



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
First Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, June 17, 2015

Day 3

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta
The 29th Legislature

First Session

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, June 17, 2015

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Let us reflect. Life and health are precious. When they are lost, all of us are impacted. Let us remember those who are no longer among us, and let us reach out with compassion and understanding to those who suffer. Today we remember and thank Constable Daniel Woodall for his bravery, his patriotism, and service to our province.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: I believe the Member for Calgary-Mountain View has a guest. Is that correct?

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a great pleasure for me to rise and introduce to you and through you to the Assembly two former members of this House, both former leaders of the Liberal opposition.

Dr. Kevin Taft is the former Member for Edmonton-Riverview and the leader of the Alberta Liberals from 2004 to 2008. Dr. Taft is the author of several books on the need for accountability and political change. His latest book, *Follow the Money*, is an excellent analysis of the waste and mismanagement of our resource wealth, and it should be required reading for everyone in the new cabinet.

Dr. Don Massey, former Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, served 11 years in this House, including serving as the Leader of the Official Opposition in 2004. Public education has always been the passion of Dr. Massey, having served on the Edmonton public school board before entering provincial politics. He was recently honoured in Edmonton by having a public school named after him, a fitting tribute for a life of service.

They're already standing. Let's welcome them to the Legislature.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Are there any other guests or visitors that members would like to introduce?

Members' Statements

The Speaker: The member who represents the constituency of Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Medical Laboratory Services in Medicine Hat

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is always a privilege to speak in this House about the fine work being done in my constituency. Today I'd like to acknowledge the Medicine Hat Diagnostic Lab and the tremendous service they have provided the city and surrounding area. For years the staff there have provided an exceptionally high quality of service diligently and efficiently. The residents of southeastern Alberta know first-hand what a valuable asset the lab has been to their communities.

That's why we are so perplexed and disappointed to see Alberta Health Services remove important services from this facility. This is not the first time we have dealt with a loss of services. Over time it seems that the gradual removal of core health services from smaller cities and towns has been an unstoppable trend. This is an issue that all Albertans find deeply troubling.

The plan announced by AHS will take diagnostic services from the Medicine Hat Diagnostic Lab and move them to the hospital, supposedly at a savings of \$5 million over five years. However, this decision has not been made transparently and in consultation with local residents. We continue to wait for specifics on the calculation of those savings. We still have not seen the business case for this decision, yet we all see the efficiency and the diligence of the Medicine Hat Diagnostic Lab first-hand. Local residents cannot support the decision without having all the details made clear.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to say that we both agreed on the importance of the lab during this past election and the need for them to continue doing their good work, and we have an opportunity now to work towards changing a flawed decision of the past and committing to the restoration of local services in the communities where they're so desperately needed and valued.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert.

Aboriginal Peoples

Mr. Horne: Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to recognize the cultural diversity and heritage of Alberta. Here in Edmonton we are presently in Treaty 6 territory, as is my constituency of Spruce Grove-St. Albert. My constituency also includes one of the communities of the Alexander First Nation, and this province also includes parts of treaties 4, 7, 8, and 10, each being comprised of multiple nations and cultures. The nations that comprise these treaties are not the only indigenous peoples in this province.

I myself am a proud member of the Métis Nation of Alberta, but I cannot claim the honour of coming from any indigenous culture, nor have I ever had a mother, sister, daughter, or aunt disappear. Yet I am proud to come from a family that was among the earliest to work in a western business here in Canada and in Alberta, my family having a long history with the Hudson's Bay Company.

We all have much to learn from the culture of the First Peoples, who have lived in Alberta for thousands of years, their respect for the environment, their understanding of home and community, and we need to recognize more fully the implications of all of us being treaty people. The treaties are agreements with mutual commitments, and together we need to learn more about how they can be a source of all of us enjoying better lives together in our communities.

With that in mind, I urge all civil servants, members, Albertans, and this government to observe aboriginal awareness day on June 21 and to recognize the past Aboriginal Awareness Week that occurred on May 19 to 22. Indeed, it is my hope that all Albertans will follow the advice of the UN declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples as well as the report on truth and reconciliation and strive to increase awareness of aboriginal peoples within a larger cultural mosaic and to build good relationships and respect the inherent rights of all indigenous peoples, not just now but at all times.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The Member for Calgary-Hays.

Constable Daniel Woodall

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was moved today by the outpouring of support from across Alberta and internationally for the regimental funeral of Constable Woodall. All Albertans depend on men and women in uniform to maintain and enforce the peace and order which we all depend upon to live our lives in safety. This city and indeed the province stopped today to recognize a hero. I will say that I was proud to have our Premier in the front row for

the event, and I thank her for attending. I would always hesitate to speak for all members of this House, but in this case I think we can all be thankful to all men and women in uniform and join together in thanking Constable Woodall and his family, his friends, his colleagues for the safety and security that we take for granted every day.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes.

Mr. Mason: If I may briefly interrupt, I would move that we ask for unanimous consent to revert to Ministerial Statements at this time.

[Unanimous consent granted]

1:40 Ministerial Statements Constable Daniel Woodall

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to my colleagues for allowing me to rise today to make some comments. As has already been noted, I've just returned from attending the funeral of Constable Woodall, and I was joined at the funeral by thousands and thousands of Albertans and many of my colleagues from all sides of this House today. I think that while most of us may be new to this House, I believe this may be one of the most heartbreaking issues that we will face throughout our career.

On our way to the Legislature today many of us saw the blue ribbons that were tied to trees that line Edmonton streets. Those ribbons are an expression of Edmontonians' support for the Edmonton Police Service following last week's devastating murder of EPS veteran Constable Daniel Woodall. This morning that outpouring of support grew exponentially as thousands of police officers and other first responders came together to bid farewell to Constable Woodall. They were joined by many Albertans, who came together with them to show support for his family, including his wife and their two young children and his EPS colleagues. They came together to remind us all of the great dangers that our men and our women in uniform face every day as they serve and as they protect others.

Mr. Speaker, Constable Woodall was the first EPS officer to be killed in the line of duty in 25 years. He served on the EPS hate crimes unit, which, along with members from other parts of the force, was attempting to arrest a suspect for criminal harassment. Sergeant Jason Harley was also shot during the attack, and we all pray for his full recovery and a speedy recovery.

As many may know already, Constable Woodall was recruited from Great Britain, where he served with the Greater Manchester Police for several years. Those who worked closely with him, both here in Edmonton and the U.K., remember a passionate, dedicated, funny, and caring officer.

Mr. Speaker, this was a senseless and devastating crime against the very people who work every day, day in and day out, to keep our communities safe. Constable Woodall's death, like those of all police and peace officers and other first responders who perish in the line of duty, is a national tragedy. Police officers and all law enforcement personnel put themselves on the line every day for us, our families, and for our communities. It is the very least that we can do to ensure that they are aware of and feel the warmth and the depth and the sincerity of our gratitude and our remembrance of their sacrifice.

I encourage all Albertans to think about what those blue ribbons represent. I encourage them to think about law enforcement staff and emergency services personnel right across our province as well as their families, who stand behind them each and every day. And I encourage us all to be grateful for all that they do to protect us day in and day out.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to request that we now take a moment of silence to remember Constable Woodall.

The Speaker: Please be seated. Thank you, hon. Premier.

I would remind the House that past precedent is that the hon. Leader of the Opposition may also speak to ministerial statements. I would also take the opportunity to remind the House that unanimous consent is required by the Assembly for any other additional speakers who may choose to speak.

I would recognize the hon. Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

Mr. Jean: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Premier, for those remarks. I would like to offer sincere condolences on behalf of all members of the Wildrose caucus to the family of Constable Woodall and especially to his wife and his two young children. They have been unfairly robbed of their father.

On Monday night of last week I received word that an officer-involved shooting had happened in southwest Edmonton. My heart sank. My immediate thoughts and my prayers went out to the first responders at the scene. I prayed for their safety and that they could all return home to the families that they love. When I received word that an Edmonton police officer had been killed in the line of duty, my heart broke. Constable Woodall, a very young man, only 35 years old, was callously gunned down while trying to protect the public from someone who cared very little for the sanctity of life. Unfortunately, Constable Woodall died in the line of duty while serving Canada, while serving all of us. There is no greater sacrifice, and not only must he be remembered, but he must be honoured.

Every morning police officers right across this country, right across this province put on their uniforms to serve and protect us and our public. They all recognize that that day may be the day they don't make it home to their family. That's what Constable Woodall did last Monday morning.

Constable Woodall was clearly a hero, as are the thousands of men and women that put those uniforms on every single day throughout this country. They live to serve the public of Alberta. They're the police officers, the RCMP, the firefighters, EMS, the sheriffs, and many other first responders that put their lives on the line for us and our priorities. Each of them, every one of them, puts their life on the line every single day to keep the public safe. We must honour and remember all of those people and remember the living as we do those who have passed. It's people like Constable Woodall who personify the term "public servant." I think a better term would be "hero."

Once again, my heartfelt condolences to his family, the loved ones, and also to the grieving members of the Edmonton Police Service, his family, his friends, our province, and our country.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member of the loyal opposition.

I acknowledge the Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to make two motions: one, that we extend Orders of the Day to complete the responses to the ministerial statement; secondly, that the House provide unanimous consent for any independent members who may wish to make a response to the Premier's remarks.

The Speaker: Thank you. You've heard the motion.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Speaker: Calgary-West.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To the Premier, thank you so much for being there today in the front row. It means a lot to me. It means a lot to my brothers and sisters in law enforcement. I am a sergeant with the Calgary Police Service. That is who I am. It's who I always will be.

To be here for six to eight months or however long it's been, and Constable Woodall and Constable Wynn – what you folks saw today was remarkable from a sense that you saw brotherhood; you saw sisterhood. You saw a family come together from throughout North America. They came here for a man who gave his life to Canada and to the United Kingdom because he was a police officer there as well. I think you all need to understand that this is a calling. It is not something that everybody can do, and that's fine. To see people who have died, to talk to people who have lost loved ones due to drunk drivers, to see people who have lost loved ones due to homicides is very difficult. It is very challenging.

1:50

I have chosen to come here to this realm to help my brothers and sisters. I had talked to them before I decided to go into politics, and I told them as I tell you: my heart is always with the Calgary Police Service; my heart is always with my brothers and sisters in law enforcement.

Mr. Speaker, 2829 is a number that will go down in Alberta history, if not infamy. That is the regimental number of Constable Woodall. You have to understand that those numbers may not mean much to a lot of people, but they mean something that is a sense of belonging. People will tattoo them on their bodies. They do it not out of any form of ego; they do it out of pride, pride for serving you and for serving Alberta.

I want to say that I was honoured and I was humbled to be there today with my colleagues. I offer whatever assistance I can, with my expertise in judicial administrative law, in incident command, to the Minister of Justice, whatever I can do to help out. I only got involved in politics to make this a better province.

Thank you, Constable Woodall.
God bless you all.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member. I believe I would speak for all of your peers in this House in expressing that you, probably more than any of us, appreciate the significance and the tragedy that has taken place. Thank you.

I'd like to recognize the Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to say thank you to the Premier and to the Leader of the Official Opposition, but a special word of thanks to the Member for Calgary-West for everything you do and for everything that first responders around this province do.

No one should have to experience what Constable Daniel Woodall, his family, and his law enforcement partners have gone through. This is indeed, as Police Chief Knecht described, a tragedy of unspeakable proportions. We must honour the courage and the hard work of first responders and never forget the risks they take. These are the people who run toward danger while the rest of us seek safety. We owe a debt of gratitude to each and every one of Alberta's first responders and to our military, who put their lives on the line to protect our values and our way of life. Edmonton has lost one of its best and bravest, and his sacrifice will be remembered by this community for all time.

As I stood to watch the procession today, I thought of Constable Woodall's family and his young children, who are close to the age of my kids. I want Constable Woodall's family to know that this community is there for them in their time of great need. I am profoundly moved by the police forces from around Alberta who joined the procession and especially the 180 officers from Calgary, many of whom took up posts around Edmonton so EPS officers could participate in the memorial. This is the same Alberta spirit of co-operation we saw when Edmonton Police Service officers and Edmonton firefighters came streaming down highway 2 to help us in Calgary and southern Alberta during the flood of 2013. I hope this is one small way we can begin to repay EPS and the people of Edmonton, by helping them during their own time of need.

My thoughts and the thoughts of my family and all of those in Calgary and all around the province of Alberta are with Constable Woodall's family and with those who serve with the Edmonton Police Service and first responders all around this province.

Thank you.

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

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the House for the opportunity to speak briefly on the memory of Constable Dan Woodall.

Today the thoughts of all Albertans are with the brave men and women of the Edmonton Police Service and with the young family that lost a husband and a dad. Like all police officers, Constable Woodall worked every day to protect all of us, serving with distinction in the hate crimes unit at the Edmonton Police Service. Like too many before him, he paid the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty. As each of us tries in our small way to pay tribute to this sacrifice and as the province says goodbye, we carry a debt that we can never repay. All we can do is honour the sacrifice and promise that we will not forget.

To all the heroes, who run towards danger and keep us safe, our deepest thanks always.

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

Pipeline Development

Mr. Jean: Yesterday, in response to a question from the Wildrose energy shadow minister, we heard the Premier's lengthy, surprising point of view on Alberta exporting bitumen for refining and sale to overseas markets. It was clear that she was not in favour of pipelines going south. Her opinions, I worry, might even give President Obama more excuses to block the Keystone pipeline. Will the Premier please clarify her position and assure Albertans that it is not the policy of her government to oppose the Northern Gateway pipeline, the Keystone pipeline, or any other pipeline?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms. Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As you know, Albertans elected us to focus on creating jobs and building the economy, and that's, of course, exactly what we will do. The comments that I made yesterday are actually no different than the comments that I made throughout the election. I understand that we need to work together with industry to promote access. We also need to do it within the context of understanding what's best for Alberta and ensuring that we retain the capacity to invest upgrading where possible. Those things are not separated. Talking about

capacity is not something that should be negated or criticized. It's part of the overall process.

Mr. Jean: This Premier has publicly expressed doubts about the Northern Gateway pipeline. Her fellow party members object to the Kinder Morgan pipeline. Her Energy minister's top adviser was employed by a group that worked against the Keystone pipeline, Northern Gateway pipeline, Energy East pipeline, and worked against using rail to move oil. Yesterday the Premier confirmed what we all know, that "pipelines are, in fact, the safest way to get product to market." Will the Premier confirm that her government will support all pipelines that get Alberta's energy to market safely?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday what I did when I talked about Northern Gateway – I'm not sure if I did that yesterday; whichever, it doesn't really matter – was that I identified what most people in the industry already understand and have in fact confirmed to me, that the likelihood of the Northern Gateway pipeline being approved in the near future is not great. Many industry leaders have acknowledged that. Now, I have said, however, that I'm quite open to the prospects of working with governments across this country with respect to Kinder Morgan, and I'm also quite interested in pursuing Energy East and working with industry in both cases to ensure that we get the best . . .

The Speaker: The hon. Official Opposition leader.

Mr. Jean: I would remind the Premier through you, Mr. Speaker, that a car never starts unless you turn the key.

The Wildrose certainly wants this government to succeed as we want Alberta to succeed. Alberta's energy industry, through its investment, taxes, and royalties, is the key driver of Alberta's economy. It creates the jobs. It creates the opportunities that drive Alberta's prosperity. It allows us to have an incredibly generous society that looks after the vulnerable. It allows all of us to have a standard of living that is second to none in the world and the envy of Canada and the world. Yet there are people in the Premier's caucus who have actively and continue to actively oppose pipeline . . .

2:00

Ms Notley: Well, on the issue of Northern Gateway, Mr. Speaker, I would just say that the key has been turned, the car has been on, it's been idling, and it's been idling for a really long time because there's no road for it to be on. I will say this. When you talk about developing market access and also developing a willingness for people to accept our pipelines, the other thing that we need to do is that we need to establish credibility on the environmental file. Now, those folks' cousins in Ottawa have not been successful in that regard and neither has the previous government. If we're going to make progress, we're going to do it by finally creating a record that we can be proud of.

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition. Second question.

Mr. Jean: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd suggest that it had the wrong driver and it continues to have the wrong driver.

Provincial Budget Timeline

Mr. Jean: Mr. Speaker, yesterday I tried to get Albertans some helpful answers on when they could expect the budget. Of course, Albertans need to know the government's fiscal plans as soon as possible, at the latest in September. The Premier and the Finance

minister were coy and suggested all sorts of timelines. Well, by September 7 this government will be four months out from the election. That is more than enough time to build a budget. Will the Premier introduce a budget in early September?

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, I've answered this question already. Albertans expect us to do a good, thorough job of reviewing the budget; they expect us to do a good, thorough job of reviewing the revenue; and they expect us to do a good, thorough job of reviewing spending and making sure that we don't make reckless, draconian across-the-board cuts but that if we do roll back certain programs, we do it thoughtfully and in an informed way. That's why they're going to see a budget in October.

Mr. Jean: Mr. Speaker, fall starts at the end of September. The Premier is hinting and telling us now that we won't get to see a budget until the end of October. According to the rules of our Legislature it takes more than 20 days of debate to pass a budget. That means we will not pass a budget until December. That is unacceptable to Albertans. Our businesses and our families deserve better, and they need to know this government's fiscal plan far before then. Why won't the Premier change her mind and bring in a budget in early September?

Ms Notley: Well, you know, it is true that if I were to operate the way the members opposite suggested that they were going to in their platform, we could just arbitrarily say: "You know what? Let's just close our eyes, cross our fingers, and take \$5 billion out and see what happens. You know what? It'll be great. We'll just wait until the teachers wander in and tell us that, yeah, there are a hundred kids in that class now because we've just laid off a whole bunch of them." [interjections] That's not a thoughtful way forward. That's exactly what Albertans voted against. We're going to bring in a budget in October, and if it takes longer to pass, it's because we're giving these guys a thorough opportunity to evaluate it once we've introduced it.

The Speaker: Might I advise the House that I have a hearing aid on one side, so I have difficulty hearing. It's very important that the Speaker hear both sides of the House while the party is speaking. I hope you'll respect that in the House and allow me to hear the speakers.

Second supplemental, hon. member.

Mr. Jean: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would remind the Premier that our platform budget wasn't off by billions of dollars.

November and December are when a government should be consulting for next year's budget; it is not when this Legislature should be working on this year's budget. The Premier seems strangely reluctant to come back in September. I can't help but note that we will have a federal election on October 19. Will the Premier confirm and assure Albertans that federal politics has nothing to do with her delaying the budget?

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, I can't help that the things that happened here in Alberta happened to work in favour of certain federal political parties and against others. You know, there's nothing we can do about that.

What this is about is ensuring that Albertans get a well-thought-out, well-researched, considered budget and that all members of the House get full opportunity to debate that budget. It's absolutely to be expected. If they're worried about the timeline, I would suggest that perhaps if their colleagues over there had not en masse crossed over to those guys, we wouldn't have had an election.

