



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, June 23, 2015

Day 6

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta**  
**The 29th Legislature**

First Session

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Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (ND)  
Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (ND)  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (W)  
Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC),  
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Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)  
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)  
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND)  
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)  
Vacant, Calgary-Foothills

**Party standings:**

New Democrat: 53 Wildrose: 21 Progressive Conservative: 9 Alberta Liberal: 1 Alberta Party: 1 Independent: 1 Vacant: 1

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## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, June 23, 2015

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Let us reflect. On this day, National Day of Remembrance for Victims of Terrorism, let each of us remember those who have been taken and those who have suffered as innocent victims of violent tragedy. We resolve to comfort the families, friends, and communities and people everywhere who have felt the pain and loss of loved ones through acts of violence and the disregard for the sanctity of that which is most precious, life.

Please be seated.

### Introduction of Visitors

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

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased today to introduce to you and through you Calgary Mayor Naheed Nenshi and his chief of staff Chima Nkemdirim. Mr. Nenshi is no stranger to this building or to the members of this Chamber. He was first elected in 2010 and has spent the intervening years serving his constituents and representing the city on the provincial and the national stages. Municipal governments, including in Calgary, play an important role in providing services and supports that families rely on every day. Over the last month I've had excellent conversations with municipal officials about our shared priorities, from stable funding to infrastructure to flood protection and public transit. I look forward to continuing those discussions with Mayor Nenshi and Mr. Nkemdirim this afternoon and in the weeks and the months ahead. So I'd ask that all members join me in giving these guests our warm welcome.

### Introduction of Guests

**Mr. Gotfried:** Mr. Speaker, I see that they haven't arrived yet, but I am going to take the opportunity as I hope they will arrive momentarily. It's my honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly some very special guests today in the House. I will ask them to stand when they arrive and allow us the privilege of introducing them. First and foremost is my incredibly supportive and accomplished wife, Cathy: my CVO, or chief volunteer officer, during the recent election; mother of my three beautiful children; long-time tourism professional and creator of Babes in Bali, women's-only tours to Bali, Indonesia. As a legacy of her passion for this incredible destination and its people, she has been volunteering and supporting less fortunate children through adoption of an orphanage on this island for over a decade. Cathy has also been a dedicated volunteer for the CBE, serving in chair and vice-chair roles and other key volunteer positions on parent councils at all of our children's schools over the past decade.

I am also honoured to have three young constituents and future leaders joining us today, all of whom became interested in and learned a bit about politics over the past few months and all of whom demonstrated their volunteer spirit in the process although I have to say that mention of another literature drop might just send them into convulsions. Firstly, my loving daughter Georgia Jayne, looking forward to being a grade 11 student at Bishop O'Byrne high school next year and to hopefully getting her driver's licence next week. Secondly, Ms Grace Hilton, our second daughter, area

constituent, grade 11 student at STS, and an accomplished athlete. And last but not least, Mr. Liam Franke, also an area constituent, grade 11 student at Dr. E.P. Scarlett high school and long-time family friend. Maybe they can hear us outside the Chamber, but please join me in the traditional welcome accorded to all honoured guests.

**Ms McKittrick:** Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the House four persons who have been active in the fourth national day of action drawing attention to refugee health care. Health care professionals from Victoria to St. John's rallied across the country to call on the federal government to reinstate refugee health services as part of the interim federal health program. The Edmonton rally took place at noon on June 15 at the University of Alberta. Please stand as I call your name.

Sarah Hanafi was one of the organizers for the national day of action for refugee health here in Edmonton. Sarah is a second-year medical student at the University of Alberta, with a long-standing interest in minority issues in health care.

Ruth Wolfe is on the academic staff of the University of Alberta School of Public Health where she serves as practice program director. She has worked on and studied issues associated with the inequities facing minorities for over 40 years and immigrant and refugee health for over 20 years. She's a strong advocate for community health workers as a vital bridge between minority communities and health and social service programs.

Dr. Jessie Breton is an emergency physician working at the Royal Alex hospital in Edmonton. She's a member of the Canadian Doctors for Refugee Care, a group of front-line health care workers from across Canada advocating for refugee health care. She's also the cofounder of the Alberta Refugee Care Coalition, which has strived to fill the gaps left by the cuts here in Alberta.

Bashir Mohamed is a refugee and was involved in organizing the rally on June 15. He's a student in political science at the University of Alberta. I would ask that the House offer the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly several members of the Edmonton cycling community and supporters of the Edmonton cycling community. I'd just ask that they each stand as they are introduced. Tyler Golly is the general supervisor for the city of Edmonton's transportation master plan. In his six years with the city he's worked tirelessly to develop and implement the bicycle transportation plan. My own constituency of Edmonton-Centre will benefit from this work with the construction of a protected bike lane on 102nd Avenue, scheduled to be completed next year, and I thank him for his efforts.

As a nephrologist and critical care physician at Royal Alexandra hospital, Dr. Darren Markland knows well the damage that a lack of regular physical exercise can do. Today I'd like to recognize him for his daily efforts to model a solution by travelling our city almost exclusively by bike.

In his work with the Edmonton Bicycle and Touring Club and Alberta Bicycle Association, Mr. Alan Schietzsch helped found the Tour of Alberta gran fondo, an event that has grown to host over 1,500 riders each year on roads across Alberta, and this is an event that he continues to support today as a volunteer.

As the president and executive director of the Edmonton Bicycle Commuters Society, Chris Chan has been one of our city's most vocal advocates to ensure that cyclists and pedestrians are protected and respected on our streets. I salute both Chris and the EBC for their long-standing and ongoing work.

Through her graduate studies in human ecology, weekly bike report on CJSR 88.5 FM, and work with the online cycling hub Bikeology, Karly Coleman helps inform and support those who already bike and encourages many others to give it a try. She's also a strong supporter and organizer of events during Bike Month.

Eric Jenkins commutes by bike every day year-round to his work as a public servant providing care and support for veterans through Capital Care and making deliveries for Calico bakery. Calico bakery is operated by his partner Laurel Ferster, an entrepreneur and fellow bike commuter who creates delicious baked goods that are available for sale every weekend at Edmonton-Centre's Mother's Market.

Lastly, I'd like to introduce Jay Smith, whose column, Your Ride, in *Metro* Edmonton offers stories and insights related to getting around Edmonton by transit, foot, and bike.

I'd ask all of you to join me in providing them with the warm welcome of this House.

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

1:40

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to introduce to you and through you some of the staff who've helped me in this office and helped me get where I am today. I'd like to begin by introducing the members of the transition team. Sharron Bursey has worked with government for seven years – please rise, Sharron – in communications offices with various ministries. Currently she is the office manager for the communications staff in the Ministry of Seniors. She helped me through the first two weeks as well as Cindy Dunphy, who has been with government for 34 years in a variety of roles, and currently she is in the Ministry of Seniors, working in the deputy minister's office. Thank you very much.

In terms of permanent staff we have Tonya Malo. Tonya started in my constituency as my constituency assistant yesterday. She has worked for AHS for the past 16 years in a variety of roles and was the chairperson of AUPE local 54 as well.

Claire Puyaoan has worked in government for nine years. I'm honoured to have her as part of my support team. Claire is my go-to for your correspondence, fellow MLAs, and she is one of the big contacts in our office, ensuring that I understand process and co-ordinating correspondence.

