclaim and restore much of the northern community to any kind of viable state, and it's unconscionable that we should be leaving that to future generations instead of requiring of industry a substantial amount that would guarantee that we can clean up, not at the public expense but at the corporate expense, the impacts that they've had up there.

Alberta Liberals believe in both a strong economy and a strong society, with an environment that supports both. The government once again pitches the economy as the trade-off with the environment instead of seeing strong standards and enforcement as the cost of doing business, essential to our responsibility for habitat and species protection as well as honouring our future generations. That's not to mention our international reputation, which is now impacting our ability to sell our product internationally. How is that leadership? How is that showing Albertans that we care about the long-term well-being of this province?

Our rich agricultural heritage continues to be threatened as well by the failure of this government to enact a land-use framework, conserve rich farmland, including the chernozem soil that surrounds Edmonton and continues to be gobbled up through industrial and residential activity. Clear-cut forestry continues to threaten our eastern slopes notwithstanding Peter Lougheed's commitment to an eastern slopes policy that would ensure that our watersheds and our headwaters get the best of protection, because the true lifeblood of this province surely is our water. We're not protecting those eastern slopes, whether it be from industrial development or deforesting, and this is only going to add risk in terms of future flooding.

We need that kind of leadership that speaks not to short-term economic gains from such things as oil and gas development and clear-cut forestry on our eastern slopes but to the longer term well-being of our watershed and our sustainable surface water. How can we continue in good conscience to allow companies to inject our fresh water deep underground, never to come again, especially in southeastern Alberta, where we have no new water to provide licences for? We have maxed out our demands on our surface water in southeastern Alberta, including Calgary, yet we allow oil companies to use surface water and inject it out of the reach of our hydrological cycle. This is not leadership.

My constituents want to hear more from this government on a stronger commitment to the 3,400 homeless people in the city and the 35,000 individuals, including First Nations and seniors, who are at risk of losing their homes, that they're living in, or are unable to sustain the current levels of monthly rent fees, creating tremendous insecurity and stress that end up either on the streets

or in the health care system or in the criminal justice system. Again, it doesn't speak of a government that sees the future and invests in early intervention, prevention, supports for people that actually would allow them to reach their potential and contribute back to society as they wish to do.

Child poverty was not even an afterthought in this throne speech. Again, many of us are looking to this government for more than words but actions with hungry kids – affordable child care, full-day kindergarten – as being a tremendous investment in our people, in the long-term well-being of not only them as citizens but in their ability to enhance the community and contribute back in the future with good jobs and their own tax commitment.

Seniors' care continues to be mediocre due to the lack of real standards, the real commitment to monitoring those standards, and the lack of any kind of enforcement of standards in our seniors' care.

I was very pleased to hear the Premier commit to a stronger agenda for First Nations. I thought that was one of the most unique and important commitments this government has made. I look forward to seeing what's going to happen in our education system with respect to the curriculum on some of the First Nations experience with residential schools and the profound need in this province for honoring and reconciling with our First Nations people on the basis of knowledge, not just on the basis of rhetoric or sympathy, and providing the kind of resources that are going to be needed to help many of our First Nations people make the shift out of their inadequate housing and living standards and educational processes to those that will really work for them and allow them to succeed and be active and proud contributors to our culture and to their own, in some cases, on reserve.

When you drill down to some of the details within the throne speech, there are some warning flags. The speech indicates that spending "will be kept below the rate of population growth and inflation." This clearly can be code for two things. One is cutting government services, and the other is that we will continue the kinds of emergency funding and crisis management that will not serve the long-term interests of Albertans. There is also a mention of low taxes and no sales tax, which again reminds me that this government has not made a commitment to stable, dependable funding.

**The Speaker:** I hesitate to interrupt, but the time has run by.

Now we have to go to 29(2)(a). Is there anyone who wishes to take advantage of 29(2)(a)?

**Mr. Eggen:** Certainly, I've always admired and am interested in listening to the Member for Calgary-Mountain View carry on with his analysis.