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

Health Care Review

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. All Albertans deserve a world-class health care system, and we want to help the government get there. But many remember that the last time Alberta centralized health services, all we got was ballooning wait times and packed emergency rooms. In response to this, the Health minister announced a plan to shrink wait times and provide more long-term spaces. Can the minister tell Albertans what this plan will actually involve besides throwing billions more at top-heavy Alberta Health Services bureaucrats?

Ms Hoffman: Thank you for the question. We made it very clear during the provincial election that we weren't going to be slashing billions of dollars from the front lines of health care and education, and Albertans made it very clear that that's what they stood by. So I'm sorry if some people don't like the results of May 5, but this government is here to deliver.

Mr. Barnes: Yesterday in question period the Health minister said that a review of the health system is already in the works. In fact, there was one just wrapped up a few short months ago. Quite frankly, there have been so many reviews and bureaucratic head-scratching on health care that we're beginning to lose count, and, oddly, none of the doctors, nurses, paramedics, front-line professionals, or any local experts that I've talked to know anything at all about this. I wonder exactly how the minister plans to hold a review without keeping any of our front-line experts in the loop.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Obviously, any time anyone begins a new job, they have a responsibility to review the decisions of the people who had that job for the 44 years before they took that job, and that's exactly what I'm doing. I've been tasked with making sure that we have good, strong decisions moving forward, and I'm doing a review. I'm reviewing the decisions that we've been making for 44 years to make sure that they align, moving forward, with our platform and the mandate Albertans have delivered to us.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Barnes: Minister, communities right across this province have told us that local decision-making is critical. A superboard in Edmonton is completely unresponsive to the need for 24-hour health care in Airdrie or Sylvan Lake, to the complete lack of dialysis treatment in Lac La Biche, or to proper diagnostic lab services in Medicine Hat. We know what the solution is: put local decisions back in the hands of local decision-makers. Minister, why announce a so-called review when you've already publicly committed to the failed centralized health policies of the past?

Ms Hoffman: Perhaps the member didn't hear what I was talking about. I was talking about our government taking time to do a review and make decisions moving forward. I wasn't talking about what past ministers, the one before or the one before that, did in the last six months or two years. I'm talking about decisions that we're making, ensuring that they're aligned with our values moving forward. I made it very clear, Mr. Speaker, that local voices will be considered moving forward. I think that what the members opposite would like to pretend is that you can cut billions of dollars out of

public health care, wave a magic wand, and magically have everything resolved because you just shuffled the decks at the cabinet table. That's not true. Albertans told us to focus on front-line . . .

The Speaker: The hon. leader of the third party.

Government Policies

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The current downturn in Alberta's economy is being made worse by the climate of uncertainty coming from some of the policy statements of this government. In particular, the lack of concrete statements or clarity around the timing or outcome of a pending royalty review and the implementation of corporate taxes is clearly causing the business community to hold off on some investments. Holding off until sometime this fall is too long. To the Minister of Finance: what are you going to do to concretely assure Albertans and the business community that your government is not going to drive away the investment that provides the jobs that Albertans are depending upon?

2:10

The Speaker: The Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the hon. member from the third party: in our platform we talked about diversification of the economy, and we will be doing that as we go forward. We'll be consulting with the broad-based business community to make sure that they're onside. Just with respect to the corporate taxes there's a range of opinion, and most recently lots of opinion says that that's not such a bad thing: as long as you give us notice, we can plan for it, and we can put it in our budgets. That's what we're doing. It was in our plan. It's in their budgets. We're doing it.

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker, on Monday, the same day the throne speech was delivered in this Assembly, the Canadian Association of Oilwell Drilling Contractors sent out an updated forecast for drilling operating days that shows an estimated job loss of more than 25,000, 50 per cent, this year due to "potential policy changes in Alberta with respect to royalties." To the Energy minister: what are you doing to stem this massive employment loss that is happening as a direct result of your government's policies?

The Speaker: The hon. Energy minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Those numbers that came out yesterday were for the first quarter, and they are a result of world and global oil prices. What we're doing is meeting with industry to understand their concerns and asking for their advice as we move forward in a royalty review. We've agreed to work together as partners for the betterment of a vibrant energy industry in Alberta.

Mr. McIver: Well, that's twice we've heard the government say that set of answers about working with industry.

On May 14th, a whole month ago, the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers agreed to form an industry group to work with the new Premier "to explore and embrace the best change possible." To the Premier: have you or your ministers met with CAPP in the full month since they extended the olive branch to you, and what progress have you made on working together with important stakeholder groups? Albertans want and need to know.

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's an excellent question. Yes, we've met with representatives of CAPP. In fact,

they were invited to attend a full cabinet meeting, and we had a fabulous opportunity to meet with them there. We've had a multiplicity of conversations: the Energy minister and myself as well as the environment minister. They've asked at this point for certain things. They've asked that when we proceed with respect to climate change and royalty review, we deal with those issues together, that they be linked. They also asked that they be consulted in a meaningful way as we develop our plans going forward, and they've asked that in the interests of certainty we do it without undue delay. All three of those . . .

The Speaker: With your indulgence I'm going to give a little leeway, as I already have on a couple of occasions today.

I would welcome the Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Value-added Energy Industries

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Finally, I get my turn. Before I begin, I do want to congratulate the Premier on her historic victory and congratulate the Leader of the Official Opposition and all members of the House. It is truly a new day in the Alberta Legislative Assembly, or at least I sincerely hope it is.

Mr. Speaker, this government speaks frequently of their fondness for value-added, and who wouldn't? The words "value-add" do sound very appealing. But saying those words and actually adding value are two very different things with very different implications for Alberta taxpayers. When making these decisions, it's important to know the government understands the integrated nature of North American and global energy markets. To the Minister of Energy: what specifically are the government's plans to force a value-added model onto the marketplace?

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you for that question. As was mentioned earlier, we were elected by Albertans to work with energy on the royalty review and other parts to understand the industry. To date I have been in Calgary six, seven, eight times since the election started, meeting with over a hundred people in industry. We're discussing – all of us have the same interests, putting Alberta jobs first and the possibility of job creation. We've all agreed to work as partners, to go forward and promote all those projects that will create and preserve Alberta jobs.

Mr. Clark: You sound pretty locked in on your definition of value-added, as if Alberta's current production doesn't add any value to Alberta's economy.

To the Minister of Energy again: how many billions of dollars is value-add going to cost Albertans?

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you for that question. At this point we're still meeting with industry to discuss all the stresses for them right now, the current global prices, and what it will take for capital investments in this industry to create those jobs and move forward. We're talking about pipelines. We're talking about value-added and the millions and billions that it will take to invest. We're creating a climate that will encourage that investment as we move forward.

Mr. Clark: Sounds a lot more like magical thinking than a concrete plan, Mr. Speaker.

We were told the North West upgrader, which is now called the Sturgeon refinery, was a low-cost, low-risk project that would add value by upgrading domestic bitumen. Again to the Minister of Energy: will your government continue the North West upgrader boondoggle, a project which will cost Alberta taxpayers \$26 billion?

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you for that question. As with all the projects, we are consulting with industry as we move forward and looking at the pros and cons of all of that. Again, we're in constant consultation with industry to look at those projects that will bring value and jobs to Alberta.

The Speaker: I wish to underline again as we move past speaker 5: no preambles in the supplementary portions of your question.

I will recognize the Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Energy Industry Consultation

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government was elected to show leadership in both growing the economy and protecting the environment. Can the Minister of Energy tell me what she's doing to ensure that industry perspectives are included in this process?

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you for that question. Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned previously, I've been doing numerous visits to Calgary, engaging energy sector leaders. In fact, I got back about an hour ago from Calgary. We met with CAPP this morning; 40 CEOs and presidents were in the room. We discussed in a very frank manner how we're going to move forward together as energy partners and Alberta partners and create jobs and an industry that is going to be strong for Albertans.

Ms McPherson: Mr. Speaker, as the minister has been holding meetings, what has she been hearing from these discussions?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our energy partners have been very pleased, first of all, that we have met with them. Some of them have never been consulted before. Nobody has asked for their ideas. They advised us to look at the last resources review and not create a them versus us. They're pleased that we're working as partners, they're pleased that we're being collaborative, and they're very pleased to have input for all Albertans.

2:20

Ms McPherson: Mr. Speaker, since Alberta is an energy-producing province and many jobs rely on this important sector, what will the minister do to ensure that their ideas are addressed?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I've said, we have been listening and learning from the industry. They're encouraging us to create a royalty review, an energy review, an industry review that includes all the parts and all the sectors for all of Alberta. We are listening, and by all means we will create a plan moving forward that will encourage investment in Alberta, and in the end everything will be better for Albertans.

The Speaker: I recognize the Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

Municipal Sustainability Initiative Funding

Mr. Stier: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week a major concern was raised at a joint meeting of the mayors and reeves of southern Alberta regarding sustainable, continued support for communities through MSI funding. The members are worried because they've received no updated information from this new government regarding any funding promises since those proposed by the former PC government. To the minister: considering that the amount of

MSI funding given to the communities has traditionally been communicated prior to the fall, when they prepare their budgets for the following year, will you commit now to maintaining the MSI funds promised by the last government for '15-16?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the hon. member for the question. You know, this government was elected on wanting to support our cities, our municipalities to ensure that they have the tools and resources available to deliver the services that Albertans rely on. I appreciate that the municipalities in question have been patient. I ask them to be a little bit more patient. This government will be ensuring that grants get to them.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Stier: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate the applause. I really do.

You know, our local decision-makers really deserve a better answer than that, Minister. The Municipal Government Amendment Act, which has now been given royal assent, that we passed in March, requires municipalities to prepare three-year financial plans and five-year capital plans. To the Minister of Municipal Affairs again, then: how can municipalities possibly prepare financial plans and capital plans when they don't know how much MSI funding the government intends to give them before the fall?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll thank the member for the question. Yesterday the Finance minister tabled the interim supply bill, which today we will be debating, so the member and municipalities will be able to see what this government is proposing as far as the dollars for MSI and for many of the other important grants that municipalities get.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Stier: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. The mayors and Reeves of southern Alberta as well as municipal leaders from across the province, frankly, have sent the minister a letter demanding that at the time of the release of the '15-16 budget this fall MSI funding intentions for the next year also be fully disclosed. To the minister: local decision-makers need to know how much MSI funding they'll be getting in order to plan for the future, not what is in the interim supply. Will you communicate this vital information to them today?

Mr. Bilous: Mr. Speaker, quite frankly, I think it would be irresponsible to make promises before this government has actually deliberated on a budget and decided exactly how we're going to go moving forward. I appreciate that municipalities are very eager to get answers. I can tell you that the Premier, this government, and myself are committed to ensuring that municipalities have the resources and the tools available to ensure that they can provide services to their constituents. So I ask the member and municipalities to be patient, and the answer will be forthcoming.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The Speaker will ask to be given some more indulgence. I'm looking for Calgary-Greenway and can't find him in the pictures.

An Hon. Member: There he is.

The Speaker: My apologies. The hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway.

Mr. Bhullar: Hard to miss.

The Speaker: He is hard to miss.

Mr. Bhullar: Yes, Mr. Speaker. That is a first. I don't think I've ever been missed. This is the first time in many years that I get up to ask a question in this Assembly, so congratulations.

Provincial Tax Policy

Mr. Bhullar: I know the new government is eager to move forward with their platform. However, Mr. Speaker, there are many unintended consequences. My first question is to the Minister of Finance. One-third of Alberta's total tax revenue comes from a very small percentage of tax filers. If you drive just half of these individuals outside of Alberta with your proposed changes, how much money will we lose?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll maybe use a quote from Peter Lougheed, and I'll take the advice of former Premier Lougheed. He said in 2011 that it is time for us to consider an increase in corporate and personal income tax. We are doing that. In our platform we talked about both of those things. We'll take steps in the next day or two to bring those before this House and have a vote on them. We'll have an opportunity to vote on them or not. But we don't feel like anybody is going to leave this beautiful province of Alberta because there's everything here people want.

The Speaker: First supplemental from Calgary-Greenway.

Mr. Bhullar: Thank you very much. We're not saying: don't raise them. What we are saying is: don't be the highest in the country. [interjections] Mr. Speaker, if I may, Alberta has a large proportion of individuals that file their taxes here that don't actually live here because this has been the cheapest jurisdiction to file taxes. If those people move, the burden shifts to the middle class. How much are you going to have to raise taxes on the middle class in three years or four years from now to make up for those \$3 billion?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think that federally we can see that the PCs have raised taxes on the middle class. We're not going to be doing that. Ninety-three per cent of tax filers will not see an increase to their taxes as a result of the proposals we're bringing forward in a few days.

Mr. Bhullar: Mr. Speaker, the question is quite simple. Minister, you yourself have said that 93 per cent will not see a change. That other 7 per cent, however, produces about 30 per cent of our personal income tax revenue. If those tax filers move to British Columbia or move to Ontario, who is going to make up the difference? Is it hard-working Alberta families that have to make up the difference because of your short-sightedness to live up to . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Members on the government side of the House, I need to remind you that I couldn't always hear his question, so I hope you'll appreciate that.

The Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much. The tax changes that we are bringing forward are fair for Albertans. They voted for us. We told them clearly what we were going to be doing. To the hon. member: I don't want to see one person leave this province. They get good value from all the programs and services here, and they'll continue to stay here not only because of the beautiful mountains but because this is an NDP government, and it's a great place to be.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

2:30

Education System

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It seems that the world of education is a very confusing place these days. I have three questions for the minister so he can help Albertans get some clarity. The Wildrose has always stood up for parental choice in school models. Will the Minister of Education commit this government to provide predictable and equitable funding for education and options that fall outside the public and separate systems for the next four years?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the question from the Official Opposition Education critic, his first time, and we'll have a long and productive relationship, I'm sure. It's very important to understand first and foremost that this government chose to make a predictable and significant re-establishment of funding for 12,000 new students who just entered our education system. That's going to pay for teachers, it's going to pay for the upkeep of places, and it's for all forms of delivery of education: for our home-schools, for private schools, for public schools as well.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans also need clarity on Inspiring Education. Redesigning the curriculum is one of the initiatives intended to bring the vision of Inspiring Education to life. Does the Minister of Education intend to rewrite the Alberta curricula to meet the vague goals of Inspiring Education, which many parents and experts think is totally uninspiring?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you very much for this question. We recognize that some people have concerns around the curriculum, around the math curriculum as well. The very first thing I can do and say is that by re-establishing funding, we can make sure that there are lower class sizes, that we can have inclusion with supports. We can have adequate money to pay for public education, the education that we want right across the province, and we will work with our partners to make sure that the curriculum teaches the basics of language and mathematics.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans also need clarity on this government's education commitments. Yesterday the minister said, "We put in \$103 million to meet the needs of 12,000 new students moving into the school system here in the fall." The minister's own numbers disagree. They show that the real cost of this announcement was over \$200 million, and there will only be 7,500 new students. Could the minister help Albertans understand the discrepancy between these figures? Was this discovery math or just . . .

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, our numbers are sound, and the hon. member can have perhaps a little lesson between the financial year of the province and the budgeting for a school year. That's where the difference lies. Certainly, we made a commitment by showing our good intentions for the interim funding. We know that we will put in place stable funding so that we can bring up our averages, make sure that students are learning the basics and that we can provide education for all people to be proud of in this province.

The Speaker: The chair will recognize the hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Seniors' Care in Fort McMurray

Mr. Yao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The first letter that the Wildrose sent to the Premier was about seniors' care in Fort McMurray. Seniors' care is an issue everywhere, but nowhere is it more prevalent than in Fort McMurray. No other community our size has gone this long without a long-term health care facility. We wrote the Premier, asking her to delay the tender for an ill-conceived seniors' project in Fort McMurray and to listen to the community. Is the Premier prepared to give the residents of Fort McMurray the facility that they need and deserve?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. We agree that this is a long overdue facility. We have been disappointed, as I'm sure the residents of Fort McMurray have been, that the seniors living there and in the surrounding neighbourhoods haven't had an option to age in place. In terms of moving forward, we want to make sure that we follow contracts, that we're not breaking contracts willy-nilly, unlike what some people might be proposing, and that, of course, long-term care is an option as well as other types of supportive living for the seniors of Fort McMurray.

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, the Parsons Creek project is the wrong project in the wrong location. The community needs an aging-in-place facility built at Willow Square. The Wildrose campaigned for Willow Square. The NDP candidates up in Fort McMurray campaigned for Willow Square. The only people that campaigned for Parsons Creek were the PCs. Willow Square is a model for every other community. Instead, an ill-conceived multimillion-dollar project is proceeding. Can the Premier tell us why such a controversial multimillion-dollar decision was made in between the election and her getting sworn in?

Ms Hoffman: It's always a great day, Mr. Speaker, when you can find opportunities to agree with members of the opposition. They agree with this government that the decisions made by the past government were out of touch, out of whack, and didn't actually help any of the Albertans in terms of making sure that we deliver the long-term care facility for Fort McMurray.

Of course, we are providing some stability as we move forward. In every decision that we are making, we're taking due consideration. One of the considerations that needs to be taken into consideration is the fact that something has been signed. The Minister of Infrastructure is reviewing the contracts as we continue to move forward and making sure that we've got the right facility for the people of . . .

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, like I said, seniors' care is an issue everywhere in Alberta. The Wildrose is here to help this new government. The government mentioned that they would meet our society's needs for home and long-term care. This is an opportunity to correct the errors of previous governments. Will the minister give us any details now on this government and how it will meet the needs of the . . .

Ms Hoffman: Thank you again to the hon. member. Of course, we want to make sure that any future decisions are made with the confidence of this government, and we are very happy to work with our partners on all sides of this House to make sure that local needs are being addressed as we continue to move forward. One of the things that needs to also be acknowledged is that there are financial implications for any infrastructure decision, especially once contracts have been signed. So we have to take financial responsibility as well as the evidence based on the needs of seniors and the local community as we move forward together with members opposite as well.

Thank you.

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

Dr. Starke: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a sad and sombre day here in the Chamber. I think one thing that we can all agree on is that the best way to honour Constable Woodall's memory is to do exactly what we're doing, and that is to actively participate in democracy, that he fought to preserve and protect.

Health Care System Decision-making

Dr. Starke: On that note, yesterday the Health minister told us that she had cancelled plans for decentralizing control of AHS in order to bring stability to the system, but the rural health services review and basically all of rural Alberta told her that, in fact, that's exactly what had to happen. To the Health minister: why have you decided to listen to your own opinions rather than to the opinions of rural Albertans?

The Speaker: The hon. Health minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. Past decisions may have been driven specifically in isolation and without consultation, but we've been very clear on the fact that we are communicating with front-line service providers. Members may have paid attention to the articles that have been published in the *Journal* and the support from the nurses as well as lead physicians across Alberta that what Alberta needs right now is stability, not another set of letterhead. They need to make sure that we can support front-line service delivery, and stability is needed for that.