We also have Eileen Hofmann – spelled differently; no relation – who has spent more than six years working in a constituency office for a former MLA. Through her casework she's been inspired to become a registered social worker, a journey that she's been completing through night courses, which she will complete this summer. She is also one of our front-office experts, supporting Albertans and finding supports that they require through Health and Seniors.

Camille Hauck is my scheduling co-ordinator, and she is in charge of keeping me on time. She has worked in government since 1985 and continues to enjoy the challenges and excitement of her work. I keep it exciting.

Tim Wilson comes to us from Alberta Health, with seven years of experience in municipal and provincial government and two and a half years as the father of his daughter, Addie Eudora Halton Wilson. He's very proud of her. Also, he is my press secretary. We should mention that.

Bill Moore-Kilgannon is my chief of staff, and he comes to us after many years as an executive director of Public Interest Alberta and was also the first executive director for the Parkland Institute here at the University of Alberta. He is a proud dad to Neil and Ian.

Please join me in the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

**Mr. Cooper:** Mr. Speaker, thank you so much to you and through you to all members of this fine Assembly today. We all know that politics is about the support of our friends and family, and today I'm so pleased to be joined by just that, some very dear friends of ours who have shared a very similar family journey. It's great to have them here to support me today and to be able to take part in the proceedings. I would like to introduce to you Ashlea, Jaeden, and Ethan along with their mom, Steph Christensen. They are the future leaders of our province, and I'm so proud to have them here with us today. If you'll join me in welcoming them to the Assembly.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Mr. Speaker, with the indulgence of the House I'd like my guests to rise and actually personally receive the warm welcome of the House.

**The Speaker:** To all our guests and visitors today, welcome.

The hon. minister.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly Dana Geall. For the last 10 years Dana has been a nurse at the University hospital, and Dana was one of my dedicated campaign volunteers. I thank her so much for her hard work, both as a nurse and certainly on our campaign. It is certainly an honour to have her here with us today, so I'd ask the Assembly to please give her the traditional warm welcome.

**The Speaker:** Are there any other members who have introductions today?

I'd like to use this opportunity for just a minute. Welcome to all our guests here. To the hon. members, let's remember that time is a very valuable commodity to this House, and as we make introductions in the future, I hope you'll remember that.

## Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The Member for Edmonton-Centre.

### Bike Month

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise in the House today and recognize that across Canada June is celebrated as Bike Month. My own love of cycling goes back to my childhood, when the family bike ride was one of our most frequent and loved activities. That love has continued throughout my life.

Biking, however, is not merely an activity for children or to be pursued solely for recreation. Across Canada governments are recognizing that providing safe, accessible routes to commute by bike is an essential part of building a modern and progressive city. This has already been demonstrated in many other parts of the world.

With the growth of major urban centres comes increasing pressure from traffic congestion. The density of our urban cores does not allow for expanded roads, but we can move more people along existing corridors by investing in alternative means of transportation, including expanded transit and protected bike routes. It is my intention to work closely with our government to fulfill our campaign promise to provide secure, stable funding for municipalities that will allow them to continue this essential work.

Commuting by bike improves physical and mental health, decreasing pressure on our medical system. I've been commuting by bike within my own constituency of Edmonton-Centre for over five years. It allows me to slow down, focus, and connect to my

community while providing essential daily physical exercise. It is also my small part to mitigate the effects of climate change and reduce my dependence on fossil fuels.

Bike commuting isn't always possible or convenient for all people in all circumstances, but I encourage all my fellow members here in this House to try biking during the time that you spend here in Edmonton-Centre, whether on our beautiful river valley trails or to visit festivals, markets, and the unique local businesses here in our downtown core or even just coming here to work in this House. It's fast, it's efficient, and most of all it's fun. No matter what time of the year, it's always a good time to bike.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

My apologies, hon. member. I lived there at one time. I should have known this. Grande Prairie-Smoky.

### Rural Health Care

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a privilege to speak in this House for the fine people of Grande Prairie-Smoky. Grande Prairie-Smoky has many vibrant communities. These communities make up a vital part of the Alberta economy. It is indeed sad to see how the government has treated such an important part of the province.

We have a severe lack of doctors, a problem not exclusive to Grande Prairie-Smoky. Some residents cannot even get a family doctor. If you're lucky enough to have one, it can still take up to six weeks to get an appointment. This forces people to go to emergency for simple things like getting a prescription renewed, which compounds the problems faced in emergency rooms. I recently heard first-hand of a patient that went to emergency, waited five hours, and was then moved to a second waiting room, where the people were sleeping on the floor, the same people that he waited with in the first waiting room.

Stories like this are common. We cannot continue to treat our seniors and other vulnerable citizens in this fashion. It is reprehensible. This is a topic I've heard over and over from the public and from seniors I have talked to. I have visited many seniors' facilities in the last couple of months. A common concern was the lack of seniors' facilities and other options for extended care.

Mr. Speaker, we spend an enormous amount of money on health care in Alberta, one of the highest in Canada, an enormous amount considering the dismal results we get, especially in rural and northern Alberta. Our front-line staff are doing the best they can with the broken system they are forced to work in. It's time to cut the waste in Alberta and put that funding toward front-line staff and hiring doctors for rural Alberta.

I have heard the current government state that there will be a \$500 million influx into the health care system. How much will be put into rural health, and how much is earmarked for hiring new doctors? Something needs to be done. I ask the government to seriously consider not only those in the Peace Country but all proud, hard-working Albertans.

1:50

### Oral Question Period

#### Government Policies

**Mr. Jean:** Yesterday I asked the Premier if she really believed that Alberta will have an advantage from having higher business taxes than Ontario, British Columbia, and Quebec. She didn't answer. This Premier's government is taking our business taxes to levels higher than those of the provinces we compete with for our corporate head offices. Our personal taxes are going up for Alberta

families, but the real Alberta advantage saw dozens of corporations move their head offices to Alberta originally. So why is the Premier pursuing policies that will drive head offices out of Alberta?

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

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, as I said yesterday when I answered this question, what this government is doing is pursuing policies that will get us off the royalty roller coaster. We are also pursuing policies that will ensure stable, predictable funding of those important public services that Albertans rely on, whether it be education, whether it be health care, whether it be postsecondary and many others. In order to do that, we need stable, predictable funding. So it is about time that we develop a tax system that is grown-up, one that reflects people that are committed to ensuring a good, solid economy.

**Mr. Jean:** The Premier is pursuing policies which will hurt our economy.

Wildrose wants to help the government clarify its fiscal situation. We're helpful. Yesterday the Member for Strathmore-Brooks tried to get the Finance minister to tell us how large the deficit will be this year. Well, he wouldn't answer, but just a few days ago the Premier told a columnist that the deficit would be \$5.4 billion. Why can the Premier talk about deficit numbers with the media but the Finance minister won't answer the same questions here in the Legislature?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, first of all, just in terms of the whole issue of driving investment out of Alberta, I did want to just mention an opportunity that I had on Friday to participate in an event where Telus announced that it would be investing a billion dollars in the city of Edmonton in infrastructure to support both our education and our health care systems. That was good news.

What I said in terms of the issue of deficit was that, generally speaking, as we work on a budget – that is not before the House today. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** I would remind the House that the leader, again, has some difficulty speaking when there's a lot of noise in the House, and time is a valuable commodity.