4:40

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member.

There is, again, a commitment to low taxes and no sales tax, which again raises questions about whether we're going to be cutting services or continuing crisis management in this province and limping along with half measures for seniors, those in poverty, the disabled, and some of our First Nations priorities, which again I applaud but need to see some ability to address. Without new funding, without new staffing, without a new circle of commitment including First Nations, I don't see the deliverables. I think we need to hold ourselves accountable for those kinds of commitments made in the glory of a throne speech but, as I've said over the last 10 years, few of them delivered.

Another important statement, that Alberta will be an environmental leader, again begs the question: how? With no new

funding, with a very weak environment department that is responding to complaints, and without the real commitment to independent monitoring, it's very difficult to imagine that our environmental monitoring and our environmental reputation are not only going to serve us and our children with a better environmental condition in the future but that our international markets will respect and really enthusiastically embrace our products. We need to do better. And that, Mr. Speaker, is what I think Albertans call leadership, not management. Again, management is doing things right. Leadership is doing the right things right.

There is a vague mention in the speech about a new tailings management framework, that was talked about two years ago, new commitments made on how we're going to manage our tailings and what was going to be the consequence if companies did not manage their tailings ponds in a more progressive way. No clear accountability there.

Many interesting and important statements, vague commitments with no details and no timelines, and that is part of the problem that we as legislators have. If we fail to put in definitions, timelines, deliverables, we cannot be held accountable. I would like to encourage the government to actually put themselves out and ensure that both in the social and environmental and even the economic fields we set some timelines, some accountabilities, some deliverables and hold ourselves accountable if you want to build credibility and rebuild any sense of confidence in our democratic process, which I would argue is at an all-time low in Alberta.

The kind of turnout at the by-elections and the measures of engagement in our culture suggest that people are pretty cynical about the democratic process. I would argue that there are many things this government could do to help restore some confidence, some trust, and some legitimacy to our democratic process, including, for example, a review of the kind of first past the post voting system. I would challenge the government to think about what we used to have in Alberta, which was a proportional representation voting system, which was removed back in the late '50s and would encourage many people to realize the true impact of their vote by seeing proportions of voters resulting in proportions of legislators. At the current time it's one more thing that discourages people from participating either in the voting process or in the political and party system specifically.

We'll have to wait and see how much of this throne speech is a mirage and how much of it is actually going to be delivered upon. We must try to keep cynicism at bay. We must at the same time be skeptical of everything this government continues to say that they're committed to, and we must try to hold ourselves in a respectful dialogue around what needs to be done in this very critical time of our history to provide the kind of leadership, foresight, planning, and investments for the long-term well-being of Alberta.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you. Five seconds remain should anyone wish to take them. No?

Let's move on, then. We're going to Lacombe-Ponoka next, please.

**Mr. Fox:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and share my thoughts on the recent Speech from the Throne delivered by His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor. His Honour is truly a figure all Albertans are proud of. I certainly share in the sentiment.

Firstly, I'd like to thank the citizens of Lacombe-Ponoka for the honour and privilege of continuing to represent them in this Assembly. I will now give my response to the throne speech.

Albertans wanted the government to make a strong stance on addressing property rights here in Alberta, but sadly Bill 1 missed the point. I have heard from Albertans that the legislation should have been committed to addressing the issues in the Alberta Land Stewardship Act and other controversial pieces of legislation that impact their property rights, but it doesn't. Albertans have asked the government to show their commitment to recognizing and protecting property rights in Alberta, and this can be done.

It can be done through Motion 501. Albertans don't want the half measures of Bill 1, but I've heard loud and clear that what Albertans do want is to support the entrenchment of property rights in the federal Constitution and Charter. Motion 501 will do more for property rights protection in Alberta than any other amendment or bill. That is because it will entrench landowner rights, Albertans' rights, in Canada's highest law, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and will help this government fulfill the promise that it made to property owners in the throne speech.