Dr. Starke: Well, Mr. Speaker, trust me, we in the third-party caucus understand the benefits that can accrue to Alberta from stability and consistency, but we also recognize that Alberta sometimes can be ready for change. In fact, though, the rural health review is based on input from over 100 Alberta communities, including countless front-line workers, and most of the 55 other recommendations also involve making changes. So what other recommendations does the Health minister plan to reverse or ignore in the name of stability?

2:40

Ms Hoffman: Thank you to the hon. member for the question. Stability is important to front-line workers. I've had lots of opportunities to speak to them, and one of the key messages that resonated

is that health care providers should be able to wake up in the morning knowing who they're going to be reporting to when they show up to work. This government is going to make that happen.

Now, in terms of making sure that we acknowledge the recommendations in the rural health review, that's absolutely been one of the items that we've been paying attention to and that I'll continue to update this House on when we have opportunities to do so, Mr. Speaker.

Dr. Starke: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that the rural health review came about as a result of hundreds of hours of co-operative effort from people all across Alberta, including, I might point out, a member of your own caucus, a registered nurse, who came and spoke with us, is the minister willing to sit down with me to review and to discuss that work for the benefit of all Albertans?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member. I've actually put in a request to both the second and the third parties to have one-on-ones with the critics that shadow my portfolios, so the critics for Health and for Seniors. I believe that there has been a bit of a lag in terms of finding a time that aligns, but I would be very happy to have that be one of the items on the agenda when we do meet.

The Speaker: I'd like to recognize the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Infrastructure Project Prioritization

Ms Gray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Infrastructure. During the recent election we told Albertans that we would end the old practice of politicizing infrastructure projects. I know that the transparent prioritization and allocation of infrastructure resources are very important to the people of Alberta. Could the minister please update the House on the status of the infrastructure sunshine list?

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much for the question, hon. member. Mr. Speaker, this government certainly wants to let the sunshine in, and I want to indicate that we were elected to provide open, honest, and transparent government, particularly in the capital investment process. We've seen in the past the manipulation of the capital process in order to secure electoral advantage for ministers and candidates, and that's not something that we're prepared to accept. So we are going ahead on our promise to establish a sunshine list so everyone will know which capital projects are . . .

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms Gray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the immense growth that has occurred in our province in the last decade, can the minister please shed any light on how the government will address the growing need for hospitals and schools in Alberta?

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much for the question. Mr. Speaker, it's our job to make sure that we provide the capital structures necessary to deliver the services that Albertans want with respect to education, health care, and other services. So I'll be working with my colleagues, particularly in Health and Education, to review the capital projects that have been planned. We will be doing our very best to make sure that the necessary projects that Albertans need and want are brought forward in a timely fashion and done on budget.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Ms Gray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad to hear that our government is working hard to deliver on the commitments we made to Albertans. We promised Albertans not only to build new infrastructure but also to repair existing hospitals and schools, high concerns for my constituents in Edmonton-Mill Woods. Can the minister please update the House on how this government will improve Alberta's crumbling health and education facilities?

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much for that question, hon. member. Mr. Speaker, members on both sides of the House know that we have to meet the needs of Albertans. They have important things that need to be delivered to them in terms of hospitals and health care and educational facilities, and we are committed to ending the practice of broken promises, where a government promises one thing in the election and then does something completely opposite after the election. So we will deliver on our promise to provide world-class services to Albertans.

Thank you.

The Speaker: I'd like to acknowledge the hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Minimum Wage

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to helping this government focus on jobs, growth, and prosperity in the coming years, but I do have some questions for them on the minimum wage hike. The NDP have said that low-income workers will benefit from a dramatic increase to the minimum wage. No doubt it will help some, but it will also cause job losses for others. What is the minister going to do to help those people who are going to lose their jobs?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Thank you also to the member for the question. Certainly, it was a clear campaign promise of ours to increase the minimum wage to \$15 an hour by 2018. We know that when some Alberta families are doing better, all Alberta families are doing better. We know from our consultations that the Premier and I were a part of last week with industry and also with advocacy groups and labour that many people are in support of increasing the minimum wage, and we're going ahead on this.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Wildrose and Albertans alike want to see as many Albertans in the workforce as possible. Minister, over a dozen Canadian studies have shown that just a 10 per cent increase in the minimum wage causes youth unemployment to rise by 3 to 6 per cent. You are wanting to raise it by 50 per cent in just three short years, so I will ask again. In the interests of helping all Albertans, what's the minister's plan to protect those who will lose their jobs with this upcoming proposed policy?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I said, the Premier and I consulted with business and labour and advocacy groups, and we're hearing what we can do to support them in making the changes. We know that 62 per cent of low-wage workers are women. We know that this will support them. It will

help many, many people. We are absolutely moving forward on this.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Hunter: There is no doubt that small businesses, those who create jobs in this province, are worried about paying their bills and keeping the doors open. These are uncertain times. Employment costs can account for 50 to 70 per cent of total expenses. These job creators have a deep understanding of this issue, and they believe there is a much more moderate approach to this. Will the minister commit to listen to the province's job creators rather than just big labour interests before bulldozing this policy through?

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We have been listening to industry and labour and advocacy groups on this issue, and we've heard also from the community that actually paying a higher wage, a \$15 wage, helps them because people have more retention. There is less need for recruitment, so they actually save money and create stability. Again, we're moving ahead on this.

Thank you.

Members' Statements

(continued)

The Speaker: The three remaining members' statements.

2:50

Calgary Dream Centre

Ms Payne: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honour the work of the Calgary Dream Centre, a pillar in the community of Calgary-Acadia, which is celebrating its 10th year of service.

The Dream Centre is a faith-based recovery centre that also offers life management skills, career development, and healthy living to the men in its programs. The Dream Centre also gives the space to heal emotional wounds by providing a compassionate ear, a shoulder to cry on, and spiritual support.

I recently visited the Dream Centre and met with some of their exceptional staff and residents. It was an honour to meet the people working so hard day in and day out to support members of our community and to ensure that all Albertans have the opportunity to meet their full potential.

The Calgary Dream Centre invests in people, and that is one of the most important investments we can make. The Dream Centre asks for compassion so that everyone feels cared for. It respects all human beings without reservation. It champions integrity and is always looking for ways to improve the lives of many. It is this kind of compassion and respect that makes Alberta such an amazing place to live.

I know that our government, under the leadership of Premier Notley, will be looking at avenues to improve life for all Albertans. [interjections]

An Hon. Member: Point of order.

Ms Payne: Organizations like the Dream Centre are models of how we can . . .

The Speaker: There are no points of order allowed in Members' Statements.

I would caution the members that you avoid using personal names in the Legislature.

Ms Payne: Thank you.

Hard work and dedication have been invested into the Dream Centre over the past 10 years, and I know this will continue. The

Dream Centre will be expanding its services to women soon, and I had the honour of meeting people who will be establishing those programs. My thanks to the staff and the supporters of the Calgary Dream Centre for their work and their kind hearts and gentle souls, that work to make Calgary a better place to live.

County Clothes-Line Foundation

Ms McKittrick: Mr. Speaker, in the throne speech the Lieutenant Governor stated: “We are optimistic, hopeful, entrepreneurial, remarkably diverse, and community-minded people. We are people who dream no little dreams and live them. We are people who get things done.”

It is with pride today that I highlight how one organization in Strathcona county has been modelling this spirit. At the pride of Strathcona county awards on Monday night the County Clothes-Line Foundation received the mayor’s award for their contribution of over \$1.6 million in the past 30 years to approximately 950 local organizations, groups, and individuals. The foundation also works through Alberta apprenticeship and industry training and Alberta Innovation and Advanced Education to ensure that students receive annual scholarships.

The County Clothes-Line is a true social enterprise. It operates a nonprofit second-hand clothing store to provide county residents a place to shop and donate their gently-used goods. This organization also provides free clothing to job seekers and essential goods to families in need.

Like many community organizations, volunteers started the County Clothes-Line. The County Clothes-Line store opened in April 1984. They hoped that the money raised would only cover operational costs, and instead they were surprised by the instant popularity and money generated.

I personally spent five years at the University of Victoria researching the contribution of nonprofits, social enterprises, and co-operatives to the economy, capacity, and well-being of communities. It gives me great pleasure that an organization in my constituency demonstrates this contribution so well. My congratulations to the current and past volunteers and staff of County Clothes-Line for their work in building capacity and using community strengths to fund much-needed projects.

The Speaker: Before I recognize the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, Member for Calgary-Hays, I want to confirm that you did speak earlier on Members’ Statements.

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker, yes, I did. Thank you for asking.

The Speaker: The Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Official Opposition Policies

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, we the members of the 29th Legislature were elected by our constituents to stand up for their beliefs and their values. They sent us here to defend their rights. The vast majority of people in Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills were clear about their wishes. They expect me to fight for small and effective government, low taxes, and personal responsibility as well as personal choice. This is the Alberta way, and that is exactly what I intend to do. The good citizens of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills oppose unnecessary, bureaucratic central planning. We see no value in overtaxing the hard-working Alberta families who drive our economy. We don’t believe in pitting one region of Alberta against another.

We do believe that parents are the best people to make decisions about their children’s education. We believe that local community

leaders are best positioned to make decisions that impact our homes and our communities. We believe that low taxes are the key to economic prosperity, that we must always keep our province competitive and we must always pursue policies intended to make Alberta the best place to live, work, and raise a family. Let me be clear. Albertans make Alberta great, not the government.

The freedoms we enjoy – the freedom of speech, the freedom of assembly, the freedom of religion – are our society’s foundation. These freedoms are worth defending, not just on election day but each and every day, and I can assure you that’s what I and my colleagues intend to do.

Tabling Returns and Reports

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker, I have two tablings. I made reference in my questions today to website statements from the Canadian Association of Oilwell Drilling Contractors and from CAPP. I have five copies of each, which I think is the requisite number, and I’d like to table them now.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It’s my pleasure to rise today to table the requisite five copies of three documents I referred to yesterday during the debate on Government Motion 3 on member appointments to committees. There are five copies of my letter to the hon. Speaker and two e-mails that I sent to House leaders and members from Calgary-Mountain View and Calgary-Bow on committee assignments. I’d like to table those now.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Seeing as the clock is about to approach 3 p.m., I’d like to request unanimous consent of the House to complete the Routine past 3 p.m., Standing Order 7(7).

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

Mr. Rodney: I thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’m humbled and honoured to table five copies of the program for the regimental funeral of Constable Daniel Woodall. Constable Woodall was a son, husband, father, friend, law enforcement specialist, and a hero. Dan, we salute you, we celebrate your life, we honour your sacrifice, we mourn your loss, we send our love to your family, and we will remember you.

Statement by the Speaker

Anticipation

The Speaker: Hon. members, I have a statement with respect to a point of order concerning anticipation raised by the Official Opposition House Leader in our last sitting. Hon. members, the Official Opposition House Leader raised a point of order yesterday concerning anticipation. The exchange between that member and the Government House Leader can be found at page 22 of *Alberta Hansard* for June 16, 2015. I indicated that I would take it under advisement, which I have, and I’m prepared to rule on it today.

First, I would like to make a point about practice when points of order are raised. Members should indicate in the Assembly by rising and catching my attention that they wish to raise a point of order. This procedure ensures that notice is provided to the members, to

myself, and to the people who assist on those matters such as the table officers and *Hansard* staff.

3:00

With respect to the point of order, it related to a question by the Member for Calgary-Cross to the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General about donations to political parties, which is the subject of Bill 1, which can be found on page 19 of the *Alberta Hansard* for yesterday, June 16.

For the benefit of all members I will read Standing Order 23(e), which states:

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

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

Basically, the rule is what it says, that a part of the proceedings should not be on the same subject as something that is scheduled for later in the day. My investigation into the matter demonstrates that the rule is not necessarily strictly observed in relation to Oral Question Period. Speaker Kowalski stated on March 3, 1998, page 649 of *Alberta Hansard* that questions that were framed so as to ask if something was a matter of government policy "took it out of the realm of debate on a particular bill." I note that in a May 8, 2013, ruling on the same issue, page 2194 of *Alberta Hansard* for that day, Speaker Zwodzesky reaffirmed Speaker Kowalski's ruling on the rule against anticipation not being violated by a question about the government policy in relation to a bill which was up for consideration that day.

Members may be interested to know that the Canadian House of Commons no longer applies the rule against anticipation during question period, as is discussed on page 561 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition. In this instance, the question asked what the government was doing about campaign financing, which is, of course, the subject of Bill 1. I think the Official Opposition House Leader had a valid point and a legitimate point of order although it could have been maybe brought forward to the Assembly's attention at the appropriate time.

As we move forward together during this session, I am sure that we will now be more aware of the rule against anticipation.

Orders of the Day Committee of Supply

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

The Chair: I'd like to call the Committee of Supply to order.

Interim Supply Estimates 2015-16 (No. 2) General Revenue Fund and Lottery Fund

The Chair: Hon. members, before we commence this afternoon's consideration of interim supply, I'd like to review briefly the standing orders governing the speaking rotation. As provided for in Standing Order 59.02, the rotation in Standing Order 59.01(6) is deemed to apply, which is as follows:

- (a) the Minister, or the member of the Executive Council acting on the Minister's behalf, may make opening comments not to exceed 10 minutes,
- (b) for the hour that follows, members of the Official Opposition and the Minister, or the member of the Executive Council acting on the Minister's behalf, may speak,

- (c) for the next 20 minutes, the members of the third party . . . and the Minister or the member of the Executive Council acting on the Minister's behalf, may speak . . .
- (d.1) for the next 20 minutes, the members of any other party represented in the Assembly or any independent Members and the Minister, or the member of the Executive Council acting on the Minister's behalf, may speak,
- (e) for the next 20 minutes, private members of the Government caucus and the Minister or the member of the Executive Council acting on the Minister's behalf, may speak.

During the above rotation speaking times are limited to 10 minutes. For the time remaining, to the extent possible the rotation outlined above shall apply with the speaking times reduced to five minutes, as provided in Standing Order 59.02(1)(c). Provided that the chair has been notified, a minister and a private member may combine their speaking times with both taking and yielding the floor during the combined period. Finally, as provided for in Government Motion 8, approved by the Assembly yesterday, the time allotted for consideration is three hours.

The Committee of Supply has under consideration the 2015-16 interim supply estimates (No. 2).

I will now recognize the hon. President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance to move the estimates.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's my pleasure to move the 2015-16 interim supply estimates (No. 2) for the Legislative Assembly and the government. When passed, these interim supply estimates will authorize approximate spending of \$56 million for the Legislative Assembly, \$15.4 billion in expense funding, \$2 billion in capital investment funding, \$765 million in financial transactions funding for the government, and \$387 million for the transfer from the lottery fund to the general revenue fund.

These interim supply estimates provide funding authorization that will allow the normal business of the province to continue until the full 2015-16 estimates are approved in the fall. These estimates also follow through on specific commitments this government has made to the people of Alberta.

Approval of interim supply estimates, pending the release and approval of the budget, will allow the government the time it needs to prepare its plans and the Assembly the time it needs to review and debate those plans here before us. Those budget documents will include comprehensive budget information in the form of the government's fiscal and business plans, the ministry business plans, and the government estimates. These estimates will be fully debated when the budget documents are tabled.

Just with regard to the budget itself, obviously, we're not doing this fast because we're going to do it right. The budget, as I said, will be presented in the fall. In the meantime we're investing in health care, education, postsecondary education, health services, just like Albertans asked us to do by virtue of the election. This supply bill is all about keeping the lights on, the trains running, and government functioning. At the same time we're restoring stability to Alberta's education, health care, and human services. The bill will maintain stability in essential public services while the government reviews the economic situation, finances, and budgeting priorities.

Just a note about what we're investing in. We're investing in stable and predictable funding for our schools and postsecondary institutions. We're doing that because investing in skills and education is the single best investment our province can make to ensure the future prosperity of all. We're investing in stable and predictable funding for our health care system because the time has come to meet our society's growing need for community services that are more in the community, like long-term care and home care,

and we're investing in stable and predictable funding for human services because people who have suffered in the recent economic downturn need our support. The new money will be, as I said, put into the areas of education, health, human services, and innovation and education.

3:10

I was looking over the previous Finance minister's interim supply bill, that he brought forward to this House on March 16, 2015, the hon. Robin Campbell. Everyone knows that that was for a three-month period of time. The estimate when added up was about \$12 billion for three months. As members opposite have identified, this is for five months, from July 1 until November 30, and it's about \$18 billion.

This interim supply, as I said, Madam Chair, will allow us to keep functioning and will allow us to invest in the things that Albertans told us they wanted invested in by virtue of the recent election.

Thank you very much for the introduction of this bill.

The Chair: Thank you, hon. Minister.

For the next segment the Official Opposition has the opportunity. Do you want to share back and forth, or how would you prefer to proceed?

Mr. Fildebrandt: Yes, Madam Chair, we would like to invite the minister to debate back and forth.

The Chair: All right. I recognize the Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Chair. Today I rise to speak to Bill 3 in a manner which I did not expect I would have to do with the election of the first new government in 44 years. I falsely assumed that with the election of a new government we would see a new way of doing things in this place. While in opposition both the Premier and the Government House Leader consistently spoke out against the undemocratic time allocation for bills as a general principle, let alone for such a hugely important piece of legislation such as the pending bill before us today. This bill has been allocated a mere three hours of debate, the minimum time legally allowed under the standing orders of this House for interim supply. That is three hours of debate for \$18.6 billion of spending, of which \$1.8 billion is new and entirely unbudgeted.

The last time that this province passed a budget was the spring of 2014, under the old Redford government. Since then we have had three new Premiers, which will cost us God knows how much for their portraits in the lobby. Our province has been operating in the dark without any real fiscal plan since that time.

Now, the Official Opposition understands that the current government is unprepared to meet this House with a full and costed budget at this time. We have made clear from the start that we understand this and that we will work co-operatively with the new government to pass a reasonable interim supply bill. Unfortunately, this government has not seen fit to live up to its own principles, that it campaigned on during the election, and has seen fit to invoke a time allocation of just three hours. That means that in this three hours we are debating \$6.209 billion per hour and \$103 million a minute.

Madam Chair, this would be unreasonable in and of itself even for a bill authorizing just \$1 billion. It is even more concerning when we are asked to pass not a budget but a brochure. We have been given three pages with virtually no details with regard to where the government actually intends to spend this money. Now, I'm going to read a quote.

It looks to me like about four months' worth of spending. It's an awful lot of money, though, Mr. Speaker. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre is absolutely correct. This is a very, very minuscule amount of information that is provided to the House, to the Assembly, in order to make the decision that is required. We certainly have no objection, you know, to voting interim supply for the government provided that a budget is brought forward relatively quickly.

You know who said that, Madam Chair? The Government House Leader. You know when he said it? March 18, 2015. That was for four months of spending. The government is now asking us to run on interim supply for eight months.

We have been given no details with regard to how this money within the departments will be allocated, and, most concerning, we have been given no details on what this means for the budget's bottom line. This bill contains not a hint of what the total expenditures will be for this fiscal year. This budget contains no details with regard to what the revenues will be for this fiscal year. This document contains no details with respect to what the deficit will be for this fiscal year, no details about what the debt will be for this year, and no details about what the net financial assets for this financial year will be.