Second supplemental.

**Mr. Jean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. More questions about pursuing policies which will hurt our economy. There are actually media reports that the Premier is going to dismantle the Alberta Energy Regulator. The AER was set up to reduce the regulatory burden on industry while ensuring that our environment was properly protected for Albertans' future. While Wildrose has heard complaints about the AER's inefficiency, there is no doubt that industry and Albertans have benefited from having a single regulator. Why is the Premier planning to dismantle . . .

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, you know, first of all, "dismantle" is a little bit of a torquing of a quote in the article that the hon. member referred to. That is not the word that I used. What I did say was that our government will be conducting a full review of agencies, boards, and commissions, something that folks over there talked about doing as well. We'll be looking at salaries and salary disclosure as well as the function of each board. When I was asked about whether AER would be part of that review, I replied that it would. This is something the people from both sides of the House have asked for.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental, the Leader of the Opposition.

**Mr. Jean:** So far this session this government has made statements in the Legislature and in the media that need some clarification, and we're here to help. The Education minister says that Alberta is expecting 12,000 extra students this fall. The Finance minister has used this number. Yesterday the Premier used this number. That number is false. Alberta school boards say that there will be 7,500 new students, not 12,000, a big difference. The actual data you can actually find on the Education ministry's website if you want to look. Can the Premier clarify why her government is using a number that they know is false?

**The Speaker:** Let me just clarify. That was the Official Opposition's second major question.  
The Minister of Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. We are basing our numbers and basing our projection to make sure that we review the shortfall in funding based on all of the students coming into the education system across the province, in all places. That number is within a range, but it's quite an accurate range.

**The Speaker:** Now the first supplemental.

**Mr. Jean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will remind the minister: it's on your website.

There are more statements, indeed, that need clarification from this government, and we're trying to be helpful. During debate on Bill 1 we asked the government to ban unions from donating the paid time of their employees. The Justice minister said that the law includes services in the definition of the contributions. That is simply not true. It was never an issue when union donations were allowed. Now it is a big problem. Unions can donate their employees' paid time to a political party for political purposes. Can the Premier please clarify?

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

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Notwithstanding that I'm being asked to reflect on a unanimous decision of the House, actually, just to be clear, rather history-making, what I said when that issue was raised was that it's one of several different issues . . . [interjections]

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

**Ms Notley:** . . . that we are putting to an all-party committee because, quite frankly, it's something that every member of this House should have a chance to weigh in on and that also Albertans should have a chance to weigh in on. That's why we're doing it.

**Mr. Jean:** So bringing in a law that doesn't actually change the law and allows donations from unions. I understand.

A final but very important statement from this government that needs clarification. The labour minister and the Premier have both said that increasing the minimum wage by 50 per cent will result in more jobs. Every employer of minimum wage employees say exactly the opposite. They point out that they will either have to shut down or they will have to reduce staff or they will have to find labour-saving ways to absorb a 50 per cent increase in labour costs. Can the Premier please clarify: does she know one single employer who will hire more . . .

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

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me just begin by pointing out that my friend across the way has an interesting idea of what a supplemental question is. We started with education and students, then we went to the Election Act, and then we went to minimum wage. So, you know . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. Premier, would you finish?

**Ms Notley:** Nonetheless, in answer to your question, yes, I do know many employers who are going to create more jobs.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

### Pipeline Development

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've heard the Premier say that she understands that we need pipelines. That's brilliant. We want to help, but the government has a lot of trouble supporting pipelines heading west or south and has sent mixed signals about pipelines heading east. Let me be clear. A new report shows that without new pipelines western Canada will lose a hundred billion dollars over the next 15 years. Can the Energy minister explain why her government is dismissing this hundred billion dollar priority for Albertans?

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, I think the Premier made it fairly clear in the last few days that we are pursuing market access. Absolutely, that's important to our government. It's important to the industry. We've heard over and over again in our royalty discussions that that's one of the biggest concerns they have, and we are absolutely pursuing those talks.

**Mrs. Aheer:** We can do more to invite investment for refineries. However, that does not get our product to market. A hundred billion dollars lost in investment means less money to health care, education, to pay down the growing debt, or to save for our future, the future of Alberta. Projects like Keystone XL, the pipelines east and west are ready to be built today to start creating jobs for all Albertans. Can the Energy minister explain this government's growing disinterest in building pipelines?

2:00

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

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, first of all, the member opposite is truly mischaracterizing what we're saying, and I have to say that I'm not entirely sure how many times we have to say it for them to hear it. What I will say, however, is that, you know, I had a great conversation with the Premier of New Brunswick earlier this week, where we talked about our common interest with respect to Energy East. I'm also very excited to be talking about the Canadian energy strategy at the Council of the Federation in a couple of weeks. We will continue to do exactly what the minister over there has been saying.

**Mrs. Aheer:** *An Action a Day Keeps Global Capitalism Away*: that is the name of the book that the environment minister helped to write that calls for shutting down the oil sands and encouraging blockades to moving product to market. We need advocates, and we need people who understand the impacts of losing a hundred billion dollars from Alberta's economy over the next 15 years. We do not need economic experiments. The NDP in Saskatchewan gets it. Why can't the Energy minister here fully support building all environmentally responsible pipelines?

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

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think we've made it fairly clear in the last week or two that we're working with all industry to talk about market access and working in an environmentally responsible way to get product to market.

### Government Policies (continued)

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Premier gave a heartfelt apology in the House to aboriginal peoples. Our caucus stood in recognition of that apology; the second party did not. Actions are more important than words. To the Premier: what action is your government taking to help aboriginal peoples benefit from Alberta's high quality of life to the full extent that they choose?

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

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. That was a very good question. Of course, there are a broad range of actions that we need to take. As you know, we supported the call of many indigenous leaders in our province for a proper, full inquiry into missing and murdered aboriginal women, but we know that that's one of many, many issues.

One of the things that we'll be doing is asking our government to look at the TRC recommendations and look at how we can make those real through a crossministry evaluation of what we can do to improve what we're doing, but we will also do that in consultation with First Nations.

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, Alberta has had low unemployment traditionally, at least until the NDP government was elected. To the Minister of Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour: what programs will you put in place to assist youth, all Alberta youth, including aboriginal youth, to be included in the economy to the full extent of their abilities and ambitions so that they can become the bright future of Alberta that I believe we all want them to be?

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

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you . . . Oh, sorry.

**The Speaker:** I have recognized the minister. Would you like it to be the Premier?

**Ms Notley:** Well, I think it was directed at me.

**Mr. McIver:** No. It was to the minister.

**Ms Notley:** It was to the minister? Well, then, I wasn't listening. We have every intention of promoting youth employment issues. Of course, we've got our job creators' tax credit, but also we ran on and will ultimately be introducing for next summer the return of the summer temporary employment program.

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, in the throne speech it states, "Investing in skills and education is the single best investment our province can make to ensure our future prosperity." We agree. Today we hear reports of hundreds if not thousands more layoffs in Alberta. To the Minister of Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour: what are you doing to help Albertans get back to work after they've lost their jobs due to uncertainty created by your government's policies?