Unlike Bill 1, Albertans know that Motion 501, if passed, would constitute Alberta's request that the Constitution be amended so that Albertans would have their property rights protected against any actions and laws passed by any future Alberta governments. The result of this motion would see property rights in Alberta enshrined in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Canadian Constitution. Consequently, this government would no longer have to bring forward legislation piece by piece to try and amend the mistakes that have been made in the past. As I said before, Albertans want to help this government. They want to help, and I want to help you keep this commitment that you made to Albertans on property rights in your throne speech.

Albertans know that strengthened property rights are a realistic possibility here in the province. Section 43 of the Constitution will allow this to happen. If this motion, Motion 501, goes forward and a similar motion in Ottawa passes in both the Alberta Legislature and the Houses of Parliament, we will have entrenched property rights here in the province of Alberta.

Some people might try to convince you that the section 43 formula only works for language; however, this is not the case. For example, in 1993 there was a constitutional amendment to allow a bridge to replace a ferry system in Prince Edward Island. In 2011 section 43 was used to modify the formula for apportioning seats in the House of Commons, apportioning the seats of the representatives who represent all Canadians. This is a powerful portion of our Constitution. It allows each province to put forward what they need for their province.

In one swift move if Motion 501 is adopted, we can have property rights in the province of Alberta. In one swift move we can tailor the legislative framework that has for a number of years now heavily impinged on landowner rights in Alberta. I urge you all to vote in favour of Motion 501 and see enshrined the protection of property rights for all Albertans. That's a legacy that we can all share in this Legislature. I want to share that with you; Albertans want to share that with you.

As the MLA for Lacombe-Ponoka I'm most excited to hold this government's feet to the fire on behalf of all Albertans and make sure that this government will keep their promise of building schools for Albertans. On September 23, 2014, I issued a press release on the problem of classrooms that were bursting at the seams in central Alberta. In 2012 the government promised a badly needed K to 6 school in Blackfalds, but at the time of the press release there still wasn't a shovel in the ground, and today there still isn't a shovel in the ground. During the by-election campaign many new schools were promised, one of these in my riding. I thank the government for doing this. Thank you. Thank you for recognizing that Blackfalds needs schools.

This province is in desperate need of new schools, not just in Lacombe-Ponoka but throughout the province. I thank the government for saying that these schools will be built; however, saying is not doing. Albertans need to see a real plan that shows just how the government plans to achieve this. I'd like to say that I will put my hand up and say to the government that I am going to work with you on behalf of Lacombe-Ponoka and all Albertans to achieve this. I will do this in my role in the opposition to make sure that that critical infrastructure is built. There's no room for political maneuvering in the building-of-schools business. Students need these, Albertans need these, teachers need these. Canada needs this. It's not just the province of Alberta. We are the economic engine of Canada. Canada needs us to build our schools.

#### 4:50

For two and a half years all Albertans have been waiting to see shovels in the ground on these new schools, and so far the only shovels in the ground that we've seen are the sod turnings. This isn't acceptable. We need to get to work on these schools. What is most important is the future generation of leaders and outstanding citizens that Alberta schools produce. The youth of today are those who will lead tomorrow. Albertans demand that the government make sure that we have these schools to educate, train, nurture, and equip our children with the skills to prepare them for the life ahead, and it begins with building schools.

Wildrose and I stand alongside Albertans on this mission to get construction happening. We have to speed up the tendering and design phases. You may have read about this in my colleague Drew Barnes' infrastructure policy paper that was published last week, titled *On Time and On Budget: Addressing Alberta's Infrastructure Needs*. Because at this moment only one – one – out of 50 schools that have been promised under this government by the previous Premier has begun its construction phase, that's a hard number to swallow: two and a half years, one school.

We have ideas given to us by Albertans, and we over here are willing to share our ideas with you. We will lend these to the government to make sure these schools are built as soon as possible. You know, it really is encouraging to watch our entire policy document be adopted by the government on the other side of the aisle. It means that the people on this side of the Legislature have been doing their jobs. They've been doing the work that Albertans have requested of them. I can stand here, and I can smile and say thank you to all of my colleagues and to all of you for adopting what Albertans have asked you for.