In short, this is a document asking for a blank cheque. This is a document asking permission for the government to spend without accountability or scrutiny and without any guidance from this Legislature whatsoever. It is a document that spends first and asks questions later. It is a document that spends frivolously. This is a document that treats money as if it grows on trees. It is a document that is irresponsibly allocating a massive sum of taxpayers' money. This government is merely asking this Assembly for its rubber stamp and asking Albertans to just trust the government.

As some of you know, I've been in the business of not trusting governments. I've never believed in just taking the government's word for it, especially these guys over here. We, the Wildrose, would not be doing our job as the Official Opposition if we just let this pass through this House without any details, without any details on what the effect will be on Alberta's economic future, without a larger fiscal outlook for the province, without any fiscal framework whatsoever. Some of my colleagues will be asking specific questions of ministries in this government with regard to what they will be spending taxpayers' money on in their respective departments.

In the meantime I have five simple questions for the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board. One, how much money will the government spend this fiscal year; two, how much revenue will the government collect this fiscal year; three, what will the deficit be this fiscal year; four, what will the debt be at the end of this fiscal year; and five, what will be the province's net financial assets at the end of this fiscal year?

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you, Madam Chair. I can begin at the beginning, I guess. The portraits for the Premiers will cost about \$12,000 each, and I can't wait to see them. I do want to say that I need to correct one thing that my hon. friend across the floor said. He might have misspoken, but he said that the original interim supply was a four-month interim supply. It was actually a three-month interim supply from April 1 to June 30. The one we're bringing forward here is a five-month interim supply.

But this is not a budget. This is the ability to keep government operating, the ability to keep, as I said, the trains running and the lights on and spending happening. The government estimates of

2015-16 are where you'll find more comprehensive information with regard to the actual ministries and what they're spending on.

That's not the intent of interim supply, and actually our interim supply looks the very same as the hon. Robin Campbell's interim supply. [interjections] Well, I've got these right here, and they look the same to me. They are the same in terms of content except for the number of months and the dollar amount.

3:20

So we're not here to present a budget, as I've said. That will be presented in the fall. We're here to extend the spending through the ministries. They have accountabilities. They have benchmarks. They have measures that they have to address. That is all within their ministries, and it's not expected to be in interim supply.

So, Madam Chair, the work that we're doing is what is necessary to bring forward, and when we do a budget, we'll be working on a budget. We have the time to come up with all of the answers that our hon. member is looking for, but those are not before us today, because that is not what we're presenting.

Thank you.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Madam Chair, if I had misspoken, then it was the Government House Leader who had misspoken. I was quoting him with regard to three or four months. But the principle of the Government House Leader I still agree with, that when a government is asking for a large amount of money in interim supply, they should provide more detail. Now, the hon. Minister of Finance talks about the number of pages in this. I've never been a particularly big fan of the details that the PCs have ever brought forward in their financial documents, but if I'm not mistaken, their interim supply was closer to 75 pages not three.

Mr. McIver: Looking pretty good now, eh?

Mr. Fildebrandt: Don't get excited.

Madam Chair, I asked the minister five simple questions. How much money is the government spending? How much money will it collect? What will the deficit be? What will the debt be? What will the province's finances be? Now, I'm going to live in a pleasant dream world for a minute and pretend that I was the Finance minister.

Mr. McIver: That is a dream world.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Four years.

If I had taken over as the Finance minister, the very first thing I would do when I got to the office, after turning off the shredders, would have been to ask to see the books. I would see a bunch of numbers in black ink, and they would all add up to an expenditure figure at the bottom, and then there would be another ledger, and they would add up to a revenue figure at the bottom. Then there would be a nice little line drawn, and there'd be another number there, probably in red ink, and I would really be concerned about that number. Then I would ask the deputy minister of my department to tell me how much my new spending measures are going to cost in addition to that and what that is going to mean for the province's deficit.

Madam Chair, I believe that if the minister cannot answer one of these simple questions, then he is unprepared to meet this House. If the minister cannot answer one of these questions, then he is asking taxpayers to trust him with \$18.6 billion in the form of a blank cheque. Current projections for revenue under the previous budget were at \$44.8 billion and account for the second-highest revenue in the history of this province. This is despite the drop in oil prices and due to record personal and business tax revenues. In the year before

this Alberta recorded the second-highest revenue in its history and also set record revenue levels the year before that. This government does not have a revenue problem. It has a spending problem. Before the government comes before this House and asks for one dime in new spending, it should first present a commitment to get its current expenditures under control.

One of the reasons that Albertans lost trust in the previous PC government was their frivolous treatment of taxpayers' dollars. The previous government regularly misspent, misappropriated, wasted, and at times came perilously close to the legal definition of stealing. Albertans knew that the government treated their money as their own private piggy bank. Albertans knew that far too often the previous government was willing to cut a blank cheque to any special-interest group in any department to make political concerns go away without any regard to the bottom line of Alberta's budget. They ran eight consecutive deficits and planned to run three more. They ran up \$12 billion of debt and planned to run \$6 billion more this year alone. In the last 10 years they ran up \$49 billion of annual spending increases, far beyond the rates of inflation and population growth. We have in this province one of the biggest, most expensive governments in the country. It is time to get spending under control. This is not a time to give the government a preloaded gift card and send them to the West Edmonton Mall.

Now, we know that the government has a majority of NDP MLAs. But does the government have a majority in this House of MLAs willing to act irresponsibly, or will they do their duty as private members and require the proper scrutiny of the executive branch of the government? Let me remind the members opposite that if they are not in cabinet, they are still responsible for holding the cabinet accountable even if they are in the same party. They have a duty to ask questions and to hold the cabinet accountable in this Legislature and not with prewritten questions from the minister's office. If they abdicate that duty, they'll be little better than the government that came before them, who allowed the government to spend, to tax, and to borrow frivolously. I'm asking the minister my five basic and easy questions. I'm asking the private members opposite to do their duty and hold the executive branch of the government accountable with regard to how it intends to spend taxpayers' money.

We are on the mere second day of the actual proceedings of this Legislature, so let's start anew. Let's show Albertans that this is a new Legislature that they voted for and not a different shade of the last Legislature just run by another party. Let's all do our duty as custodians of the public purse and taxpayers' money.

I want to know: will the minister table a document detailing the information that we have requested very reasonably in this House before asking the House to pass it? If he will not table an answer to one of these questions, then I believe he is unprepared to meet the House. So let me ask them another way. I asked if he was able to answer every one of them. Can I ask the minister: can he answer even one of them?

Mr. Ceci: The answer is that the Fiscal Management Act requires that on June 30 we present the consolidated financials for this province. We'll be releasing that information prior to June 30 as is requested in the act. That document is before Treasury Board tonight, and then it is going to our Auditor General. I can tell you that from the perspective of the Ministry of Finance we are very, very satisfied with all of the financials in those documents, and I think the member and the previous government needs to be congratulated to a degree because there's some good news in those documents that you will find out on June 30.

The Chair: The Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Chair. The minister stated that their supply bill is based off the previous government's supply bill. Not that I am a particularly big fan of the previous government, but why don't you just introduce their budget?

Mr. Ceci: That's not our plan. Our plan is to move forward with our platform, that we campaigned on, and we are using the unpassed budget of March to build our interim supply bill on. So we're using that budget, that's not passed, and coming up with the numbers, extending through the first supply bill to ours. As I said, in the fall we will have our own budget before this House, and we will ask for support of that from all in this House.

3:30

Mr. Fildebrandt: Madam Chair, if we concede that this government has absolutely no idea about the big financial picture for this fiscal year, then perhaps they can answer some questions on the government's interim supply bill on an interim basis. Will the Minister of Finance tell us what his interim finance policy is?

Mr. Ceci: I think that would be fairly clear. The policy that we have built this supply bill on is to look at the previous government's budget and to carry that through to this supply bill, with the addition of four areas that we campaigned on, that we said we were going to restore. So we're restoring the cuts that were proposed by the previous government and building on the previous budget to do that.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Madam Chair, how much time do we have left?

The Chair: Thirty seconds.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Oh, I'd better make it good, then.

Madam Chair, it's been one of my great concerns, before being elected to this Legislature, with regard to the government's accounting policies. Two and a half years ago the former government repealed the Fiscal Responsibility Act and Government Accountability Act, that drastically weakened the reporting standards for budgets and quarterly updates for the government of Alberta. Can we expect the minister to improve upon this in the budget following interim supply?

The Chair: One moment, hon. Minister.

I didn't perhaps explain this at the beginning. You do get a full hour for the Official Opposition, but it's divided into 20-minute segments. So you can continue for the next 20 minutes if you choose, or another hon. member in your caucus can take the next 20-minute segment.

Mr. Ceci: Do you want me to answer that question?

Mr. Fildebrandt: Yes, sir. You can if you want.

Mr. Ceci: I just need to remember what the question was, again. [interjections] Oh, the improve-on-process one. Yes. We are in discussions now at the ministry with regard to how we're going to bring forward reporting. I can tell you that there are some discussions amongst officials in my ministry and the Auditor General with respect to refining the reporting process. What was done quarterly may not be done quarterly in the future. We haven't landed on an actual process that we're happy with or that we're going forward with, but I can tell you that the way things were done in the past isn't necessarily the way we're going to do them going forward.

The Chair: Thank you, hon. Minister.

We'll continue with the next segment. Cypress-Medicine Hat, you're taking over the next segment?

Mr. Barnes: Yes, please, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Do you want to go back and forth again?

Mr. Barnes: I would like to go back and forth, please.

The Chair: All right. Continue. Go ahead.

Mr. Barnes: Okay. Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to focus my questions in interim supply more on health care and infrastructure, but thanks to the hon. member for helping to set the stage as to where the government is at and what, you know, the state of Alberta is. My first two questions in question period focused around local decision-making, focused around the value that the taxpayer deserves for his hard-earned tax dollars.

Some points that I want to put on the floor right away are that since this experiment in centralization began in 2008 – health spending then was approximately \$12 billion. Last year the previous government's estimates had our health spending, Alberta Health Services and Alberta Health combined, at over \$18 billion. When I look at the numbers that are presented in your interim supply and what was in the three-month interim bill from before, \$7.75 billion plus the \$5.25 billion in the earlier one show \$13 billion for eight months. An incredible \$19.5 billion we're now at for health care in a province of 4.3 million people.

It's also scary because it doesn't include the infrastructure part of health care. If my recollection is right, how the government used to do it was that infrastructure spending for health care was in the Infrastructure budget, while infrastructure spending for education was in the Education budget. So we have some areas there that I would like to go over. Again, we're looking at what in Canada now is the second-highest per capita spending of all provinces, behind only Newfoundland and Labrador: many, many instances where the outcomes don't match the amount of money going in.

In the three years that I've been the MLA for Cypress-Medicine Hat, the stories I've heard, you know, make you shake your head. Easily the number one complaint in my constituency association office is people that have just been to Great Falls or Kalispell, just spent \$15,000 or \$17,000 to get a shoulder fixed, just spent \$23,000 to \$29,000 to get a knee or a hip done because they didn't have access to our system. Also, the centralization, not being able to see somebody in our area, has contributed to that problem.

I remember good work by the opposition a year or so ago, discovering a warehouse of computers, \$30 million, that sat there for a year and a half unused, unallocated because of centralization. I heard stories of local hard-working front-line workers. When they need a little thing of glue, a whole case comes out of Edmonton; the rest gets thrown away. In Medicine Hat when you can't get out of the parkade because the parking arm is broken, six hours later someone comes from Red Deer and fixes it. Or how about the \$800,000 piece of equipment that arrives unexpected – no one's trained for it – and sits in the corner? These are the things that local decision-making can improve, and doing so would improve the morale of our hard-working front-line staff, our professionals and give the quality of service that smaller urban municipalities and our rural municipalities so deserve and so need.

My first question to the government is: of this 7 and three-quarter billion dollars that's allocated for the next few months, is any of it to make our system more responsive? Is any of it to give our system more local decision-making?

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Thank you to the hon. member for raising a number of points in his introduction to what I hope is our 20-minute banter. It's an honour and a privilege to rise on the interim supply estimates currently before the House and to have an opportunity to ensure that Albertans will continue to access the health care services they need and deserve.

In the weeks and months ahead our government is committed to fulfilling what Albertans told us during the election was important to them. This includes restoring stability in the health system, focusing on patients, opening new long-term care beds, using hospital space that sits empty to serve patients better, and reducing wait times. Interim supply estimates that are currently before the House will help us accomplish this and more, with these additional dollars reversing the previous government's cuts to front-line health services. I think the hon. member will be happy to hear that. This additional money will ensure stable, predictable funding for acute care in our hospitals. It also puts in place the necessary resources to meet Alberta's growing population.

Interim supply estimates include, as the hon. member mentioned, \$7.8 billion for Health to cover expenditures from July 1 to November 30 if need be. This adds an extra \$500 million over what the previous government allocated for Health in its proposed budget and subsequent interim supply bill. This additional money will restore \$160 million in previous government cuts to the health care system. The remaining money will ensure that the health system can meet the demand of the population growth. Just like we have 12,000 new Alberta students who need teachers, we'll have close to 70,000 new Albertans who need front-line health care workers like physicians, nurses, and health care aides.

3:40

Madam Chair, there is no doubt that Albertans would have been negatively impacted by the cuts proposed by the previous government's budget. Staff would have been laid off, and much-needed front-line care would have suffered. With these additional dollars our government has taken the steps necessary to ensure that money is there to cover things like volume increases for the increasing number of people moving to Alberta, who need health services, more babies being born in our province, more seniors, those with chronic disease needing care, and the escalating costs of drugs that are so very needed by Albertans. The bottom line is that our government is taking action to ensure that Albertans receive the timely care that they need and that they deserve.

Our Premier has been very clear that stability and protecting public health care are our highest priorities. We're meeting that commitment. We're committed to ensuring that the services families depend on are protected, including those affecting seniors and the health care system. In other words, our government is putting Alberta's health care as our first priority through this bill. Universal, accessible, high-quality health care must be there for Albertans when they need it. We know that this is only a first step, that more does need to be done, and more will be done.

Madam Chair, this doesn't mean that our efforts to find efficiencies and savings will stop. Alberta Health Services will continue to look for ways to deliver health services more efficiently and will continue to do analysis of all health spending, including past experiments in privatization, as we put together a new budget for the fall. In the coming months we'll be developing a new health budget that, line by line, will be centred on the health needs of Albertans and Alberta families, and it will include much-needed investments in home care and long-term care, which will include stable and predictable funding for our overall health care system.

Madam Chair, each and every one of us needs the health system at some point in our lives. When we have family or a friend or a

loved one who is in need of medical attention, we want assurance that the health system will be there for them, and it's clearly not acceptable to put their lives at risk through reckless spending cuts. We need to make sure our hospitals, clinics, and health programs have the resources they need to meet the demands of a growing population. Albertans know there's nothing more important than the care of their loved ones, and on May 5 Albertans elected a government that's committed to ensuring that public health care is protected and strengthened.

I look forward to working with all members of this House to find ways that we can be more efficient, but in terms of the expediency of this bill we need to make sure that we can move forward and continue to plan for the growth that we have, to ensure that Alberta's health care is stable and available in the time to come. So I urge all hon. members to vote in support of stable health care for Albertans. Vote in support of Bill 2.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Minister. Thank you, Madam Chair. I've talked to several stakeholders that tell me that one of the quick ways to make our health system more responsive, better for the patient, more efficient for cost is if we can do something to improve our electronic health records and the interface between the physician, the patient, and the specialist. I'm also told that one great big system, more centralization wouldn't be the best compared to smaller systems. Is any of this \$7.75 billion headed in that direction?

Ms Hoffman: Thank you for the question. These are the types of conversations I hope that we have an opportunity to explore in the months ahead and work collaboratively on. This, as I mentioned, is really about restoring the \$160 million, that was proposed cuts, as well as making sure that there is money for the 70,000 new patients. It isn't really about investing in new technology or systems in that way. There might be opportunities to explore that as we move forward, but this is making sure that there is an allocation so we can continue to plan for growth.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you again.

One of the freedom of information requests that our great staff got for us a short time ago was: 110,000 employees at Alberta Health Services; 9,600 of them are making over \$100,000. Is this \$160 million – was that the number? – going back into the system? Is any of that \$7.75 billion going to hire more high-level bureaucrats?

Ms Hoffman: Thanks for the question. Of course, the focus is on making sure that we have front-level service providers. Just like in education the money's intended focus is around making sure that there are teachers, education assistants, and custodians, in health care our intention is to make sure that we have front-line service providers, so physicians, EMTs. We know that there are a number of different initiatives. The wait times that we've had for ambulances are something that needs to be addressed. This is about adding front-line capacity to meet the proposed 70,000 Albertans who will be coming here. I think that's roughly the size of Red Deer. We want to make sure that there are front-line service providers to meet their needs.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you.

Again, in the last Legislature it was discovered time and time again, the neglect that some of our important infrastructure is in. Is any of this money going to fix the Misericordia hospital, which is long overdue?

Ms Hoffman: Of course, capital projects are something that the Minister of Infrastructure – I was looking to see if maybe he wanted to jump up – and then, in my case, the Minister of Health work on together, collaboratively. In terms of this plan we haven't got massive financial commitments in terms of infrastructure. This is about making sure that we continue on with the interim supply that was passed previously, with the additions to Health. Health isn't the budget line item that houses the big infrastructure projects. We do have some money for some essential supplies and those types of things, maybe equipment, but the money for brand new construction and major modernizations will be something that will be well debated in the fall budget should there be an increase to fund some of those initiatives. So this is operational.

Mr. Barnes: Okay. Thank you.

I talked to a number of stakeholders, and absolutely we have one of the most fantastic acute-health systems in the whole world. Thanks to all our hard workers for that. But the amount of money around prevention, mental health, managing chronic conditions: has your government pinpointed more of this important, hard-earned taxpayers' money towards prevention, towards managing chronic conditions and mental health issues?

Ms Hoffman: Thanks for the question. In the platform mental health was definitely one of the key pillars. In terms of being able to do something under the current financial structure that we have, we've reached across the aisle and asked the Member for Calgary-Mountain View to help evaluate and work with us in terms of large-scale recommendations moving forward in terms of systems.

In terms of immediate action there are the naloxone kits that are being distributed throughout the province. Really, when I think of naloxone – and it relates to mental health because it's addictions related – it's basically for somebody who's in a situation where they might be overdosing. It's the equivalent of an EpiPen for somebody who is having a chronic attack, an allergic reaction. So it's really about having those life-saving resources on the front lines.

Then, of course, once we save countless lives – well, not countless; we'll count them – with those resources, we'll be able to make sure that the mental health patients, for the most part, who are suffering from addictions have resources down the way through the review so that we can continue to expand service for them.