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

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. The unemployment numbers we are

seeing are a reflection of the previous government's lack of diversifying the economy. We are committed to making lives better for all Alberta families, and this means raising the minimum wage to . . . [interjections]

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

**Ms Sigurdson:** Well, as I was saying, the unemployment numbers that we're experiencing today are because of the previous government's lack of diversification of the economy, and we are investing in other things than the oil and gas sector . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Minister.  
The Member for Calgary-Elbow.

### Minimum Wage

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Now, we've already heard a lot about minimum wage in this House, so I thought I would try a more nuanced approach. My friends on my right here: they're locked in. They believe a minimum wage should never increase, nor should any taxes in any case ever. My friends on my left: they're locked in, and they think a 50 per cent increase in Alberta's minimum wage is a cure-all. Now, I expect the truth is somewhere in between. To the Premier: what specific evidence can you provide that shows a \$15 minimum wage will not have unintended consequences . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. Premier, is there a question that you'd like to respond to?

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. This really is a critical, critical issue. As I've said previously, there is a tremendous amount of evidence to show that when low-wage people have more money, it actually generates more economic activity. We also have seen the evidence in the States, where we've . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Any time left? Hon. Premier, 10 seconds, please.

**Ms Notley:** All right. Okay. Then, of course, we've seen numerous antipoverty reports that identify that a living wage in this province, for instance in Calgary . . .

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

**Mr. Clark:** So we haven't heard a study, and I wouldn't count that as evidence, but what I would agree on with the Premier is that I also care about poverty reduction. I care about that very much and helping people who really need it. Minimum wage, however, is a blunt instrument, and having a minimum wage 40 per cent higher than the rest of Canada is a risky social experiment that could backfire on this government and actually make the situation worse. To the Premier: will you commit to a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy that includes minimum wage, and if the evidence shows that a \$15 minimum wage hurts more than it helps, will you back down?

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

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We, of course, are very focused on poverty reduction, and I've asked my Minister of Human Services to follow up on where that poverty reduction strategy is and to bring it forward with some real, significant changes, minimum wage being one of them, minimum wage being one of the key recommendations of groups who have

been working on the poverty reduction strategy for the last two and three years. So we know that that is part of it. The other thing to remember is that three years from now \$15 an hour will not be 40 per cent above the rest of the country.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, we know multinational corporations can spread the impact of minimum wage increases across hundreds of stores, but Alberta's small businesses will face increased costs, causing them to lay off staff or, worse, go out of business entirely. Now, I want to point out to the Premier that Calgary-Elbow and Edmonton-Strathcona are home to an especially high number of excellent Alberta small businesses. To the Premier: if you are locked in on a \$15 minimum wage, will you commit here and now to reduce small-business tax to offset the problems you will create for your constituents and mine?

**Ms Notley:** Well, you know, we will be putting together a job creation package that you will hear more about, Mr. Speaker, in the fall because we know that that is a very important issue. We'll be working together with business on that, and I look forward to that. But, again, we do not want a province where the only businesses that survive are those that require people to be paid at two-thirds of a living wage. We cannot grow our economy on the backs of the poor.

**The Speaker:** Before we begin the next set of questions, I would remind the House about preamble comments. I know there will be some creative ways found to not turn statements into preambles, so I would ask that you be conscious of that.

The Member for Calgary-East.

2:10

### Education Concerns

**Ms Luff:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a teacher in the CBE for the last six years I've regularly had classes that are up to 70 per cent English language learners. This is especially true in classes across my riding of Calgary-East. For years school boards have had to cut valuable supports for these students due to lack of funding. Since the future of our province relies on the success of all of our students, I ask the Minister of Education: what is this government doing to ensure that English language learners are getting the supports that they need?

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

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. We recognize that we've seen a 50 per cent increase in second language learners in our public school system since 2005, and that number is increasing by 5 per cent a year. So the first thing that we did, very importantly as a new government, is that we reinstated the funding around all grants pertaining to second language learners as well as for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students as part of the ...

**Mr. Jean:** Time.

**Mr. Eggen:** ... \$103 million injection of funding for 12,000 new students in our schools.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I would remind that the time is being taken care of by the table officers, and that is who I'm listening to.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Ms Luff:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In addition to English language learners, teachers are working with larger, more complex classes, less prep time, and fewer resources overall. Can the minister tell us what is being done to help these teachers and their students?

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, it's very important to understand the first principles in ensuring that schools are functioning and that kids are learning, and that's to make sure that you have proper funding in place. That's why, once again, we put that money in straight away, to ensure that we at least hold the line. Then I've also been working with parent groups and with trustee associations and with the Alberta Teachers' Association to make sure that we build a sustainable plan for the future.

**The Speaker:** I would remind the hon. member that the last time I heard your first supplemental, I thought I saw a preamble in there. I know it'll be different this time. Go ahead.

**Ms Luff:** I really like preambles.

To the Minister of Education again: given that school boards have told us they felt ignored and neglected by the previous government and given that I have spoken with some principals and superintendents and they are very hopeful that this new government will hear their concerns, what are we doing to ensure that school boards are being heard?

**The Speaker:** Very creative use of the word "given." I'm sure I'm going to hear that a few times today.

The hon. Minister of Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you. Well, given that I've met with school boards across the province – and, you know, we opened up the door straight away. I've had meetings not just with each of those groups separately but with all of those groups together, which is the first time, they've said, in many, many years that that's happened. We're looking for a spirit of collaboration to ensure that we get the long-term funding we need, where we need it, when we need it so that all students in our province are able to succeed and learn to the best of their abilities.

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

### Education Funding

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government has presented an interim supply bill without information about how the funds will be used. The budget will not be presented until the school year has started. School authorities are holding back their funding for hiring and supports until they have some clarity about the budget. This crisis in educational planning has been brought on by this government. To the Minister of Education: what is the Minister of Education going to do to ensure that educational funds are ... [Mr. Smith's speaking time expired]

**Mr. Eggen:** I guess, Mr. Speaker, hyperbole is part of the action plan for this opposition over here.

We made it very clear that we would restore the funding that the previous government failed to do to meet the needs of 12,000 new students coming into our schools to learn. That's what we endeavored to do, and that's where the money is going to be so that kids learn on time and learn what they need to learn as well.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that I've heard from constituents that resources for teacher aides and other supports for vulnerable students have been rolled back and given that the Wildrose campaigned on a solid plan to ensure that our vulnerable youth would have what they need, again to the Minister of Education: will this government commit to providing clarity for the educational authorities so that they can have their programs and staffing in place by the beginning of this new school year?

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

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Actually, I thank you for that question, too, because everyone needs to know that the money that we put into place – and it's in the range of 12,000 based on the 1.9 per cent population growth from the Treasury Board – is to be in the classroom for teachers, for support staff, and to make sure that kids are learning in our classrooms. After the fall budget is tabled, then the monies for the rest of the school year will be forthcoming as well.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Smith:** Well, thank you, again, Mr. Speaker. It's all very well and good to add money to the Education budget, even if you do not have an approved budget to add to. Given that Mr. Ramsankar, president of the Alberta Teachers' Association, believes that the new funding will be of limited value if it does not go to the classroom supports by September, how is this minister going to reassure parents that teachers and educational assistants will be rehired to meet the needs of students in the classroom this September?