Lacombe-Ponoka is facing rapid growth challenges. The services that will provide the community with the necessities of water and waste management must be met with appropriate funding. You heard me ask this question earlier. The town of Blackfalds and the city of Lacombe are feeling this, and it is crucial – it is crucial – that the government fulfill its promise that it made to these communities. The north leg project of the central Alberta regional waste-water commission is crucial to seeing the needs met in these very rapidly growing communities. Albertans need the Water for Life project to be more responsive to the needs of extremely fast-growing communities here in the province of Alberta, and nowhere is that identified more than in the town of Blackfalds and the city of Lacombe.

Albertans want to see a government that is concerned about these issues not just within the riding of Lacombe-Ponoka but in all areas of this province. Albertans are relying on this government to include them in their big picture, in your big picture, the one that was put out in the throne speech and not to get lost in politics, in this government's policy.

Albertans hope this government is fully committed to ending waste and to prioritizing projects that affect all Albertans. I've spoken of two of these in my comments so far, the north wastewater leg for Lacombe and Blackfalds and the schools. I realize that it's not just my constituency that faces these challenges, but we need to make sure that the government is working on behalf of all Albertans and that those needs are being addressed.

This government has promised to build what the people need and to start planning for the long term, in fact, 25 years out. Albertans hope to see this government stick to the promises that they have made in this most recent throne speech because it is clearly spelled out that there is a lot of work to be done. Unfortunately, all of that infrastructure work over the last two and a half years that should have been done on schools – well, that time has been wasted.

Now, I really hope – I really hope – that we start to see shovels in the ground. It's unfortunate that we've missed another building season because I can tell you that it does add costs. It adds costs when we start trying to put shovels in the ground in January. The ground is frozen. You know, you've got to clear away the snow. It's hard to put utilities in at that point in time. So it pushes these back even further. We need these projects. Albertans need these projects today, not tomorrow but today. It's unfortunate that we've waited two and a half years for these schools to even begin construction.

The bright side is that we've got time ahead yet. If we start today and we work together today and you take the ideas that Albertans are giving to you through us, though the Official Opposition, we will start to move forward on some of these issues. I see the promises in your throne speech. I love that you've taken them from our policy documents. I just hope that you implement them in the way that we would have implemented them, and if you don't, I will be here along with my colleagues to make sure that those promises are implemented in the way that Albertans conveyed them to us.

Thank you very much for this time. Thank you again to the constituents in Lacombe-Ponoka for my ability to represent them and present this speech to you in this hallowed Chamber.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, section 29(2)(a) is available at this time.

If not – I see no one wanting to take it up – let's move on to the next speaker. Are there any other speakers? The hon. House leader for the opposition.

**Mr. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to stand and say a few words about the Speech from the Throne. I thought it was a very interesting document. I think there were a lot of good things in there, a lot of good words, good ideas. There were some things that I thought were a little bit vague, but hopefully we can put some meat on the bones a little bit as we go forward.

With regard to fiscal management I was happy to see that a large portion of the throne speech dealt with fiscal management and clearly was written in a way that used a lot of the language that the Wildrose over here has been using for a very long time with regard to budgets, with regard to debt, with regard to controlling our spending. I'm very optimistic about that. I think that that's good to see.

I think that we need to do more in this House to work together, especially right now, Mr. Speaker, because we do have a situation where, quite frankly, we do have a bit of a fiscal crisis developing. If oil bumps up tomorrow to \$100 or \$95, we can avoid it. But the fact of the matter is that if oil remains at \$70 to \$75, in that range, below or slightly above, we have a real problem on our hands.

We're going to have to learn to work together to do what's right for this province because there's too much at stake. It's one thing to carry, you know, \$10 billion, \$15 billion, or \$20 billion in debt, which is probably what we'll be taking on by 2016, but it's quite another if those numbers start popping up into the \$30 billion, \$40 billion, or \$50 billion range. If we do not get our fiscal house in order, that is what we will be looking at in the long term should oil prices remain where they are or near where they are right now.