Mental health and home care – I think it was mentioned – are definitely pillars in our platform and components where we look forward to bringing about more robust change as we move to having a real budget, a whole budget. This is about day-to-day operations. I wish it could meet the desired outcomes for everyone in a very immediate fashion, but this is really about making sure that we can continue to provide the services we have today with the ability to expand for growth in the fall.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you.

I believe you announced \$30 million for home care this year and \$60 million in years going forward. Very commendable, a very, very good idea. Of course, our party, the Wildrose, had \$50 million in our campaign promises for home care, that we thought was important. Is \$30 million going into home care from these interim supply estimates? One of the concerns I hear about: although Albertans think it's a very good idea, they want to know that the proper level of service is met for the recipients. Is that part of this issue? Is \$30 million from here going to home care?

Ms Hoffman: Thanks for the opportunity to provide a little clarity around my remarks. What I was asked about is whether we're

committed to fulfilling that platform piece. In the platform we talked about how those were steps that we were planning on rolling out. These will definitely be components that we'll be able to hold onto in the fall budget, when we actually have an opportunity to look at it more fulsomely. There will be components for growth in home care, just like the allocation for 70,000 new patients is being worked into the budget. That's how we're going to get some of that home-care money out immediately and, hopefully, to a variety of regions throughout the province so that we can support the people in need of supports in their home, where they live, rather than having them relocate. The component around the growth is where the timely home-care piece will come from, and then in the fall we'll be able to talk specifically about line items as they relate to home care.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you. A wonderful idea.

The last government was going to put the Calgary cancer centre at the south campus. The Premier said the Foothills and apparently has changed her mind. Is any of this money, is any of this interim supply that we're voting on looking at the value, the cost-benefit analysis, as to exactly where this should go for the citizens of Calgary, who have been waiting too long for this?

3:50

Ms Hoffman: A reporter asked me earlier today when we should expect an announcement on the Calgary cancer facility, and I said: 10 years ago. I think we'd agree on that. The Premier did say during the election campaign that the Foothills was the desired location. For the most part, we think that's probably still the best location, but I think we owe it to Calgarians and to all Alberta taxpayers to make sure that we review the evidence and that it aligns with our goals for Calgary and consulting with Calgarians.

The number of cancer patient advocates as well as cancer physicians who've reached out to help us make sure we have the best evidence to make this decision as we move forward has been amazing. I've had the opportunity to visit the current Tom Baker and see first-hand what they're doing with a less than ideal space that they're operating under. They don't just serve Calgarians. They serve Albertans and a number of people from other neighbouring provinces and territories as well. This, of course, will be a priority, and I look forward to working with my colleague the hon. Minister of Infrastructure to be able to bring something forth in the fall budget. Again, this is operational focus, so we don't have money in this budget around capital announcements. This is about making sure that we can continue to plan for the growth that we have going forward.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you.

In addition to the needs in Calgary and the needs in the Misericordia hospital here in Edmonton, the Wainwright hospital is in serious concern of having a problem and maybe patients having to be relocated. Fort McMurray, Northern Lights, and Boyle were other communities that I remember off the top that had similar issues. You've already said that none of this is for capital. Is part of this money in the interim supply for maintenance, and is any of this for an allowance in case, heaven forbid, something very, very serious happens and temporary places have to be looked at? Are there any contingency plans for that kind of thing for our rural communities, which have just as great a need but maybe are not as well known?

Ms Hoffman: I really appreciate the question. In terms of capital investment there's \$32.5 million for capital investment and \$27.7 million for financial transactions. That's actually capital investment going towards equipment specifically to treat cancer, so it doesn't

look to me like it's specifically around additional deferred maintenance. Whatever the deferred maintenance allocation would have been in the proposed budget back in the spring, this \$500 million is a top-up to basically grow those line items in the interim by their relative percentage.

It wouldn't likely be sufficient to address all deferred maintenance throughout the province. This is a problem that's been building for decades and that we're not going to be able to solve overnight, but there will be additional resources going out to facilities to be able to do minor upgrades and some basic operational infrastructure maintenance in the next four to five months. Hopefully, we'll be able to work collaboratively on bringing forward a capital plan that will, through the sunshine list, meet the needs of all communities throughout the province. It's not going to be easy.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you again. I appreciate all your answers and your willingness to answer.

The Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

We now enter into the final 20-minute segment for the Official Opposition. The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Do you wish to continue back and forth?

Mr. Strankman: Yes. If I could, I'd like to continue with the back and forth.

The Chair: All right.

Mr. Strankman: I have several ministers that I'd like to question. Primarily, it relates to my Agriculture and Forestry shadow portfolio. It's somewhat of a situation, Madam Chair, like déjà vu for myself and, I'm sure, the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat to be debating the interim supply estimates here because we did that in the spring thanks to the management skills of the now third party. We're going to do the best we can.

I'd like to direct some of my first questions to the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry. I see that under the previous interim supply estimates bill, Bill 18, which I'll refer to as interim supply version 1.0, the amount was approximately \$180 million. That was for what I understand to be an approximately three-month period. Going forward, version 2.0 has the indication from several of the ministers to be a five-month period, but the amount of the funding in 2.0 for Agriculture and Forestry, to my understanding, is \$340 million. Could the minister please correct me on that if my math is inaccurate?

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you for the comments as well. The approved operating expense, interim supply, for April to June was \$221.899 million. The July to November submission is for an additional \$336.121 million, which brings the total 2015-2016 interim supply to \$558.020 million. This reflects almost 77 per cent of the published operating budget.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you for that going forward.

In the old interim budget \$586 million was the budget allocation totally for 2012-13, but \$707 million was the amount for '13-14, and \$704 million was the amount for '14-15. I was just wondering if you could tell me: are you expecting these levels to stay the same as we reach the total budget going forward?

Mr. Carlier: Madam Chair, interim supply amounts were calculated using historical spending patterns, scheduled major grant payments, and cash spending profiles of capital budgets. All the listed amounts include spending associated.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Mr. Minister. It's well appreciated.

Madam Chair, I want to go through it somewhat line by line going forward here because I'm trying to get a sense for how the portfolio is going to be managed. It was not even mentioned in the budget. I believe from our conversations that we would both agree that agriculture is an important portfolio for the province. I'd like to talk about section 2 there, and this is from the previous Bill 18, interim supply, and the supply estimates previous to that, where we talk about economics and competitiveness, international marketing, and market attraction. Could you give me some information in regard to proper funding for that? We've had our discussions in regard to, for example, Mr. Minister, the Rahr malt plant at Alix. Will there be any funding to allow for those types of developments to go forward?

Mr. Carlier: Madam Chair, a lot of those details I think have yet to be worked out. I haven't been briefed on a lot of the questions you have, but I will endeavour to find those answers to your questions as soon as I can.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you again.

A similar question to that. Under agriculture and innovation it has a line item there: budget funding for agriculture environment and water. I understand that to be the issue with the Rahr malt plant. Have you had any chance to learn about that and what funding might be available for them for that situation?

Mr. Carlier: I have not. I haven't that in front of me, but I've been briefed on that. Again, I can come up with those numbers, you know, at a later date and give you a better, a more fulsome answer to that.

Mr. Strankman: Thanks again.

Madam Chair, I'd like to continue on to item 4, food safety, animal health and welfare. Food chain traceability is an important thing, and the amount that I saw in the recent supply estimates was actually down from \$6.5 million to \$5.2 million. I understand that to be an important concern. You see some of the marketing things going forward with food suppliers in the province. Can the minister give us some understanding of whether that funding will be continued or increased or decreased? I mean, we're debating an \$18 billion budget here, and it's significant to try and understand what sort of a trend might be coming forth.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you. There is a lot of, you know, consideration on the different aspects of your question. Again, I do apologize; I have none of those figures in front of me. I haven't had the opportunity to consult with my colleagues in cabinet, but I will endeavour to get those for you.

4:00

Mr. Strankman: Well, I too, sir, am looking forward to that. I understand, Mr. Minister, you have a stakeholders' meeting coming forward in the very near future, that I think is extremely important for industry.

Going forward, industry development, \$2.61 million in '14 and '15: can we expect that trend to continue for rural development? After we spoke recently about our mutual desire to diversify agriculture, at least in my opinion, can you give us sort of an indication of what that trend may be?

Mr. Carlier: Madam Chair, rural development continues to be, you know, an important aspect of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. We're looking at not decreasing any funding for rural development, whether it be agricultural societies to 4-H or whatever that might be. Again, no solid numbers, but I'm looking to get that for you.

Mr. Strankman: Thanks again. I'm just trying to, as I keep saying, get a trend because as you well know, Mr. Minister, this is recorded in *Hansard*.

Mr. Minister, with the potential of a 50-year drought coming up in the province, have you given any consideration to the funding available under agriculture insurance and lending assistance? Even going forward, several of us have had in our constituencies issues with wildlife damage and the management of that. That, too, is interrelated to ESRD, but there's a certain component that does relate to agriculturalists.

Mr. Carlier: A couple of issues there. I think one was on the drought. You know, it's continuing to be dry conditions in the province. There has been and still continues to be the crop insurance program with Agriculture Financial Services Corporation. There are systems in place, that have existed in the past, for helping farmers and producers with issues when there is going to be drought. We all pray for rain. Hopefully, that will alleviate a lot of our issues.

The other on the wildlife. My understanding is that there are currently programs in place for compensation when, for instance, people lose livestock when there's predation happening and that kind of thing. That will most certainly continue.

Mr. Strankman: That's not what I was driving for, Mr. Minister. AFSC has crop insurance policies that relate to crop damage, et cetera, et cetera, from wildlife. In some areas it's becoming very onerous, the influx of animals, the ungulates like elk and such. I was wondering if you have given any consideration to that going forward in your portfolio.

Mr. Carlier: The AFSC does have insurance programs that are available to farmers. I understand that the seed producers, the people that plant, you know, wheat, canola, et cetera, are close to about 75 per cent insured. So I believe the program is robust and continues. My understanding just as of today is that there are some producers that are not going to qualify for some of this insurance because of their small size. As well, for instance, farmers in the Hutterite colonies don't take part in the insurance programs. Otherwise, my understanding is that the program is robust and operating as it should.

Mr. Strankman: I'd have to disagree with the minister on that, and we'll discuss that at a later date.

The other thing I have here is the livestock and meat strategy, sometimes known as ALMA. Can you give me any idea of the direction of the mandate of that part of your portfolio? There's a significant number of dollars that are spent in that. I was just wondering, with our time of somewhat fiscal restraint, if that might be reduced or managed differently.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you for that. ALMA's total 2015-2016 budget has been reduced by \$4.8 million, to \$32.3 million. This year's ALMA budget has more than \$32 million to help support projects focused on research and innovation, industry development, and enhancing food safety. Since January 2009 ALMA has provided more than \$190 million for projects that enhance and support our

livestock industry, with a total projected value of nearly \$781 million.

Mr. Strankman: The point I was trying to make, Mr. Minister, was that that fund, in some people's eyes, is controversial. I was wondering if you've given that any consideration or will be reviewing the direction of the funds that are allocated to that organization.

Mr. Carlier: You know, I have talked to some stakeholders as well as some producers. This is the first opportunity I've heard any criticism of the project, but I think it's worth pursuing. As the Speaker himself alluded to, there is an opportunity to speak to stakeholders even later this month. So I think that dialogue will continue, but for now the ALMA program has had their budget reduced.

Mr. Strankman: To a somewhat unfamiliar field but somewhat relating to agriculture. In our old budgets and estimates I see where there is approximately some \$42 million allocated for the expenditures relating to forestry. I was wondering if the minister has any new and innovative ideas going forward there. I have some questions that I'll be bringing forward at a later date in that regard, but I was wondering if he has any ideas about whether that's sufficient or needs to be adjudicated, too. There are issues with such a thing as pine beetle and those sorts of things going forward. Or do you feel that that sort of an influx would fall under the purview of, potentially, Environment?

Mr. Carlier: Madam Chair, I suppose there is a lot of overlap with Environment and with Forestry, but the Forestry operating budget includes, for instance, the fight back against mountain pine beetle. The operating budget of Forestry is a set amount. Anticipating perhaps another question, then we're asking for emergency funds to fight the actual forest fires, the wildfires, which we've had an abundance of this year.

Mr. Strankman: That's what some of my questions will lead to later on.

My next question is to the Minister of Finance. It may possibly be more of a statement. I know, being a Calgary resident, where I'm a rural resident, having lived my whole life six miles from what some people describe as a social experiment called Saskatchewan . . .

Mr. Mason: It is now.

Mr. Strankman: It's, well, better than it has been for the last 60-plus years, Minister of Infrastructure.

The question I wanted to ask was that they made comment in regard to keeping the trains running. I was wondering if that would pertain to something that might be in the jurisdiction of Drumheller-Stettler.

Mr. Ceci: No. It was a metaphor that I was using to say that government needs this appropriation to keep providing the services that it is providing now to the citizens of Alberta, which they rely on and which need to keep happening.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the clarification.

My next comment is to the Minister of Health. She made a comment, and I'd just like to ask for clarification. She talked at some point in her answer there about acute-care beds, and that has

been a gigantic issue for my constituents in the village of Consort, where the previous Minister of Health in 2011 actually promised the reinstatement of those acute-care beds. I was wondering if some of your comments would relate to rural health care issues like the situation in Consort.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, hon. member, for the question. For those who are curious at all, I actually spent three years of my life living in the same small community just six kilometres from the border as well, so it's nice to have a neighbour in the House. I was about one to three, I think, during that time, so I don't remember a lot of the details around access to the Consort hospital.

Part of what we're doing, of course, is looking at where there's existing space, where there are needs, in particular, for long-term care patients to have access to long-term care spaces and a way that might create opportunities for us to move forward in an efficient way with our commitment to the 2,000 new long-term care beds as well as freeing up some acute-care space down the road. I look forward to learning more, and when we discuss the rural health review, I am sure that'll be one of the pieces that we mention.

Since I've got the opportunity, I just wanted to add one thing. When I spoke earlier about the \$32.5 million for capital investment, I'd talked about the cancer treatment. It also includes some funding for information technology as well as medical equipment replacement. My apologies for not adding that to the record. Glad to have the opportunity to do it now.

4:10

Mr. Strankman: Thanks. I certainly appreciate it.

My next comment is to the Minister of Education. We've spent some time in the Chamber, too. I haven't heard a specific comment – certainly, to these estimates I know we're using broad strokes – but I'd just like to make confirmation with the minister that he's aware of remote, rural school funding and the difficulty that they have with the fuel costs, the disparity in those areas.

Mr. Eggen: Yes. Thank you so much for the opportunity to speak on this issue. We know that there are extraordinary costs associated with small-centre schools and, truly, rural schools as well. We would like to address that more fully as we move through the fall. I have had discussions already, though, with people, school board trustees from the PSBAA, describing to me the fuel concerns that they have and troubles getting the leases for people to take the contracts for busing. I am going to continue meeting with them this summer to look for a way to make sure that subsidy is in place so that the rural bus contracts can be met.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you to the minister for that. His experience here does tend to lead to that, but because of the short time that we have for this vast amount of money, it's important to get some of these comments, in my opinion, at least on the record.

My next comment is to the Minister of Transportation. I know that he's fully aware of some of the issues in the rural areas. I was just wondering if you could give us any idea of what funding allocations, if any, might be available for rural bridge construction and maintenance going forward.

Mr. Mason: I'll get the hon. member the answer to that question.

The Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

That concludes the first hour of our discussion, and we now move into the next 20 minutes, where the members of the third party can engage in a dialogue with the minister.

Do you wish to do a back and forth as well?

Mr. McIver: Madam Chair, can I share my time with some of my colleagues in the caucus?

The Chair: You can do it that way.

Mr. McIver: Okay. Then we'll go back and forth if that suits you.

The Chair: All right. Sure.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I have a number of questions here. A lot of questions have been asked, and not that many have been answered, but we'll carry on. Some of the questions that I would like to know in the estimates – and I've got quite a shopping list, so I'll try not to say it too fast. How much in the estimates is to go toward flood mitigation, the Calgary cancer centre, the Calgary southwest portion of the ring road, the completion of highway 63, road repairs and maintenance, the twinning of highway 2, the schools committed to? How much is coming in and out the heritage fund, different than what was previously budgeted? As well, any changes to seniors' facilities? That's quite a shopping list, but the bad news is that I'm not done.

While I was listening to the previous questions and answers – and I'll try not to repeat them because if you didn't answer before, I'm guessing you're not going to answer now. Just a wild guess. But I did hear in several of the answers from the ministers, Madam Chair, references to the NDP platform. So I looked it up, and I have it on my screen. One of the promises in the NDP platform is to create a women's ministry. I don't see a separate ministerial line item here, and there's very limited information for that. So if you could explain where that is because that's one of the promises. I'm wondering where the funding for it is.

Again, trying to be sensitive to the time of the House and, most particularly, to my colleagues and caucus that have a lot more questions, at some point, preferably today, but I've got a pretty strong – I will read you 5.3. “We will create a Women's Ministry to lead initiatives for greater gender equality in Alberta.” I certainly don't see that ministry listed here. So I think that's a fair question. I would say that if you go through your platform, which I hope you have memorized – I apologize. I haven't got it quite memorized. You have line items. That one I just gave you is 5.3. All of the itemized numbers – 1.1, 1.2, all the way up to the end – if you could cost those out for us here in the Legislative Assembly, I think that would be appropriate, particularly since a lot of the answers that I heard from your ministers were: we're focusing on the stuff in the platform. So because you're focusing on that, I'm guessing you have those numbers at your fingertips.

Ms Hoffman: I'm going to start with responding to the last couple of questions and then pass the response to my colleagues on the first ones. We'll start with the last. In the terms of the ministry responsible for the status of women we absolutely have created that area. There is not a deputy minister for it. The amazing minister who has that under her responsibilities is the minister responsible for environment, and that's something that's she's taken under her responsibilities now and will for who knows how long. That's something that she continues to do, but there isn't a separately funded line item for it because it's work that's happening through her office currently. There isn't an additional cost right now.

In terms of the platform this is the four-year road map, and there are a number of immediate steps that we're taking. When the fall budget comes up, you'll be able to see a direct reference to a number of the commitments and how the progress is on the road map that we're taking in the first year. Reversing the cuts was how I referenced the platform, and definitely it was something that we

heard loud and clear through stakeholder engagement and through the voting process. It's around reversing the cuts that were impending in the past budget. These are the four areas that we're doing that in through interim supply.

Mr. Ceci: Regrettably, I can't provide answers to all the questions on spending lines that you asked previously. We really just did take these government estimates, divide by 12, and multiply by five. We have five months of spending in here that were estimated back in March, and we've added four things into it. That's how we came up with the continuation that's in all of these line ministries that are here before you.

Mr. Mason: I want to respond as well, if I can.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Yes. Well, I just wanted to supplement what the Minister of Health and the Minister of Finance have said and just indicate that this interim supply with four specific exceptions is based on the interim supply and the budget that was prepared by the outgoing government. I would think that the hon. leader of the third party would have an intimate understanding of what is in this budget. However, having said that, I will endeavour to get him specific answers to the list of line items that he has requested. But, hon. member, to be really clear, this is still your budget.