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, you can be certain that I will be looking very carefully to make sure that that money, the \$103 million or thereabouts, however many students are there, will be spent in the classroom to make sure that the supports are there for kids to help them learn. In fact, the Calgary board of education said, and I quote: for the first time since 2012 the CBE will see their basic funding per student increased. End of quote. So, certainly, they're very pleased about it. I'll make sure that the money gets spent in the classroom, where it belongs.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

### Job Creation and Protection

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Another day, yet another report of job losses in the oil and gas sector. In fact, 185 hard-working Albertans at TransCanada are now without jobs. Given that we're hearing that other major oil and gas companies are in the process of cutting their ranks as a result of nearly a billion dollars of lost revenue thanks to pending corporate tax hikes and the uncertainty created by the government's promised royalty review, to the Minister of Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour: what are you doing to create more jobs and to address these job losses?

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

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. As I've said already in this House this afternoon, unemployment numbers that we're experiencing now are a reflection of the previous government's lack of diversification of the . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** How much time left?

**The Clerk:** Twenty seconds.

**The Speaker:** Twenty seconds, Minister.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The situation that we are in now is because of the lack of diversification in our economy, and certainly we are wanting to invest in diversification and to support business. We're working with our partners in industry and business to do that. As the Premier said, Telus has invested a billion dollars just last week . . .

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Energy: given that the pending royalty review, a new climate change strategy, and reviewing the mandate of the Alberta Energy Regulator are causing so much uncertainty in the energy sector, what do you intend to do, specifically, to work with the energy industry to ease the uncertainty and anxiety caused by your government's policies, to ensure that there are no more job losses for hard-working Albertans?

2:20

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, since day one we've been meeting with energy leaders, mostly in Calgary, but in Edmonton here some have reached out to us. The federal energy minister has reached out to us, and we're in constant talks. They're encouraging us to look at the industry as a whole, look at all the pieces. They feel that when we do all those parts, that will create stability. In fact, it is creating stability just in these talks that we've been doing.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Finance minister: given that so many Alberta businesses are holding off on making new investments or are cancelling existing commitments thanks to the policies of this government and given your own caution on tabling a budget, why can't you wait until next spring to implement higher business taxes, working with the business community to adapt and save jobs? What's the big rush?

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you to the hon. member. Mr. Speaker, it's always regrettable when there are job losses in any sector, including the ones that we're experiencing in the oil and gas sector. But we're working closely, as the Energy minister said, with that sector, and we'll be looking at that more as we go forward. The budget, as this hon. member knows, is coming forward in the fall, after looking at all ministries, the efficiencies that we can create through looking at those ministries. We will be working hard to develop that so we're globally competitive as we move forward, as we have . . .

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

The hon. Member for Little Bow.

### Rural Transportation Infrastructure

**Mr. Schneider:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Between 2013 and 2014 the former government downloaded the funding of bridges to rural municipalities. One of Little Bow's counties has about 200 bridges, of which 11 are within one year of their useful life. In fact, rural Alberta is responsible for 75 per cent of roads and 60 per cent of bridges. Wildrose's 10-10 plan would make sure that municipalities have resources for these projects. To the minister: is this government aware of this quickly growing problem facing our rural communities?

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the hon. member for that question. Yes, we are aware of this problem. As leader of the NDP opposition in years past I met regularly with the executive of AAMD and C, and they brought these matters to my attention, particularly the question of bridges. I might add, however, that much of the infrastructure in the province's purview is in similar condition. So we have many priorities that are very important, and we have . . .

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Schneider:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Given that detail is limited in the supply bill as to where dollars for infrastructure are to be spent and given that the resource road program was funded at \$31 million and the local road bridge program was funded at \$26 million, rural communities need to know what the government's plans are. To the minister: will you confirm or deny that there is money within the supply bill that will see funding returned to the local road bridge program?

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you again to the hon. member for that question. This is something that I've been discussing with my officials as I am getting up to speed on the many complex details of the ministry, and I can assure you that it's going to be given the most careful consideration when we bring our budget forward in the fall.

**Mr. Schneider:** Given that in the riding of Little Bow a roundabout has been proposed for the convergence of highway 23 and highway 519, where seven accidents have taken place since January 1 and one fatality, and given that access in and out of Coalhurst is another dangerous situation, complicated by a CP Rail crossing, and given that those important road projects were in the loop for construction – given, given, given – can the minister please confirm that monies in the supply bill will see that these projects are funded?

**Mr. Mason:** To the hon. member: I am aware of these problems, and I'm becoming increasingly aware of the wide number of similar issues in other constituencies. I want to assure you that we'll take these seriously and that I will be looking for some assistance from individual private members regardless of their party affiliation in addressing the issues facing their constituents.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Airdrie.

#### Urgent Health Care in Airdrie

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm from Airdrie, and given that it is one of the fastest growing cities in Alberta – we're literally bursting at the seams – and given that Health ministers have played politics in Airdrie and now we have a bigger, more centralized Alberta health system that has a long history of neglecting the local needs of local decision-makers, we're desperate for a 24-hour urgent health facility. I'm hoping this government can get it right. Will the minister commit to put politics aside and build this centre in our community?

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

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. We know that there has been some lack of confidence in some of the processes among Albertans moving forward from the past government, and we're committed to making sure that we have an infrastructure plan that is publicly

released, with lots of opportunity to ensure that the sun shines on that list and we can have a full public conversation. So when this government makes a commitment, you can count on it.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Minister, lives are in danger, over 60,000 people. Given that there is only a total of 14 beds to treat a population of over 60,000, a 24-hour urgent care network is needed. It's overdue, and study after study has demanded it. We all know that putting off this urgent care centre is dangerous. What sort of timeline will the minister commit to?

**Ms Hoffman:** I want to thank the hon. member for the question and the opportunity to express the fact that we want to ensure that Albertans no matter where they live, including every corner of this province, have opportunities to ensure that their confidence is instilled in the public health care system. We do have a responsibility to the 60,000 people living in Airdrie as well as the more than 4 million people living in Alberta to make sure that we're planning infrastructure responsibly, and when we do make a commitment, to following through on those commitments. I appreciate the information being provided today.

Thank you.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Given that Airdrie needs a . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I wonder if you'd wait until the Speaker recognizes you. Proceed.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Given that Airdrie needs a 24-hour health care facility and given that in March the facility was promised but now we're sort of in limbo – when you have a sick child, Calgary is simply too far away, the wait times are just too long, and we're closed after 10 p.m. The plans are in place. Will you just give it the go-ahead? Will the minister commit to helping all Albertans and build this centre?

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you to the member for the question and for drawing attention to the fact that there were a number of press releases made by the third party when they were in government in the months leading up to the election. Press releases do not necessarily instill confidence in Albertans moving forward. We as well as members of the Official Opposition were highly critical of the number of promises that were made and the lack of government actually funding those in the past. You don't have that in this government. When we make a commitment, we'll follow through on it, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### Job Creation and Protection

*(continued)*

**Dr. Starke:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Job losses across the province are among the most pressing of social and economic issues. For example, in your own home city of Medicine Hat, operations at Sanjel were recently suspended, meaning that these jobs will go to another location, potentially outside of Alberta. To the Minister of Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour. Oil service companies in rural Alberta are feeling the pinch of a weak product market as well as a government whose policies seem bent on crippling their industry. How will you ensure that those who live in rural Alberta will receive the same focus on . . .