So this is a very serious situation, and we need to treat it seriously and, hopefully, use this as a time to recalibrate the way we deal with finances in this province so that in future years when oil falls to these levels, we aren't left scrambling. That is, I think, a key development in our province's future. We need to make sure that we get this right and that we don't fall into this trap again of overspending so much that we put ourselves and our kids in this kind of predicament. Hopefully, we can work together in that regard.

I think that as the throne speech stated, keeping spending in line with inflation plus population growth is a good first step. It's very important not just operationally to do that but also with regard to capital. You've got to remember that capital is not just a one-time expense in most cases. Schools, roads, infrastructure, health facilities: they all have to be staffed. That's operational. They all have to be maintained. That's operational. These are real costs, so it's not just a one-off.

5:00

We have to make sure that as we move forward and we build, when we build infrastructure projects, we keep an eye out for what that's going to cost operationally going forward so that we can maintain spending increases to inflation plus population growth. I was very happy to see that in there, and I hope that we can work together to make that happen.

With regard to debt, you know, I didn't see enough in there. I would have liked to see more specifics with regard to controlling our debt. We are going to be in the \$20 billion range by the end of the 2016 budget cycle according to the government's documents, \$21 billion, actually. We need to rein that in. We need to at least have a repayment plan, a specific plan that's going to put a specific timeline in place that will show a way forward to repaying this debt and getting to the point where we don't have to take out more debt for capital. Is this going to happen overnight? No, not at \$75 oil. It's not. But we need to start thinking a little bit more long term and think about: what is the end goal here? What is the plan going to be to stop going into debt, as a first step, and then, after that, to get out of debt in a way that, of course, makes sense. Obviously, we don't want to be paying penalty charges and things like that. To put a plan in place to stop the debt and then eventually pay it off I think is very important. I didn't see too much in there about that, and I would like to see more going forward on that.

With regard to savings, again, I have been happy with some of the developments recently with regard to that. It seems like we're refocusing the purpose of our heritage trust fund more into savings. Now, of course, we don't have much money to save right now because of our predicament with the price of oil as well as our spending issues, but that is something I am happy to see. There is at least an indication that we're going to get back to the original purpose of the heritage fund, which was that we would put enough away in these times of plenty so that eventually, down the road, when oil and gas revenues decline, we would be in a situation where we could use interest from the heritage fund to replace those revenues and replace our reliance on oil and natural gas so that we didn't have to grossly increase taxes and make ourselves uncompetitive, which, of course, would lead to fewer

jobs, to people leaving the province, to becoming a have-not province. We want to avoid that, obviously, in the future.

Economic diversification is a part of that, but we have to realize that economic diversification completely away from oil and gas is not a realistic goal in the short term or even the medium term. We can work towards it, we can try to diversify as much as possible – that's important – but to say that we're going to completely replace the oil and gas economy and the revenues stemming therefrom with new industries, and so forth, that are completely unrelated to oil and gas: again, a great goal, a great initiative. Let's push that way, but it's not going to be possible in the short or medium term to do that. We need to therefore prepare to replace those revenues from oil and natural gas, and the best way to do that is through the heritage fund and through a very careful and consistent savings program. I'm happy to see that that is still a goal. It's obviously going to be slowed down somewhat because of our financial situation at this time, but long term I am very excited to see that.

I'm very curious to see Bill 2. Obviously, there are some things in Bill 2, the Alberta Accountability Act, that sound promising. I'm prepared to look at these bills – the same with Bill 1 – as first steps. I mean, I'm going to support Bill 1. I'm probably going to support Bill 2. I haven't seen it yet, obviously. But there will be proposals and amendments made to both of those bills, particularly Bill 2, regarding ways that we can cut down on the size of government, frankly, and that culture of entitlement. I'm not convinced that it's been taken care of in the last month. I think that there's still work to do there.