Mr. McIver: I thank you for that. If I wasn't paying attention, I apologize, but to me, that is the clearest way that's been said, that this is the previous budget divided by 12 and multiplied by five.

Mr. Mason: Plus four items.

Mr. McIver: Okay. Plus four items.

I'm not sure, Madam Chair, that that's been said out loud before, so I thank the minister for sharing that with the House. Sometimes when you pry at the edge, the top pops off eventually, and that was one of those moments, so I'm grateful for that. I have a lot more questions, but my colleague the hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway has some, and I would like to yield some time to him.

The Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway.

Mr. Bhullar: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I, too, would like to go back and forth with just very brief, quick questions. First of all, I will point out the fact that this is a rather slim document. The last interim supply document was 72 pages, and that's a heck of a lot more than what we have here today.

An Hon. Member: That's efficiency.

Mr. Bhullar: Yeah. In terms of efficiencies, sir, I don't think so. We had line-by-line items with prices attached.

Secondly, I do remember members opposite, that now occupy the front bench, complaining constantly about the lack of time that we had to debate some things. You know, some things change, Madam Chair, but they don't really change. I just find that rather amusing.

4:20

Ms Hoffman: Would you like us to respond to that?

Mr. Bhullar: No, I wouldn't like you to respond because we have many other questions, the first of which is that you say that this is the previous budget, essentially taking us until the end of November. However, you have added money back into specific departments. That money was taken out of some departments to

make sure that we bend the curve on spending. You are adding that money back. The largest cost pressures on government are salary negotiations. Are you then telling departments and telling unions that all bets are off and that they can come to the table looking for 4, 5, 6 per cent raises once again because the government is open to spend more and more and more?

Mr. Ceci: To the hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway: no, we're not telling any labour groups anything like that. What we are doing is sticking to negotiated agreements, and we're sticking to them where the previous government didn't stick to them with regard to opted-out employees. So we are supporting the agreements that were made with opted-out employees. As far as the other negotiations coming forward in due course, when they come forward, we'll negotiate with them. But for the time being there's nothing that's in this interim supply that is any different except the agreement to address the opted-out employees' contracts, and that money is being found within the CHR department, the human resource department. So we're good on that basis, and we're not changing things, and we don't have to because we're not negotiating right now.

Mr. Bhullar: Madam Chair, I'd like to point out to the minister that in any given year about 20 per cent of the government and the government's partners' contracts come up for renewal. So by reinstating a whole heck of a lot of money, what you're essentially doing for 20 per cent of contracts, that are coming up for renewal this year and next year, is that you're saying that the government is in the money again. The government is in the money again. We've got money to spend, and we're not going to hold the line on spending as we have been.

But moving forward to other questions. I am going to start with some specifics if we can get short, quick answers back and forth, starting with the Minister of Agriculture. The capital project for water projects was reduced by \$2 million in the last budget. Is that still being reduced by \$2 million, or has that been beefed up here?

Mr. Carlier: Madam Chair, again, I don't have those exact figures in front of me, you know, in terms of the supply plan going forward. I don't have those details. Sorry.

Mr. Bhullar: I hope the minister will be able to provide us with the details.

Next, moving on to the Ministry of Education. There are \$671 million in capital investments. How many schools does the minister have under construction today? What stage are they at? What are the completion dates? Will the phase 3 schools that were being expedited to be open at the end of 2016 be funded in this interim supply?

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you for the question. Certainly, as we've distilled a more elegant way of describing the budget, the hon. member can certainly see that we are using the same schedule for building schools. The three phases, as I've kind of divided them up in a working way to my department: the Stelmach phase, the Redford phase, and then the Prentice phase; one, two, and three. We have not seen any deferments towards the schools up to this point, and certainly we are moving ahead aggressively on the same timetable as the previous government.

Thank you.

Mr. Bhullar: Thank you very much. Minister, if you could just provide me with specifics. If you don't have it at your fingertips, that's fine.

Mr. Eggen: It's on the website as well.

Mr. Bhullar: Thank you.

Next, to the Minister of Energy. In the last estimates there was \$33 million in financial transactions. I'd like to know what happened to those.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Could you be more specific? I'm not sure which ones you're referring to.

Mr. Bhullar: There's expenses, there's capital investments, and then there's financial transactions. These are essentially payments that come out, payments that go out, collected in a variety of different ways. You had \$33 million worth of these in the previous estimates. You don't have those now. So I would ask you to provide us with the details of that at your next available opportunity.

I'm going to move on here to Environment and Parks. Is there money for the Springbank flood mitigation project? I've recently learned that perhaps your party is reconsidering this compared to what you said in the election.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you for the question. On the subject of flood mitigation we continue to review our options. I'm pleased to share with the member, as Minister Bilous has, that we are reviewing all of our options. We are also reviewing our election commitment to the McLean Creek project because we want to make sure that we have all of the information before we proceed with this very large piece of public infrastructure and public investment.

Madam Chair, these are decisions on the order of hundreds of millions of dollars, as the member well knows, so that's why we're taking the time to review our options with respect to McLean Creek, Springbank, and other flood mitigation options. As I understand it, for interim supply these allocations are for ongoing operations in the department.

The Chair: Just as a reminder, hon. members, we don't refer to others by their name.

The hon. member.

Mr. Bhullar: Thank you very much. Minister, they're there for the operations of the department as well as capital and expenditures. But I guess I'll take that as: there is no new money for it, so the money that we had committed for it is still in the budget. That's great to know because it's a good project.

To the Minister of Health: how much is currently allocated in your capital investments budget for the cancer clinic, and where do you suspect you'll be able to find potentially anywhere from 800 million to 1.2 billion additional dollars to locate the project at the Foothills site?

Ms Hoffman: Thank you to the member for the question. I wanted to add that I think I misspoke. There is some allocation for the ministry responsible for the status of women, I believe, housed in Human Services. Back to that.

The work around the capital projects, I'm really thrilled to say, is not actually in the Health ministry budget, I don't believe. I believe that the major capital announcements, the line item, is in the Infrastructure budget. So right now Infrastructure hasn't had any additional funding allocated to it. This is, like I said, the interim supply just to get us through until the fall, so there isn't an additional allocation in this budget around where that cancer facility would be located. My understanding is that major infrastructure announcements like that – maybe you can help me understand this process – are in the Infrastructure minister's budget, actually, not the Health minister's budget.

Mr. Bhullar: Major project funding, Minister, through the chair, can be in the Infrastructure budget; however, the policy rests with the Ministry of Health.

There were dollars allocated to emergency room expansion. These are much-needed projects. I believe there were five of them across the province. These projects really cannot wait four to five months. They need to get started immediately. I can speak of the Peter Lougheed alone. It is bursting at the seams, a very important project. Will this project have to wait until the end of November to see progress, or is the money in here so we can continue to make this happen?

4:30

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's my understanding that it is in here. If I'm wrong on that, I will get back to you in writing in short order. My understanding is that those are the types of projects, doing the divided by 12 times five, that are allocated in this current budget. If I'm wrong, I will respond in writing.

Mr. Bhullar: Thank you very much.

Through the chair, to the Minister of Human Services. Given that the economy is slowing down and perhaps some of the economic policies of your government could cause the economy to slow even further, which means greater case demand on your department and Alberta Works, how many additional resources – I mean, for these next four or five months, if you're saying that you've kept the budget the same, how do you plan on meeting additional caseloads if you have not allocated any more dollars in the budget?

I think this is the first time you're going to be standing up in the House, so congratulations as well.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Human Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you, Member for Calgary-Greenway, for providing me with this opportunity. Finally, somebody asked a question toward a very important ministry.

The budget allocation. There will be an increase, and that increase will be around \$39 million. That will be used to provide and maintain and enhance the services which are already existing.

The other thing I want to clarify. The Member for Calgary-Hays asked about the women's ministry. There is an allocation within that increase that Human Services is getting, and we will be allocating \$1 million, as promised in our campaign, to that ministry. The minister responsible for the status of women will be rolling out the priorities, how that will be used, but I can tell the House that money in that ministry will be used to enhance gender equality, to promote that research, and programs directed at the betterment of women.

Thank you.

Mr. Bhullar: Thank you very much, Minister.

I would like to know: of that \$39 million increase, how much is to address, quote, unquote, the cutback, and how much of it is for caseload? If you could provide that information for me.

The last question is to the Minister of Seniors. The ASLI program, a very important announcement: seniors need these beds. We can't wait four months. Is the money going to be forwarded to ensure that seniors' homes are constructed in Alberta before the end of November? We need to start these projects immediately.

The Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Our time has expired for the questions by the third party. We now enter the next 20 minutes, where members of any other party represented in the Assembly or independent members may speak.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Madam Chair. Based on mutual agreement amongst the three of us, I understand that we have 20 minutes, and I will take nine of those minutes. I will cede some time to the Member for Calgary-Bow and also the Member for Calgary-Varsity to follow on.

I understand that the government needs to get it right when tabling their first budget. I also understand that the objective of interim supply is to keep the lights on. Of course, I would appreciate, as other members have said previously, that we would get a more detailed breakdown of where the money is being spent. Accountability, of course, and transparency we would hope would be hallmarks of this government.

I will adopt a particular focus in the first part of my comments and questions and appreciate some back and forth with the ministers and then will ask some more general questions, and I will focus on flood in particular. There is a \$7.2 million allocation, I understand, from the previous budget, in Aboriginal Relations related to flood in particular. Through the chair, to the minister responsible for Aboriginal Relations: is this a cost-sharing program with the federal government? Do you know what specifically those dollars will be spent on and what the outcome of those will be?

Ms Ganley: Thank you for the question. I don't seem to have those exact figures in the numbers before me, particularly in terms of what the federal government contributed because those didn't go into interim supply, but I will get back to you with those.

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Minister.

Through the chair, then, to the Minister of Education. I'm curious. There's, again, another similar amount of money, in fact, \$7.2 million in funding, which I assume and believe would be related to the repair or rebuild of schools, in particular Elbow Park school in the fantastic constituency of Calgary-Elbow. Can you confirm that that funding is, in fact, in place for the rebuild of Elbow Park school?

Mr. Eggen: Yes. I appreciate the question, and it's very nice to see the member up and running. We certainly will do so. There's a listing on the website already, the different phases of both renovations and construction, where you can look at those as well. We've not changed any of the timelines by which we would undergo either renovations or, in this case, restoration, but if there is an exception to that, I will endeavour to get you that information immediately.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Minister.

Moving on, then, to obviously a significant one, the Minister of Environment and Parks. There is a significant budget allocation for flood mitigation. My question will be similar but perhaps a different take than the Member for Calgary-Greenway. I understand that you are still reviewing, and I just want to state for the record and before the House how much I appreciate your spending time with me this morning to bring me up to speed on where you are with that project, with the Springbank project, with McLean Creek, with flood mitigation in general, and also to ask for my input. I very much appreciate your taking that very open and collaborative approach. My question is: how much of that money do you anticipate spending this year? Do you anticipate moving forward with a project of some kind in this budget year?

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you for the question. It was indeed a pleasure to have a meeting this morning to discuss our mutual interest in ensuring that we move forward in accordance with public interest and with an eye to all Albertans and safeguarding our financial interests as well. These are very, very large decisions that

we will not make hastily. We will make them with, you know, full consultation with all affected parties.

Now, on the capital investments in the interim supply, those are, as I understand it, commitments that have already been made. I think that once we land on a series of projects in order to appropriately protect against a 2013-like flood for the citizens of Calgary and the rest of southern Alberta, you'll see that plan going forward.

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Minister.

Madam Chair, a question for the Minister of Municipal Affairs. In terms of the money you expect to be spending and your government expects to be spending this year, how much of that will be spent on the disaster recovery program? Does it represent an increase, a decrease, and can we anticipate the significant expenditure related to the 2013 floods wrapping up this year?

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and I'll thank the hon. member for his questions. Again, some of the complexity when it comes to disaster recovery, when it comes to flood mitigation, is shared between several ministries, so rest assured that we will be working with the joint ministries and across ministries to ensure, obviously, that we're doing the best to protect Albertans.

To your question, I can tell you that for this interim supply, \$173.7 million is for the cash-flow needs of the disaster recovery program for the 2013 Alberta floods. I think that answers your question. Feel free to comment further if you have anything.

Thank you.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much.

I'll ask now some more general questions. To the Minister of Education. We've talked a lot about the funding for growth and for student growth, which I think is absolutely warranted and very badly needed. I just want to get some more detail on what contingencies or plans you may have made for – perhaps we don't have 12,000 students; perhaps we have 7,000 students; perhaps we have 16,000 students. It's a bit of a moving target where things are going. Is that funding committed on a per-student basis, and if there is a smaller number of students, in fact, do you spend less money?

4:40

Mr. Eggen: Yes, hon. member. That's a very insightful comment, and indeed that's how the ministry, the department, always does fund. In fact, that's why you see some potential for variation, but their estimates are based on population. There's actually a great way to find statistical information on your city or any place in Alberta. Go to the school boards. They have very good estimates on population. So we can expect that \$103 million within range to cover the expected increase in enrolment. It was a necessary thing we had to do with interim supply. We exist as a government to pay for students' education, and we did so.

Thank you.

The Chair: I'd remind hon. members to always speak through the chair.

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the reminder.

This will be my final question before I hand off to the Member for Calgary-Bow. To the Minister of Health. Mental health primary care is very important, and there's a program under way called PCN evolution, primary care network evolution, the second iteration of primary care. Of course, we know that primary care and prevention is really the one thing that has been shown over time to bend to the

cost curve of health care. I'm very interested if you are committed to primary care networks going forward and if, in fact, the interim supply reflects same.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Madam Chair, for the question. Last week I actually had an opportunity to have a face to face with the president of the AMA and also with two of the leaders with regard to the primary care network initiatives that are happening throughout Alberta. So we definitely talked to them about some of the challenges and opportunities. Eighty per cent of Albertans are actually registered through a primary care network right now, so obviously this is something that patients are choosing to register with. We need to make sure that we're looking at ways that we can share a number of reserves. We need to be responsible with taxpayer money and make sure that when money is being allocated in a budget year, it's being spent in that budget year to meet the outcomes of that budget year. There have been some problems with that, so we're definitely going to have to work with the primary care networks to make sure that we have an appropriate reporting process and that the funding that is being allocated is being spent responsibly. But I'm excited to work with them and with other health care providers throughout Alberta.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow.

Ms Drever: Thank you, Madam Chair. The government needs time to table a budget that works for Alberta. However, in the meantime we need to ensure that key services such as education, health care, and social programs continue to be accessible to Albertans. We need a thorough and carefully thought-out budget which reflects what Albertans voted for in the May 5 election. As an Albertan and as an MLA I support the interim supply passing in a reasonable time to ensure that those priority services remain rather than leaving Albertans without those services while we debate over ideology.

Now to the Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thanks, Madam Chair. A pleasure to rise and speak to the supply bill. I would have to be a little bit repetitious, having been here a while and seen the same story repeated several times with huge critique from the current hon. House leader on the other side complaining about the absolute lack of time to debate massive budgets. So a simple request to the House leader to review the standing orders and see if there is a way that we might expand the time for debate on this and, in the interests of building cross-party solidarity around the important decisions that they're going to be making, extend an olive branch to all parties to allow the research necessary, the options out on the table, the opportunity to have meaningful discussion on what is a pretty major decision we're being asked to make.

I could make a motion. I haven't written it out, and we'd have to think about how to word that. But it seems to me that it is in the power of the Legislature to expand the amount of time dedicated to a particular debate. I'll leave that to the House leader to think about.

There are already signs, let me say, that this new government is hedging its bets on some of its commitments in its campaign promises, whether it's on education or the cancer centre or flood mitigation. I guess many Albertans would like to know what you're going to deliver on, and at some point I think it's important for you to come clean about what you're going to deliver and what you're

not going to be able to deliver because of the realities of the current situation. That's a preamble that I wanted to say.

I also appreciated the Finance minister's clarity about where the budget comes from. It's simply the old PC budget, and it's continuing on the same. One would hope that some of the bad decisions that were made in the last budget would be corrected in this interim budget.

Several questions for the Health minister. The last budget cut \$75 million from PCNs. I hope that's something the minister – and I may have missed it because I wasn't here earlier in the discussions. Clearly, that is funding that was targeted at essential management change in the PCNs. The PCNs have been told to change. They've been working towards more efficient and measured outcomes. They cannot continue with the effective, efficient changes that were in process if that \$75 million is cut. They're already at \$62 per patient, which has not been changed for several years. They're on a very tight budget. We want primary care networks to thrive. If you can comment on that.

Also, the 42 PCNs seem to be managed independently. Are we going to try and see some more consistency in how those financial decisions for each of the 42 PCNs are going to be made? I hope we can move to that quickly so that there is a sense of fairness and capacity building.

Also, what is your thinking about shifting some of the massive acute-care funding that we see into home care, community care, prevention? Is there not some low-hanging fruit there that we could at least be beginning discussions on? I hesitate to talk about some of the rural hospitals that are no longer functioning as hospitals but redesignating them for what they are doing, which are in some cases community health centres, in some cases seniors' centres, and ensuring that some of that funding, then, could be available for other support programs, including mental health and prevention supports. Perhaps the minister would like to comment on those few.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the member for raising a number of points that give us an opportunity to begin some of the dialogue on these issues.

Primary care networks are doing a lot of good work. There are also a number of challenges that they're facing. I believe that it was \$50, and it was adjusted to \$62. We actually need to do a fulsome review and see what is actually adequate because I think that these have been targets that have been chosen without actually doing a lot of analysis around what it actually costs to operate these facilities. So where a typical physician might see a thousand patients, they would have \$62 times a thousand to provide some additional supports. There might be 200 physicians in a primary care network. We're not talking about small budgets here. The physician allocation I believe is still primarily fee-for-service. Anyway, we definitely have some work to do. The primary care networks have come to the table very willingly. I think they were the ones who initiated the first meeting, wanting to make sure we can work on that.

I also can't help but think about similarities between some of the ways that budgets have been allocated to them and the ways we've allocated financing to schools districts in the past. For example, under my past hat we would have 200 individual schools in Edmonton public schools, and our collective responsibility is to meet the needs of all those students, just like the PCNs' collective responsibility is to meet the needs of all their patients. I think we need to have a bit of a dialogue around how we use those allocations to equitably meet the needs based on geography and other types of challenges that might be in place.

In terms of mental health I am really glad that the hon. member will be part of the advisory committee that reports to me. We will have details specifically around mandate and terms of reference in the days to come, as we will around additional information relating to the primary care networks.

I always cringed when I'd hear ministers say, "Stay tuned" in the past, but I find other words difficult for me to find. I look forward to discussing this and revealing more details in the days to come.

4:50

Dr. Swann: And the \$75 million that has been cut from PCNs: I didn't hear you comment on that.

Ms Hoffman: I will but not today. I'm sorry. I can't today.