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

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Certainly, the lack of diversification in

our economy due to the previous government's decisions is continuing. The numbers we're experiencing now have a lot to do with that. We are interested in investing in diversity. As I said earlier, Telus just invested \$1 billion, and we want to have more investment and that kind of thing to diversify so that we're not so dependent on the oil and gas industry.

Thank you.

2:30

**Dr. Starke:** My next question actually is to the environment minister. Given that other major companies such as Baker Hughes and Schlumberger are also scaling back or shutting down certain locations, how does this government intend to strengthen their greenhouse gas emission techniques when the very companies that look to create this technology are being forced out of Alberta?

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** I have to assure folks that both the environment minister and myself have been meeting with industry because we do see the connection between both. Industry is quite heartened by that, and we are assured to look at the industry as a whole, and . . . [interjection] Excuse me?

**An Hon. Member:** Stay tuned?

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** No.

The industry has assured us that they like the fact that we're looking at it together, and they don't feel that's going to impact jobs.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Back to the Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour minister this time. Given that most mid-sized cities in Alberta experienced explosive economic growth since 2005 along with unprecedented job creation and given that the most recent figures from my home city of Lloydminster suggest that up to 3,000 jobs have been lost because of economic and policy uncertainty, how can this government's only strategy in creating new jobs be to simply put money in the hands of those who spend it fastest?

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

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In addition to being the Minister of Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour, I'm also the Minister of Innovation and Advanced Ed. Innovation is doing a tremendous amount of work. I just recently went to NAIT and saw all of the alternative energy and other initiatives they're doing. We've invested \$40 million more in postsecondary and apprenticeships to support people to get good jobs and stay here in Alberta.

Thanks.

### Health Coverage for Refugees and Refugee Claimants

**Ms McKittrick:** Mr. Speaker, nearly three years ago the federal government drastically cut its health coverage for refugees and refugee claimants. Many provinces, including Alberta, then stepped up to provide care to refugees and their families. To the Minister of Health and of Seniors: will this government join the calls of doctors, nurses, and other Canadians in other provinces for the federal government to reinstate health care coverage for all refugees?

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

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for this important question. The highest court in Canada

has ruled that the federal government must reinstate coverage for refugees. The federal government is appealing that decision, but it has been forced to put an interim program in place to ensure coverage for refugees and refugee claimants. This government's position is that the federal government should end this appeal. We are committed to ensuring that people who are living in Alberta legally have the right to public health care, just like all of us do, including refugee claimants.

**Ms McKittrick:** What assurances can the hon. minister give us that this government is there for the refugees and all of their families?

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

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. I've had an opportunity to ask some questions in my ministry around this issue. As has been directed through the Court of Appeal, the federal government has a responsibility to ensure that refugee claimants are currently getting the services that they require under public health care. As well, I've had an opportunity to clarify that children who are born in Alberta who are the children of refugees will have access to whatever services they need within public health care. This means that we'll continue to provide public health care for refugees seeking legal status in Canada.

**Ms McKittrick:** To the Minister of Health: will this government stand up for those seeking refuge in our great country by calling on the federal government to abandon its costly appeal of a Supreme Court ruling, which has called these cuts cruel and unusual?

**Ms Hoffman:** Thanks again to the hon. member and those who are in attendance today to hear this answer. We absolutely agree with the Supreme Court that these cuts were cruel and unusual and that they targeted populations who have already been targeted for far too long in their own countries, and that's why they come to Canada. They come to Canada to ensure that they have opportunities for themselves and for their future, and that includes publicly funded health care. We encourage the federal government, whoever is in government after the fall election, to ensure that this appeal stops and that we continue to fund refugees and refugee claimants.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, there's a suggestion that there may be laptops being used. I would remind the House of the procedural letter that was sent earlier about that practice.

The Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

### Registry Services in Blackfalds

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first question is about the town of Blackfalds, a town of 8,000 people that have no Alberta registry office. It's not because the town doesn't want one. Council has asked for it. And it's not because there are no entrepreneurs willing to invest – there are – but because of the bureaucratic rules that are convoluted and deny an entire town the benefit of a registry. Is the Minister of Service Alberta aware of this problem, and could you please tell us why the bureaucracy is preventing this community from having a registry office?

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

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the hon. member for his question. I can tell you that I will be looking into this matter. I don't have an answer for you right now, but I think it is a very valid question, and I look forward to getting back

to you and to all members of the House with a response. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Orr:** I do thank you for that answer because people do have to drive all the way to Lacombe or Red Deer every time they are required by law to renew their driver's licence or a registration or get a death certificate or anything. People with disabilities and transportation problems, busy working people find that extremely difficult. Will the same minister be able to tell the people of Blackfalds how long they will have to wait for such an essential service?

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

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the member for the question. As I'm looking into getting more details on this, I think it would be irresponsible to give an answer as far as how long. I can assure the member that I will be talking to the ministry and getting some answers as quickly as possible and getting back to the hon. member.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you. In that review, if necessary, would the minister be prepared to initiate a review of the registry rules with the intent of permitting separate municipalities to service their communities with this essential service of a registry office?

**Mr. Bilous:** Mr. Speaker, thanks to the member for the question. I definitely want to look into this. I think, first of all, it's important that Albertans do have access to registries to ensure that they, obviously, can get their licences and not have to travel too far throughout the province to get this done. Again, I think that until I get some answers, it wouldn't be prudent to be making any kinds of promises and commitments other than that I will look into this example in Blackfalds and get back to the member.

Thank you.

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

### Capital Projects in Calgary-Lougheed

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My constituents in Calgary-Lougheed are truly grateful for the building of three schools in the past three terms as well as the internationally awarded Calgary South Health Campus, the reconstruction of south Fish Creek park, a historic agreement for the southwest Calgary ring road with our Tsuut'ina neighbours, and more. However, due to recent changes, my constituents have become greatly concerned about whether formerly planned projects will actually be going ahead. My first question is to the Minister of Education. Considering the incredible growth in our riding, can the minister assure the students and parents in Calgary-Lougheed that the construction of Evergreen middle school will begin in the next two months and be completed the following fall, as scheduled?

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

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the Member for Calgary-Lougheed for the question. We've been working very closely with Infrastructure, with school boards to make sure that we provide stability and predictability for all schools here in the province of Alberta. In regard to his school specifically I'm aware of the growth that's taking place there, and if the hon. member can give me a list – I've done it already for a couple of people – I can find out exactly where that school is at.

2:40

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

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. I look forward to a little back and forth on that.

Now, given that our caucus leader was instrumental in reaching a landmark agreement with the Tsuut'ina First Nation – and my constituents truly appreciate that – can the current Minister of Transportation quell any uncertainty and assure our constituents that the tendering of the southwest Calgary ring road will be completed this calendar year with construction to begin in 2016?

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the hon. member for his question. I had the opportunity two weeks ago in Calgary to meet with the chief of the Tsuut'ina Nation, and we had a discussion. I fully understand the components of the agreement that was negotiated by the previous government with the Tsuut'ina Nation, and I understand as well the very significant contributions that the province has made in terms of land and cash and that there's a seven-year guillotine, if you will, on the agreement, after which everything would revert to the Tsuut'ina Nation. So there's a very serious time urgency with . . .

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. I'm sure that *Hansard* will get the spelling of guillotine correct.