One of those things that I really would like to see in Bill 2 or an amendment to Bill 2 would be a cap on severance and bonuses for all government employees. I put forward a bill last session that would cap severance at \$100,000 for under five years of service and \$200,000 for over five years of service. I think that's reasonable. I still think that's very generous, actually. We have to put that in place so that on a go-forward these ridiculous severance allowances that have happened in the past – yes, it has been in the past. We've got to make sure that we don't repeat the mistakes of the past and the issues we've had with million dollar severances, massive payouts, and people collecting severance and then moving into another department, leaving and collecting another severance, as we saw in the case of Mrs. Weatherill. These things are just complete wastes of money, so we need to put this policy in place, and it needs to expand to the entire government, not just political staffers. I hope that we can do that.

With AHS, in particular, the Health minister I think is going to find that there's a lot of stuff to clean up over there, and I wish him well in doing that. There is a culture that's permeated over there for far too long, and I sure hope that the Health minister will work towards cleaning that up. He has a fresh slate, a blank slate, so I'm going to support him in his efforts to do that.

With regard to other things that we can do to get our budget and spending under control without affecting front-line services, I do think we need to look at – I understand from the throne speech there's a review being undertaken of our agencies, and so forth. I think that's a great idea. I hope it's a review with teeth and that we're not afraid to combine, amalgamate, and even in some cases get rid of certain boards and agencies in our province that, frankly, we could either do without or certainly where we could have one board have responsibility for more than what they're doing now. These costs add up, and our government has just simply gotten too fat and bloated. We need to shrink the size of the administration to one that at least is somewhat resembling the rest of Canada on the average instead of by far, as it is today, being the largest

bureaucracy in the entire country, including the federal government, on a per capita basis. I hope that that review will go well.

The results-based budgeting process: I have not seen results from that process yet that have led to any kind of real, substantial savings. I'm hopeful that it will at some point do that, but I'm still waiting, and hopefully we'll see that soon.

Those were the things I wanted to talk about, mostly, with regard to the throne speech. Basically, those are mostly fiscal issues given that that's my critic portfolio, but, you know, there are other issues, obviously. I look forward to seeing more decentralization of health care. That means a ton to me as the representative from Airdrie, but I truly feel that our local people, our local health professionals and locally elected leaders, are the ones that should be making the most decisions with regard to patient care and the allocation of our health dollars. You know, I think it's a great deal for AHS and the Health minister as well. It's less to do if they decentralize. It's fewer decisions that they have to make about situations that they probably have no idea about or very little idea about because they're not on the ground. It's not their fault; it's just a matter of location. Decentralizing that decision-making to the local level I think is absolutely critical, and again I like the language around that.

Obviously, I would like to see more meat on the bones here, but it's a good start. We've heard a lot of good words before in this Assembly. You know, jeeppers, I've only been here six years, and this is the fourth Premier we've had. I believe this is the seventh Finance minister I've had as Finance critic.

**An Hon. Member:** Really?

**Mr. Anderson:** Yeah. I don't know if that's a compliment or a real indictment. Regardless, it is what it is.

5:10

**An Hon. Member:** You're bad luck.

**Mr. Anderson:** I must be bad luck. That's right.

I hope that we're moving forward with this Premier, and I hope we're moving forward with this Health minister and Finance minister and Education minister, and so forth. We need to put our thinking caps on, reach out across the aisle, and work together because we are in a situation that is quite critical. We have too many people depending on us to do the right thing and get our house in order.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available.

If not, I'd be pleased to recognize any other speakers or perhaps a motion to adjourn debate at this time.

**Mr. Oberle:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and move that we adjourn consideration of the motion before the House at this time.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

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

**Mr. Oberle:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In consideration of progress that we've made today and in consideration of the opposition's wishes to participate in debate, I move that we now call it 6 o'clock and adjourn till 1:30 tomorrow.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:12 p.m. to Thursday at 1:30 p.m.]







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