Dr. Swann: You can't cut, or you can't comment?

Ms Hoffman: I can't comment on that today. We're talking about the whole line items. I'll be able to provide more details in the days to come. [interjections] I can say whatever I want; I'm choosing not to comment on this today. I will be very happy to provide additional detail in the days to come.

Dr. Swann: I appreciate that. I look forward, when you can, to hear word of that.

I'd also like to hear what in the budget, if anything, infrastructurewise is allocated to the Calgary cancer centre. I may have missed it. Has there been anything?

Mr. Mason: Madam Chair, I wanted to respond to that question. We are in the process of reviewing in detail options for the Calgary cancer centre so that we can as soon as possible inform members of the House and of the public what the best option is to go forward. Given the amount of money that's involved and the importance of this issue to the people of Calgary and southern Alberta, we decided that we would take a very close look at this. I've been doing that in conjunction with my colleague the Minister of Health in order to provide the best possible option and to be able to justify that option. That will be forthcoming, I hope, very soon.

Dr. Swann: Finally, with respect to the flood mitigation infrastructure is there anything in the budget that relates to the major projects that have been raised upstream?

Mr. Mason: Well, as a matter of fact, there are two items, Madam Chair, with respect to this in terms of the flooding. One on the operational side is \$23 million to support flood recovery and rebuilding efforts in southern Alberta. Work continues in 2015-16 on key initiatives such as the floodway relocation program, cleanup and remediation of the flood-related damages at the Hidden Valley Golf Resort site, and the construction of the High River community resource centre. There is \$6 million included in these interim supply estimates in capital investment allocated to the flooding program as well. So \$23 million on the operating side and \$6 million on the capital side.

Dr. Swann: Does that include the rehabilitation fund for some of the in-city commitments that the government has made?

Mr. Mason: I can get back to you, hon. member, with that information. I will provide that to you and all members of the House.

Dr. Swann: Thanks very much.
That's all, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

We only have three seconds left, so we're moving into the next segment. For the next 20 minutes we have the opportunity for private members of the government caucus to question the minister.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Hawkwood.

Mr. Connolly: Thank you, Madam Chair. I know you're all anticipating it. This government was left with an enormous problem in regard to the number of students there are per teacher in our public schools. In Calgary many public high school teachers have between 40 and 50 students per class. Many of these students require one-on-one time with their teacher. However, with so many students per classroom it is nearly impossible for teachers to give students the time they need and the time they deserve.

When I was in high school, Madam Chair, which many of my colleagues are no doubt aware wasn't too long ago, I had 44 other students in my English class. If everyone showed up, there weren't enough chairs for everyone to sit in. After recently consulting with teachers who work in schools all over Calgary, I have learned that things have changed for the worse thanks to the previous government, who now sits on the other side. Classes are now exploding with students, and we neither have the infrastructure nor the number of teachers to cope with this exorbitant number of students. Additional cuts from the previous government would have only worsened the situation for many teachers and students in our public school system.

My question for the Minister of Education is as follows, and all my questions will be to the Minister of Education. What in this government's interim supply bill will help to alleviate overcrowding in our public schools?

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the member for his question. Again, it's very important for us to differentiate between our interim supply budget, which is our interim funding, I should say, and then the overall budget on which we are overlaying that other document.

We certainly knew full well before the election was even called that there was a serious shortfall of funds to meet the needs of more than 12,000 or thereabouts students entering into the school systems this next year. So we knew that one of our first acts of government had to be to restore that funding to ensure that there were teachers in front of these young people and that there was a support system available to provide that education.

But Albertans must understand – and I think the school boards, teachers, parents, and students ultimately do understand – that this is a restoration of funding that more or less put us back to where we were last year in regard to class size and inclusion of students with special needs, with varying degrees of supports, and the maintenance of buildings and so forth. So we still have lots of work to do. Certainly, by including this \$103 million or so into interim supply, we have the opportunity to at least stop the trend of much larger class sizes and so forth.

I also want to say, Madam Chair, that as a teacher – for 20 years I taught, and of course many of my colleagues are still teaching – I am just absolutely astounded at the increase in class size over the last decade or so, especially in high school. We know that if you want to look at improving learning outcomes, if we want to improve math skills, language skills, and so forth – my colleague opposite is a teacher of long standing as well – there's nothing better that you can do than to have a lower ratio between students and teachers in a classroom. I mean, there's a certain point, but certainly that's the first step that you would take in a triage, so to speak, of trying to

improve our outcomes to equip our young people for the essential math and language skills that they require and to send them on their way for a bright and prosperous future.

So the short version of it is that, yes, we did provide some mitigation in regard to a larger process that I think was heading in the wrong direction. Certainly, we ran strongly and received a very strong mandate to fix education here in the province, to invest in the next generation. As I said previously this afternoon, that's really the cornerstone of why we exist as this legislative body, to provide that education, health care, and infrastructure for the people of Alberta to live and prosper.

Mr. Connolly: I'd like to thank the hon. minister for his answer. I have a couple more things. Can the minister please detail for me the actual impacts an Alberta family will see as a result of the money that is supplied in the interim supply bill?

Mr. Eggen: Well, again, just very quickly, we know that there are certain students at more risk, that are more likely to be affected by the negative effects of not having that \$103 million in there to provide the education for an additional 12,000 or so students. I think one of the critical areas that we reinvested in was the restoration of grants for English-language learners. We have unprecedented immigration into the province of Alberta, not just from other parts of Canada but from all over the world. Again, often language learners are the most vulnerable if they don't find their feet and have that extra help to be successful in a regular classroom, so that restoration, I think, is absolutely important.

5:00

The second area where I know that we can find tangible and immediate benefit from the restoration of funding is around First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students in our schools. These are the areas where we are having the least success in terms of completion rates in regard to the acquisition and retention of essential math and language skills, so the restoration of funding will definitely have an immediate and significant impact on First Nations, Métis, and Inuit student programs that we will be further working on over these next weeks and months.

Mr. Connolly: Thank you once again. This is my last question before I'll be giving the rest of my time to the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie. What is the plan moving forward to continue addressing the funding needs of school boards in the province?

Mr. Eggen: Well, it's very important that we, Madam Chair, recognize the integrity of these democratically elected bodies to make decisions that can most directly and effectively impact the education of the students to which they are charged here in the province of Alberta. So it's very important that we take that feedback. The very first groups that I've been meeting with are school boards from around the province, and as we empower them, both with decision-making but also on a consultative basis, I think that we will get a better return for our allocation to the boards.

Again, this does extend to all the ways by which we deliver education here in the province of Alberta. I know there's been some sound and fury around home-schooling and with charter schools and private schools, but, I mean, we are responsible to all students in this province, and to ensure that there was adequate funding was one of the first things that I did when we did build this funding, to make sure that it's going right across in equal measure to fund all students here in the province. I think that as we move along, that is a solid way to look at how we should exercise our responsibility in the future. I know that we'll have many discussions around this, but certainly I wanted to provide security and the surety to know that

all students in this province would be funded and the school boards would have some sense of long-term stability that they could make better plans with.

The Chair: I recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Mr. Loyola: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's an honour and a privilege to be here in the Legislature, as it was an honour and a privilege for me to serve and work at the University of Alberta for the past seven years before being elected to this House. My questions are going to focus on postsecondary education.

While at the University of Alberta I was also elected president of the Non-Academic Staff Association, and it was a pleasure to serve as a support staff there. But while there serving on the NASA executive, we experienced a number of challenges due to the past government and their cutting to postsecondary education. It was an incredible shame. There was so much pressure put on the administration of the University of Alberta that they even felt the need to come to us and ask us to open our collective agreement just because of the financial pressures that the past government put on them. So the question that I have for the hon. Minister of Innovation and Advanced Education is: how are we going to help the institutions address their financial challenges as we move forward?

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you very much. Thank you to the member for the question. Certainly, it's a significant concern of this government that postsecondary education has been underfunded for many, many years, and we are going to address that this year. We're moving to restore funding, the 1.4 per cent cut that the previous government had put in; to freeze tuition and support educational institutions to have funding for the shortfall from that so that the institutions aren't, you know, as they have been in the past, underfunded regarding that; and also to support them to make sure that they have the funding for market modifiers and noninstructional fees because we're freezing all of those also. We certainly see the concerns that postsecondaries faced and absolutely are moving on this and will restore funding.

The Chair: Just a reminder, hon. members, to please speak through the chair because it also helps with the microphone for *Hansard*. If you're turning a different direction, they can't hear you.

Mr. Loyola: Thank you for that reminder, Madam Chair, and thank you also to the minister. Because of past cuts the institutions announced program and staff cuts due to unpredictable government funding, so with the new funding that this government will provide, can students expect those programs and staff to be restored, hon. minister?

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair. Regularly institutions review the programs that they offer to students, and, you know, on a regular basis some may be cut, some may be expanded. Those are going on, and some of that has already been done, so there may be some programs that will be restored, and some may not. It will depend on what the reasons are for the closure or the suspension. We expect that institutions will revisit their budgets and make appropriate decisions after this new injection of funding.

I want to reiterate, too, that the ministry reviews all proposals for suspensions and closures from institutions to ensure the system-wide Campus Alberta continues to meet students' needs. So some will; some won't.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Loyola: Thank you. You previously mentioned market modifiers, hon. minister, and at the time the previous government claimed that market modifiers were necessary to maintain the quality of the programs. But what will be the impact of this new funding on programs and enrolment, hon. minister?

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you very much. Institutions are going to receive funding to compensate for the market modifier rollback, to a total of \$22 million. Our government would also amend the regulation, which will freeze tuition at 2014-15 levels for two years. The compensation is on top of the restored funding of the 1.4 per cent cuts and an increase in base grant funding for cost of living. Due to the increased funding government is providing, there should be no need for institutions to adjust enrolment levels. Additionally, with increased funding we expect that institutions will maintain their plans to improve and increase program quality as they would have under the market modifiers.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Loyola: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the minister for that answer. We know that there is continued and increasing demand for skilled trades and a lack of spaces for students. Hon. minister, through the chair, what are you planning to do about apprenticeship seats?

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you very much. Madam Chair, you know, we have a commitment to ensure that all apprentices have seats in Alberta. We know that the demand for apprentices has gone up 70 per cent in the last decade in Alberta, and we know that we want to have enough trained tradespeople to work here in Alberta, because there is a lot of demand. We're absolutely investing in that and ensuring there are seats.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Loyola: Thank you, Madam Chair. I have no more questions at this time.

The Chair: Is there any other member to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

5:10

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll be asking questions to the Minister of Human Services. As many will know, I was a social worker that worked for Human Services for the last 10 years as a child protection worker, and I've seen the demand that's happened within the Ministry of Human Services in a variety of different areas and how those are impacting Albertans. To the Minister of Human Services. You indicated prior that there will be increases to the budget for Human Services. Can you indicate in what areas those increases will occur?

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Human Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Chair, and thank you, Member, for asking the question. The first thing: I can assure that a portion of that increase will go to the area our member was working in, to improve the outcomes in that area. Secondly, the funds will be going toward the women's emergency shelters. Thirdly, the funds will be going to FCSS programs, which is a partnership between the municipality and the government to provide services to the municipalities. So those are the three main areas that we campaigned on, and those are

the areas we will be focusing on to improve and to allocate these funds.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Madam Chair. Can the minister please clarify in regard to child intervention how these funds will improve the outcomes for the child intervention stream?

Mr. Sabir: I think these new funds will be allocated to improve the children's services. We believe that kids are better served when they are raised in the community, so funds will be allocated for outcomes which are measurable so that kids are spending time in the community. Then these funds will be allocated toward the outcome that kids who are in temporary care are able to go back to their family and be reunited with their family. Wherever that's not possible, we will allocate funds to make sure that they get a permanent home and stability as soon as possible. These funds will also be allocated to improve services directed at the transition of youth into adulthood. These funds will also be directed at the services for indigenous communities, to make sure that services are provided to them in a culturally and traditionally appropriate manner.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Madam Chair. As we know, within Alberta, although we are a province that has benefited greatly from our resources, we also have seen that many Albertans do not have stable housing. Can the minister tell the House how these funds will be used to strengthen the shelter networks within Alberta?

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Member. These funds will be used to fund the second-stage housing of the women's shelters. In fact, I attended the AGM of the shelters' network two or three days ago, and the idea is that the absence of these houses, the absence of these places for women to turn to, reinforces and compounds the problem of family violence, because they don't have a place to turn to. These funds will be directed towards creating more spaces like second-stage shelter spaces so that they have the needed spot.

Thank you.

Ms Sweet: Thank you.

The Chair: That concludes the 20 minutes for that piece. We are now entering the final segment, where the rotation repeats the cycle. Speaking times are reduced to five minutes each, but that means you can combine your time with the minister for a total of 10 minutes of back and forth. We'll start with the Official Opposition. If they chose to share that time, that's all right, but you'll only get 10 minutes.

That being said, I will first recognize the hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Madam Chair. First of all, I just want to get some clarity. The Minister of Finance said that the way they were able to drive their numbers was to take the past budget, divide it by 12, and times that by five so that you get the five months you're looking at. Then there are four items also that you added into that.

The question I have for you. I'm not sure whether you or the Minister of Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour wants to answer this. In 2012-13 the operational budget for Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour, the amount for that, was \$143 million. In 2014 it was \$166 million, and this year it's \$74 million. With the projected or possible increases in unemployment with the low oil and with some of the policies that we deem not as advantageous for our economy as

maybe your side would, are there any provisions that you're taking into consideration to be able to make up for this possible increase in unemployment?

Mr. Ceci: We know the unemployment numbers are going to be rising. There's been a lag behind the decisions by major energy companies and their layoffs, so those kinds of EI numbers will be in our interim supply and addressed through the budgets that we have there. Yes, we're going to be addressing those.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you. I appreciate the comments.

How does it work with EI being a federal program and your role in that?

Mr. Ceci: Our role in that is to be conscious of all the numbers and the number of people who are leaving employment, going to EI, and subsequent to EI, if they need additional supports for Human Services to support them, we take that up. Social assistance numbers may be going up as a result, and we would be addressing those through this interim supply bill, that will give the money to the Human Services budget.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Madam Chair. I don't want to be a stickler on this, but is that not just passing on the cost of that program to the federal government?

Mr. Ceci: Well, if you're talking about Human Services, no, we're not passing that on at all. We're addressing that through our service provision at the ministry. If people come to us and need help of last resort, this province delivers that through their many programs throughout Alberta. We have those dollars addressed in the Human Services budget.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Madam Chair. Maybe I need to address this to Human Services. Is there money allocated for these provisions in order to be able to address this issue of rising unemployment?

Mr. Sabir: Madam Speaker, as the Minister of Finance indicated, there is a lag behind those layoffs and the timing of the pressure that will be felt from them. At this point there is an increase in the allocation, and that will help us sustain those services. When we come to the fall budget, we will have a better idea of what those pressures are so that we can build that into our budget and can provide for those pressures.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Madam Chair. I think I'll have to move on from this one, then, and hope that we get some more clarity there in the future.

One of my questions. I live right next to the largest reserve in Canada, the Blood reserve, and there's a lot of need for educational programs to help them out of poverty and the struggles that they're in. The previous government committed \$600,000 to aboriginal development programs and partnerships. Will this government be increasing that amount, or will they be decreasing that amount?

5:20

Ms Ganley: Thank you for the question. At present I have numbers in front of me that deal only with interim supply, and in terms of

interim supply they've moved forward with the previously allocated budget.

In terms of developing the budget in the fall, as my colleagues have said on so many occasions, we are going to do a fulsome review of what's needed and what's available in order to move forward.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you for that.

Madam Chair, labour relations was previously budgeted at just under \$2 million. Are you expecting to raise this amount?

Mr. Ceci: Sorry, I didn't catch the last bit of your question. What was it?

Mr. Hunter: I apologize. Labour relations was previously budgeted at just under \$2 million. Are you expecting to raise this amount?

Mr. Ceci: Are we expected to raise this amount?

Mr. Hunter: Yes.

Mr. Ceci: I don't know. I don't think so. I can get back to you.

Mr. Hunter: Madam Chair, one of the concerns that will be coming up in the near future is the issue of workers' compensation and OH and S with farmers. Obviously, this is something that's going to be debated in the future, but given that your government is proposing increasing the number of people that will be going into workers' compensation with that increase in farmers and their workers, are you planning on increasing funding to that? What is your approach to this workers' compensation funding?

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Ms Sigurdson: Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair. We're looking at interim supply right now. For this period the budget is not changing. It is going ahead as it was. There is going to be no new funding right now. In the new budget, that's coming out in the fall, we'll be looking at where we need to go from here. But at this point, for this interim supply, there is no new funding.

The Chair: Hon. member, you've concluded? You still have two minutes left in the 10 minutes. You're fine? Okay.

We will then move on to the next segment of the rotation, to the third party.

Dr. Starke: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you for the opportunity to speak on interim supply. I will preface my comments also by saying that I find it disappointing that the new government has elected to reduce the amount of debate to three hours. It's certainly a complete about-face. It may just have something to do with the chairs over on that side; I'm not just sure. But I will say that certainly it is a complete and total change from what you were preaching not six months ago, and it's a little disappointing to me that you've decided to take that approach.

Furthermore, I do want to reiterate what my colleague the hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway stated, and that is that the total lack of any detail in this is very frustrating. Quite frankly, in the limited three hours that we have, we're wasting a lot of it just asking, trying to get that detail that should be in the documentation that we're provided. Once again, I look back at the documentation that was provided back last spring, and it was considerable. It went department by department, what the changes were. If there are, in fact, only four adjustments, I think, you know, that certainly could

have been provided to the members on both sides of the House so that we could dig into that a lot more clearly.

But I would like to investigate into that. We have \$1.8 billion in additional spending. So far I've heard of \$103 million in Education and \$500 million in Health. Can the Minister of Finance detail to the House where the other portions of the \$1.8 billion are? In what departments? In what programs? What amounts are being spent?

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much for the question. I can say that the new money I think they're focusing specifically on. We have Education, Health, Human Services, and Innovation and Advanced Education as those target areas. The adjustments are in the range of \$45 million for Education. Health is half a billion. Human Services is \$39 million. Innovation and Advanced Education is \$40 million. Those are the ones that are the biggest buckets before us that we're investing in.

Dr. Starke: Well, Madam Chair, I must confess that it's a little bit unclear to me how that, then, arrives at \$1.8 billion, but I want to move on to some other specific questions.

With the Minister of Health we just got cut off, but I really do want to hear and have it on the record with regard to the ASLI grants. These were important grants that were announced, you know, just before the election, but quite frankly in the service and the needs of housing for our seniors across the province I think they were very well received. I just would like your confirmation that the ASLI grants that were announced are still going to go ahead under your government's program.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you for the question. Madam Chair, one of the first meetings we had was with the Continuing Care Association. I think that they understand, given some of the language that was in our platform, which your hon. colleague has referenced, around our desires around making sure that we're providing publicly funded and publicly delivered supports in the long term, that we're in a process right now where we're looking at some of those grants. I have communicated to get word out to them in a timely fashion. Right now I can't say definitively yes or definitively no, to be completely honest, but know that this is something that 22 days in I've made a priority to make sure that I familiarize myself with and can provide some clarity to the people who heard announcements made by the past government around what we can do moving forward. I don't want to say: stay tuned.