My last question is to the same minister. Given the deadlines, as you've mentioned, in the complex agreement can you assure the constituents in Calgary-Lougheed and all Calgarians and Albertans, who will be extremely well served by this road: will the southwest Calgary ring road indeed be completed by 2019 according to your time schedules?

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much to the hon. member for the question. Given what's at stake, Mr. Speaker, it's very important that we proceed as expeditiously as possible with the completion of the southwest ring road.

### Members' Statements

(continued)

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-South East.

### Energy Policies

**Mr. Fraser:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, my heart goes out to all the Albertans that have lost jobs, including the 185 from TransCanada that we heard of today. The Premier said today that her intent is to get Albertans off the oil and gas roller coaster, but is it her intent to move them off the roller coaster and right into the unemployment line? With higher business taxes, a royalty review, a new climate change strategy, increasing the minimum wage in a downturn, reviewing the mandate of the Alberta Energy Regulator, it's no wonder businesses are holding off on making new investments or even following through with the existing commitments they have today.

Just yesterday the *Financial Post* reported that the uncertainty surrounding Alberta's policy on oil and gas royalties has already caused several companies to shift capital to other provinces, and this should come as no surprise. A securities analyst was quoted as saying that land sale activity, which is a key indicator for future

drilling and investment intentions, is expected to increase in British Columbia and Saskatchewan in 2016-17 at Alberta's expense.

I find it ironic that we keep hearing the government say that they need four, five, six months or maybe longer to conduct multiple reviews before they can bring down their budget, yet this same government expects Alberta businesses, who create many of the jobs in this province, to only have six days to change their budgets to accommodate the new policies.

Mr. Speaker, we're not just talking about numbers. We're not talking statistics. We're talking about Alberta families. These families want to take care of their children and their aging parents. In order to do that, they need a job. When Albertans lose jobs, that goes far beyond politics. These are life-changing events caused by policies being rushed by this government without enough thought or consultation.

To the government: slow it down; protect Albertan jobs.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Stony Plain.

### Wabamun Dragonfly Festival

**Ms Babcock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This year, as every year, the stunning village of Wabamun held their Dragonfly Festival last weekend. It's a weekend filled with pancakes, parades, playing ball, and the perfect weather in this, the capital region's four-season playground. Young and old alike watched the parade go by, and I heard that there was a rule that if you waved, you got candy.

Upon entering the beautiful village of Wabamun, the first thing your eye is drawn to is the world's largest dragonfly. To celebrate the dragonfly and life on the lake, Wabamun holds its annual Dragonfly Festival.

The village of Wabamun did not always sit on the site it occupies today. The village was moved across the ice of Wabamun Lake during the winter of 1911-1912, one building at a time, to accommodate the arrival of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway. The coming of the railway led to many opportunities within the village of Wabamun. Tourists arrived from Edmonton, and coal in the area was developed for shipping.

Today the coal and the tourism are still there along with a marina capable of launching and mooring all manner of boats, including large sailboats, and the village's waterfront park. There are many young families that call this village home and many retirees as well, making for a well-balanced, tightly knit community. Many people volunteer and are willing to give a hand when needed, exemplifying the sense of community and friendliness we find throughout rural Alberta.

The Dragonfly Festival is a time to see people come together not just in a time of need but in a time of joy: firefighters making smoke on the barbecue instead of putting out fires, new ventures in the market, dance classes coming to town for the little ones, and candy in the streets. The symbol of the dragonfly carries the wisdom of transformation and adaptability, of change and light, and when a dragonfly shows up, it reminds you to bring a little more lightness and joy into your life. So when you celebrate the world's largest dragonfly, it can bring nothing but positives.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I would remind the House again that as members leave the House, they acknowledge the Speaker's chair.

The Member for Calgary-Varsity.

### Sheldon Kennedy

**Ms McLean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to acknowledge the work of a local leader and hero who is recognized both here in

Alberta and further afield. Whether you know Sheldon Kennedy for his eight years in the NHL or for his cross-Canada in-line skate to raise awareness for child abuse, Sheldon is best known for his courageous decision to report the sexual abuse he suffered while playing junior hockey.

Since then Sheldon has become an inspiration to abuse survivors around the world and has become a committed, outspoken children's advocate. For his tireless work he has received several awards, and in May this year he was awarded our country's highest honour, the Order of Canada. Sheldon also serves on the board of the Sheldon Kennedy Child Advocacy Centre in the constituency of Calgary-Varsity. In this amazing place compassionate and committed experts from all fields, like social workers, health care professionals, police, and Crown prosecutors, work together to support victims of child abuse. The centre's collaborative approach gives children, youth, and families affected by violence hope and helps them heal.

The Alberta government is a proud partner with the Sheldon Kennedy Child Advocacy Centre and its work in support of children as well as prevention and research. Together with other child advocacy centres in the province we are developing Alberta's integrated model of best practice. The integrated model will expand the collaborative services approach beyond the locations of the child advocacy centres themselves.

In addition to his work as a board member, Sheldon continues to bring attention to the work of the centre and the issue of child abuse. Please join me in congratulating Sheldon Kennedy for his appointment to the Order of Canada, for his leadership, and for his compassion and courage.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

### Strathmore-Brooks Constituency

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud to represent my constituency of Strathmore-Brooks. The counties of Newell and Wheatland have a rich history that is significant to both the development of Alberta and Canada, dating back over 100 years. Now, imagine me in a hat for a moment. I'd like to take this Chamber back to 1885, when James Wishart first followed the Gleichen trail towards Montana. During his exploration he came across a river valley covered in wild roses. He shouted to his crew: "Here's the promised land. We go no further." James Wishart knew what we now know, that Strathmore-Brooks is as Albertan as Alberta gets and that this is Wildrose country.

2:50

My riding of Strathmore-Brooks has a long and proud history abundant in western heritage, with century-old farms and ranches that are still in operation today. Good old rodeo still plays a large role in tourism in my constituency. Speaking of rodeo, rodeo season has kicked off, beginning in June with the Brooks Kinsmen pro rodeo, and the upcoming annual Bassano Amateur Rodeo is set to take place soon. And how can we forget Tilley Heritage Day, which features a delicious old-fashioned barbecue and barn dance, the Duchess Days festival, and the Siksika summer rodeo? Both the Strathmore Stampede and the Strathmore gay rodeo feature a running with the bulls.

These are just a few of the many events that my community has to offer. This summer all across Strathmore-Brooks you can see bull riding, barrel racing, tie-down roping, steer wrestling, chuck-wagons, stagecoaches, and many other western activities for all to enjoy. I would like to invite everyone to visit Strathmore-Brooks

and experience some of these incredible events that run deep with Alberta's history and heritage.

Yee-haw, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** I would remind the members that we should be cautious and get clarity from the Speaker's office with respect to items which are props that are brought into the House. I will overlook this instance, but again I would remind the members that we ought to be cautious and respectful of the House's traditions with respect to such matters being brought into the House.

Thank you.

### Tabling Returns and Reports

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

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm tabling the appropriate number of copies of a Canadian Press article highlighting the comments from the New Democratic government last week on "Punt patronage: Alberta NDP wants end to 'pork-barrel politics.'" I'm looking forward to seeing an end to unfettered appointments without independent merit.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have an article here with respect to the 185 layoffs at TransCanada corporation announced today. I'd like to table that for the House as well.