Dr. Starke: Well, Madam Chair, the subtext to that that I'm hearing, though, is that if there is a proposal that was approved for ASLI funding that is not publicly delivered – i.e., if it's being done by a private operator – those projects will be given a lower priority. Can the Minister of Seniors confirm that that is the case?

Ms Hoffman: Madam Chair, that is not the case. What we're doing right now is trying to make sure that we review all of the grants that have been announced previously, align them with our priorities moving forward, and work with the delivery providers to make sure that we're meeting the long-term needs. I want to make sure that every decision we make going forward we can hang our hat on and be proud of the science and the facts that went into making those decisions moving forward. Maybe "science" isn't the right word.

I want to make sure we're doing evidence-based decision-making, that there isn't political interference, and part of my responsibility to Albertans is to make sure that I take the opportunity right now to ensure that any decisions we make moving forward we will stand by. When we make announcements, you can count on that they'll be funded. Right now I just need to make sure that I have a little personal time to review those. Twenty-two days

hasn't been quite long enough, but I'm working quickly to try to make sure that I can provide some direction. So I can't do that today.

Dr. Starke: Well, Madam Chair, I can appreciate the time constraints that the minister is working under, but I can assure you that the ASLI grant that was announced for Vermilion-Lloydminster I'd be happy to provide you with all kinds of background information on and assure you of the merit of that particular application.

I'd like to move on to the minister of parks and recreation. One of the things that we heard during the course of the election campaign was that certain revenue enhancements would be rolled back, and one of the areas where revenue was actually changed was in, believe it or not, camping fees and cottage lease fees. These have lagged behind the market rates and what is being charged in the private sector, and as a result of that, it becomes difficult for the parks area to retain its overall ability to be viable. What I'd like to know is: are the camping fees going to be rolled back as you have rolled back other fee increases, and if so, what effect does that have on the overall parks budget?

Mr. Ceci: I think I'll take that by saying that, yes, we're rolling back a number of fees. I can tell the hon. member that the breadth of those fees, the actual fees that we're rolling back, will be the subject of some information shared in the very next few days. It's not here before us right now, but there are several buckets, several things that we are rolling back. You know about the health care levy. That one we're rolling back as well as . . . [interjections] Keep going? You want me to keep going on fees?

I will tell you that a number are being rolled back. We're going to have an announcement about those things in the next few days, and they amount to several hundred million dollars.

5:30

Dr. Starke: Well, Madam Chair, if I could offer a little bit of input, although it sounds like the decisions have already been made behind closed doors. One of the fee increases, for example, was the maximum fines for speeding through construction zones, the maximum fines for speeding past ambulances or police stopped on the side of the road. I mean, I'd like to know that those are not being considered for rollbacks. I do think that those were justified.

A question for whoever is answering on behalf of the Minister of Transportation, and it has to do with the water for life program. That's important in terms of delivering critical water infrastructure to rural communities. Some of these projects have been ongoing and require the ongoing funding from the Transportation department. I'd like someone to answer, if possible, what the status of water for life is. Has their funding been changed as a result of these interim supply estimates?

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much. I'll do my best to attempt to answer on behalf of the Minister of Transportation. It's my understanding that, again, the dollars that were allocated in the previous government's budget for water for life have not been changed, but I will make a note of it and ensure that the Minister of Transportation notifies you and members of the House.

Dr. Starke: Madam Chair, just as a final comment, I will mention that I'm hearing from a lot of stakeholders in my constituency that there is a great deal of uncertainty from this government. They're saying on the one hand that nothing has changed and in fact the budget will be going ahead with the allocations that have been listed, yet a number of projects and a number of issues have been

told: "You're on hold. Don't go anywhere. There's nothing certain. We have some decisions to make." I'm just going to encourage the government to make the decisions as quickly as possible because this level of uncertainty is not helpful to anybody. It's not helpful to you and your reputation as a new government, and it's not helpful to the constituencies.

I'd like to cede the rest of my time to the hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway.

Mr. Bilous: Madam Chair, can I respond, please, on behalf of the government?

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: I'd like to respond to that. I appreciate the member's remarks, but I do want to remind the House that this is an interim supply. This is not a budget. This is designed to ensure that government keeps running and not just government but programs and services that Albertans rely upon. We will very much so be bringing out a budget with much detail this fall, that will go through exactly how our government plans to spend and the programs that we plan to deliver for Albertans.

Again, this is an interim supply bill that, obviously, as members can appreciate, needs to go through this House, through this process in order to continue our services and programs past June 30. Therefore, you know, we ask that members in the House be patient with their responses.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

That brings that segment to an end. We'll move once more through the rotation.

I can recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow if you're in agreement. Do you want to share the 10 minutes? You can do that as well.

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Madam Chair. I will be brief. I just have a question for whoever is answering on behalf of the Minister of Transportation. Perhaps the Minister of Environment and Parks may want to answer this question. Previously it was noted that there's \$23 million in interim supply to continue the floodway buyout program. This is one of the most odious and ill-considered policies that I've perhaps ever seen. We haven't achieved any clear public policy objective that I can see, yet we've wasted over \$100 million.

I will take some time here to speak slowly, as I see the minister returning to his seat. I'll reiterate my point here. As I talk about the floodway buyout program and as I look through the communities in High River and the communities in Calgary that have been hollowed out by this ill-considered policy, where people were given a full market value buyout on their homes, barely a hundred people of the 254 homeowners eligible for this program chose to take the buyout. But those that did cost the taxpayers and the people of Alberta over \$100 million. At the same time, we have not cleared the floodway. The purpose of that program is to move those impediments out of the fast-flowing waters in the time of flood.

Well, whether we like it or not, over the last hundred-plus years we've built in places we probably shouldn't have built. However, that has left our communities hollowed out, and it has not made us at any less risk because now there are still two-thirds of those houses in the way. It's going to hit the next one, and it's going to take a sharp left-hand turn, and it's still going to devastate those communities. My question, then, through the chair, is: will the minister consider reversing that buyout, not spending that \$23

million that have been allocated, and instead dedicate those resources to upstream flood mitigation to ensure that all people, not just in those communities but the business owners and residents in other areas that are at risk of flooding, are protected?

Thank you.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you for the question. What the interim supply is meant to do is keep the business of government moving so that we can conduct a more full review of flood mitigation as we are going forward. I am not inclined to give a hundred per cent stamp of approval to the previous government's policy initiatives with respect to flood mitigation. As I have said previously, I'm loath to claim that all of their decisions were terrible. I'm equally loath to give them all the stamp of having acted in the public interest. So, Madam Chair, as we review our flood mitigation options, this program will be part of that, but in this interim supply period what we are debating here are the ongoing operations of the government. But those programs are certainly under review.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm glad to hear that those programs are under review. This one, in particular, I think offers us an opportunity, as we review those programs, to identify an area where we can really make some change by reversing it. So I'll ask the same question of the minister of Infrastructure and Transportation. Will you in fact reverse that and not spend those dollars on the buyout program and find a better use for them?

Thank you.

Mr. Mason: Thanks very much for that question. I think it's a very good question, a reasonable question, and a thoughtful question. I am obviously not going to give you an answer right now because I would like to provide you with a reasonable and thoughtful answer, which requires some time to look at these things we have. As you could no doubt guess, there are a hundred or more issues in each of our departments – and many of us have two departments – that we need to become familiar with. But I will take the point that the member is suggesting. I will discuss it with my colleagues and in due course will provide you with a specific, detailed, and reasonable answer.

Dr. Swann: Just a couple of questions with respect to perhaps Human Services, specifically. I didn't see anything related to either early childhood development enhancements or affordable child care, which were pretty strong commitments of this new government. Can the minister elaborate a little bit on what their vision is? If not in this budget, where are they going with early childhood development enrichment and affordable child care?

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Human Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you, Member, for raising this question. As indicated earlier, the numbers in this budget are based on the previous budget, so what we have done is added \$39 million. That amount will be used to sustain and improve services. Insofar as child care is related, we understand that it's a very important issue. I even heard my caucus colleagues talking these days about how they're looking for child care spaces. We have committed to providing \$25 a day child care. In the coming days we will be looking at that in a more fulsome manner, and we will be able to provide more clarity and more information on that.

Thank you.

5:40

Dr. Swann: The last Minister of Education funded \$5 million research called the early childhood mapping project. Very impressive results: almost 50 per cent of children under the age of six delayed in one parameter out of the five major parameters for milestones in the preschool years. I hope the minister will take that under advisement, that this is an urgent priority. Many of these organizations across the province that did the baseline research are ready and willing and able to provide some of the early childhood resources if they have support from government. It would be a great loss to this province if we were not able to provide some of those resources to sustain the great work that's been done for five years in early childhood development mapping, that now has identified the problems, and there are no resources to deal with up to 50 per cent of children who are not meeting the milestones.

I want to put that on the record. I want to put it on your agenda and make sure that we find some shift of resources, perhaps. Whether it's from your department or Health, we need to ensure that. This is a primary prevention opportunity that again we're missing.

To shift gears just a little bit, the other area I wanted to raise was the early intervention in cancer identification. With respect to the health system there are tremendous opportunities if we were to be more systematic about screening programs, if primary care networks were given those resources that appear to have been cut. I've heard from the primary care networks that they are told to cut the \$75 million from their budgets this year. Prevention efforts, early intervention, health promotion, wellness: all these things are being sidelined again because of the priority of acute problems, so we are again missing a tremendous prevention opportunity if we cut this \$75 million from primary care networks and a tremendous opportunity in early childhood development if we don't identify high-risk families and get the resources to the community that could potentially deal with this.

One final comment more than a question has to do with the corporate survey in Human Services that year after year after year shows low morale, shows lack of confidence in management, shows real challenges within the department. Somehow resources need to be found to address some of the staff needs. It needs to be part and parcel of any budgeting to ensure that we start to address some of the demoralization of Human Services staff for whatever reasons, many different reasons. I do not want that to be lost in discussions about money, that people in the department have tremendous potential for improving their productivity if their concerns and frustrations and disappointments and overtaxed resources, in some cases, are not being addressed.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

We now will go to this side of the House for the segment of 10 minutes if we have speakers.

The hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Madam Chair. As many in the House may know, I've been a registered nurse for over 17 years, so I'd like to direct my questions to the Minister of Health. During the campaign I heard many questions from my constituents and even from people from other constituencies with concerns regarding health care. Will the interim funding help make sure that people in rural communities are able to access primary care?

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you, colleagues, for your attention as I engage in responding to this important question raised by my colleague.

In terms of the \$500 million that's being injected back into this budget, obviously we know that Albertans resoundingly rejected the past budget that was being proposed, which would have seen \$1.1 billion in cuts in the budget moving forward, and that's why we have this reinjection of the \$500 million. That will be provided throughout the province to ensure, like I said, the patient growth and to reverse that \$136 million, I believe it was, in cuts. So this is money for growth, and in rural areas where there's growth, there will of course be funds to follow those patients.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Madam Chair. I also would like to ask the Minister of Health how the interim supply funding for Health will deal with wait times as certainly wait times for procedures have been a concern. So how will the interim supply funding ensure that wait times do not get worse?

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, hon. member, for the question. [interjections] I know you guys don't want me to waste time, but I'm having a really hard time being able to respond when I hear your questions louder than my own voice. Thank you.

I want to make sure that – see, now I'm off track about the question. Wait times. In terms of the past budget that was proposed in the spring, there were, like I said, these \$1.1 billion in cuts, which we know would have impacted our ability to deliver on the front lines in terms of physicians, nurses, EMTs, other front-line service providers. By this House today reinjecting this \$500 million to make sure that we can continue to fund growth moving forward, we will have the resources necessary to be able to serve the needs of these 70,000-plus new Alberta patients that we're expecting to come into our system, because not only are babies being born, but people continue to move here from other places, around Canada and internationally. So we need to make sure that we continue to offer the type of public health care that they so rightly deserve, moving here to Alberta.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Madam Chair. As many of you may know, my role was as a public health nurse, and working with fellow home-care nurses, there was much frustration about access to home care. So I would like to know: will the additional funding make sure that people are able to access home care?

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Madam Chair. Again, a big piece in the platform related to health care – we talked about mental health, we talked about long-term care, we talked about wait times, and another big piece of that is around home care. As was laid out in the platform and as we're so proudly moving forward on, these additional allocations today will have some room for us to grow in that area. In the fall and in subsequent NDP budgets we'll have an opportunity to look specifically at those line items and to be very proud of the investment we're making as legislators here to meet the needs of Albertans, especially those who are in a variety of different situations and want to be able to age in place.

Thank you.

The Chair: Is there another hon. member wishing to speak on this side?

If not, then we will continue on with the rotation, and we'll return to the Wildrose caucus. I have next on my list the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Sorry; he's not here. Oops. The hon. Member for Highwood. I get myself in trouble.

Mr. W. Anderson: Oh, great. Put me up just before dinner. Here we go. I'm holding you up.

Anyway, thank you, Madam Chair. Interestingly enough, I've been sitting here patiently listening for the last two hours and 50 minutes to talk about spending money, allocating funds, interim budgets. These are great words – I love them all – but I never heard the word “savings.” Nowhere has anybody talked about saving money.

Now, for those who don't know me, I come from the private sector. I've managed to go through a few mergers and acquisitions in my past and been able to grow a couple of businesses with my esteemed colleagues in the private sector. But typically when there's a change of management, a change in an organization such as this – and congratulations, my esteemed friends on the opposite side of the House, but you can obviously see that my friends on the left, no pun intended, have been downsized a little bit. Downsizing is something that we don't look negatively at in the private sector, but when it does happen, typically there's duality of process, there's systems change, intellectual capital changes, people change, bricks and mortar change. These changes are often good.

I have to commend my esteemed colleagues on the other side of the House. A lot of you have taken on dual portfolios. Congratulations. That's a heavy workload. In doing so, what you've done is that you've reduced the size of your ministry obligations, i.e. the cost of those. But typically when that happens, there are usually some savings involved. Duality of process, intellectual capital, bricks and mortar: these are things that cost money. If you're collapsing the size of your ministries, where are the savings? I haven't heard anything about savings. Can the Minister of Finance tell me: what are you doing with that money?

5:50

Mr. Ceci: I appreciate the hon. member's question. This is an interim supply bill, so we are supplying money to the programs and services of the different ministries that require it. We are already hard at work on a budget, and that will put Alberta's families' priorities first. But I can tell you that we expect all departments to look at all options through this budget process that we're engaged in and to address the savings that the hon. member is asking for.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. W. Anderson: Thank you, Madam Chair. I look forward to those dollar amounts. Thank you very much.

I want to just put this on the record. I know that my esteemed colleague to the left of me managed to talk about the water for life program. The town of Okotoks is in my constituency. This town has approximately 30,000 people. For the last two years they have been looking at being provided with what we call potable water, or drinking water. They've applied through the water for life program for a pipeline from the city of Calgary. It was denied and turned down. The water for life program I think has been decreased by about – I forget – \$30 million in the last budget. I just want to put on the record that I want to know from this government that they will be providing additional funds to the water for life program. Keep it on the record for the town of Okotoks.

Thank you.

Mr. Mason: We'll certainly be making that decision in the fall budget. I appreciate that the hon. member, in theory, is looking for savings, but in the end, like all the others, he's asking us to spend money.

Mr. W. Anderson: Well, you've got to get the money from somewhere. Hopefully, it's not just tax and spend again.

One last question. I want to put this to the minister of services. In your interim budget you've got allocated budget for capital of \$12 million. I'm just asking the question: is that for newly announced projects or for existing projects? Can you clarify that for me, sir?

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much to the hon. member. I'm just looking to see if I can quickly see what the capital investment is, and I think, unfortunately, that you're either going to have to give me a couple of minutes, or I will get back to you in writing exactly with some details as far as the capital investment. You're talking about Service Alberta, just to clarify. I will get back to you shortly here, and I appreciate your patience. Sorry; through the chair.

Mr. W. Anderson: I'd like to turn the rest of my time over to my esteemed colleague.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Well, thank you so much. It's a pleasure to rise.

An Hon. Member: Time is a-ticking.

Mr. Cooper: We've got all the time in the world. Unfortunately, for this evening we have five minutes before we get to have dinner, and I'm so pleased that we get to come back to conclude this whopping amount of time that the government has so graciously allotted for us to debate this significant piece of supply, that we'll be able to do after the dinner break.

I just wanted to quickly double-check here. I know that I'm new, generally speaking, around these halls. I am particularly new to the Chamber. I was a little perplexed yesterday, but the Government House Leader implied that we should be familiar with this supply bill because 90 per cent of it is the same. I just wanted to remind him that, well, 90 per cent of the bill may be the same; 70 per cent, whatever it is, of the House has never seen this. So, you know, to imply that we don't really need to debate it because 90 per cent of it's the same as the last guy's is a little bit untoward. It would have been great for all of those who wanted to speak – and I can tell you that there are number of others in our caucus who didn't have the chance – to have allowed them that opportunity.

But I wanted to quickly just clarify two things, particularly with respect to the interim financial policy that the government seems to be working from. I'm just curious if the Finance minister or whoever would like to speak to it would clarify for us why the interim financial policy that you're working off is directly attributed to a budget that was never passed in this place and not to a budget that had been passed and introduced, three Premiers ago, by the former Premier Redford.

Mr. Ceci: I'd liked to respond through the hon. chair. It's really the only thing we had to work from. The previous work that had been done by the previous government is what we looked at. We didn't have time to produce our own budget, so we needed to work with the best estimates before us, and those are here save for the additions that we have put in and talked about, save for the additional expenditures, the elimination of fees and levies that we're not going to bring in. So that's the best work that we had to work from, and we've put it before you.

Mr. Cooper: I will add that I think it's a little unfortunate, working from a document that in many respects doesn't really exist because it never was passed. While it was presented, it certainly never became law and never became the direction of this government.

Mr. McIver: It's on the Internet.

Mr. Cooper: It is on the Internet. I've seen it there.

I'm seeking a little bit of clarification. We understand that 90 per cent of this is exactly the same and that 10 per cent is a change. I understand that we've talked about 12 divided by five plus four new items, and the four new items make up the 10 per cent. I'm just curious to know if the Finance minister would be willing to try and

provide some clarification, perhaps even be willing to provide a line-by-line for this House, certainly before we vote on what very likely will become the appropriations bill, on exactly what that 10 per cent is and perhaps in the moments remaining provide some clarification around exactly what that spending is going to be for.

Mr. Ceci: Madam Chair, through you to the hon. member: I think I identified the focus for those . . .

The Chair: Hon. members, I hesitate to interrupt, but the clock is now 6 p.m., and this committee is recessed until 7:30 tonight.

[The committee adjourned at 6 p.m.]

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