**The Speaker:** I think that pursuant to Standing Order 7(7) the daily Routine is now concluded.

### Orders of the Day

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

Mr. Connolly moved, seconded by Ms Kazim, that an humble address be presented to Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor as follows.

To Her Honour the Honourable Lois Mitchell, CM, AOE, the Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Alberta:

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

[Adjourned debate June 18: Mr. Clark]

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

**Mr. Clark:** Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. I had concluded my remarks previously. I thank all members for their rapt attention to my words and, with that, will cede my remaining time.

Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, questions and comments?

The hon. member.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity to deliver today my response to the Speech from the Throne and for the privilege of delivering my maiden speech to this House. It is indeed an honour, which I take very seriously.

First, let me congratulate you and the other officers of this House on your election to lead us in our humble duties. To all members of

this House: I salute their commitment to represent the people of Alberta to the best of their ability and my caucus colleagues for their indulgence, patience, and guidance as I become conversant with the legislative practices and procedures.

As a 23-year resident of Calgary-Fish Creek I am more than humbled to represent a constituency which I believe reflects much of what is great about our province. Being the 19th member of the Legislature to serve this geographic area, I am in good company, with Premiers, Speakers, and Leaders of the Official Opposition preceding me. Established in 1979, Calgary-Fish Creek, named after the neighbouring Fish Creek provincial park, has previously had only two other MLAs representing the great communities of Canyon Meadows, Lake Bonavista, Bonavista Downs, Parkland, Deer Run, Deer Ridge, Queensland, and Diamond Cove.

Calgary-Fish Creek is home to just over 38,000 Albertans living in an area with a deep history and key significance to this region, an area of early habitation and gathering by our First Nations people. First settled in 1873 by John and Adelaide Glenn, Fish Creek quickly became an area known for ranching, agriculture, trading, and social activity, and some of those habits still remain today.

After a short period as a Dominion of Canada instructional farm for Treaty 7 the land was purchased by the Hull brothers, when it became a place of innovation in irrigation and agricultural production while also cultivating a much-heralded reputation for regional social life, with the emergence of the Bow Valley Rancho as a required stop for all visiting dignitaries.

The natural brick home built by William Roper Hull still stands proudly, restored today as a showpiece of the Rancho at Fish Creek Restoration Society, a testament to the tenacity, hard work, and dedication of Mitzie and Larry Wasyliw, who along with the Friends of Fish Creek Provincial Park Society and regional park staff continue to act as able stewards of this valuable park, established in 1975 by Premier Lougheed's PC government as a legacy for all Albertans to enjoy for generations to come.

It has indeed lived up to that government's vision. Today Fish Creek is our busiest provincial park, welcoming an estimated 4 million visitors per year to enjoy this gem of nature as Canada's largest urban park. I am proud to represent communities which share this incredible natural resource.

The constituency of Calgary-Fish Creek, which has been home to me and my growing family since 1992, is an amazing example of community spirit at its best. Along with my wife, Cathy, and our three children we have been committed to and deeply involved with the community since making it our home. From years of involvement in the scouting movement to managing soccer, lacrosse, and volleyball teams and an ongoing commitment to area schools, it has been a pleasure to connect with our neighbours and other like-minded Albertans seeking a safe, friendly, welcoming, and nurturing community.

In Calgary-Fish Creek 70 per cent of area homes were built between 1961 and 1980, including, of course, Calgary's first man-made lake, Lake Bonavista, a brainchild of Mr. E. Vee Keith, now a community-run facility that boasts its own mini-ecosystem, including year-round recreation and fishing. Forty-eight per cent of residents were born in Alberta while 18 per cent are immigrants. Over 85 per cent are homeowners, and fully 62 per cent boast postsecondary education, working in every vocation and profession imaginable. While over 15 per cent of residents are between the ages of five and 17, an almost equal number are aged 65 or over. Languages spoken in the area include French, Chinese, German, Punjabi, Vietnamese, Spanish, and Tagalog, to name a few,

reflecting the increasing diversity within the constituency over the past several decades.

As a proud born-and-raised Calgarian and Albertan myself I am perhaps a hybrid of what makes our community, Alberta, and Canada great. While my mother was a third-generation Irish-Canadian of humble roots born in Parry Sound, Ontario, her sense of adventure and selflessness led her as an RN to Thailand to establish their first-ever public health program, representing the United Nations World Health Organization. There she met my father, a Polish-born Jew raised in Shanghai and a refugee from the communist regimes of Stalin and Mao, also in a faraway land, representing MGM movies in the most exotic of locales during the era of *The King and I*. And where did they choose to raise a family? Alberta. I am blessed that their choice back in 1957 has become part of my life story. Yes, my parents were two of those people from all around the world who shared a dream of a better life mentioned in the throne speech, and I and my family indeed believe that all of us here are part of that living legacy.

3:00

I have lived in war-torn Nigeria as an impressionable child, travelled extensively around the world during a two-decade-long career in the international airline business, and fed a lifelong appetite for wanderlust, but Alberta remains my haven, my safe place, and the best place in the world to make a living, to build a life, and to call home.

During my humble life I've been honoured with the privilege of serving the community in many ways. With deep involvement in Alberta's Asian communities since the early 1980s I've been blessed to have made many lifelong friends, and I'm humbled to be considered honorary Chinese by my peers in that community. Being part of bringing dragon boat racing to Alberta in 1992 was one of my proudest moments.

While I've been deeply involved in embracing cultural diversity through such organizations and events as the Chinatown Street Festival in Calgary, the Hong Kong-Canada Business Association, which is a national and provincial organization, Hong Kong days, and more recently GlobalFest, I've also had the privilege of deep engagement with community groups and the nonprofit sector, including the Kids Cancer Care Foundation, Trico Centre for Family Wellness, Trico Charitable Foundation, Habitat for Humanity, and many more, too numerous to mention. These opportunities have deeply influenced who I am and the values I uphold and defend every day.

I've also been blessed to have spent a decade in Alberta's housing sector. This has provided me with an opportunity to embrace the importance of affordable and appropriate housing for all Albertans. This key issue will be a personal priority for me in working with this Legislature, collaborating with the public, private, and nonprofit sectors to bring creativity and innovation to reduce barriers faced by many Albertans, both long-time residents and newcomers of all ages, in addressing housing affordability.

But why public service at this stage of my career in life? Not only is it time for me to give back but also for me to follow my passion for people, for our province, and to do all that I can do to ensure that Alberta and Canada can seize our rightful position on the national and global stage. From the distant memories of model parliament at Western Canada high school to studying political science and economics at the University of Calgary, some dreams never fade.

For me the core values and principles of the party and people I now serve and represent remain little changed from the vision I took away as a 13-year-old pounding in lawn signs for Peter Lougheed in 1971. To me Alberta is, rather simplistically, all about three

things: entrepreneurial spirit, for which Alberta is renowned as a national leader and where those with a predisposition for risk can bring forth great societal wealth; a prairie work ethic, a true tribute to our pioneers and province builders from all walks of life; and building an inclusive society but, truly, more than that: embracing and celebrating diversity in all its forms.

I'm a passionate proponent for and will remain a fierce defender of the Alberta advantage, recognizing that the legacy of what this means to Albertans varies from city to city, town to town, and hamlet to hamlet but that it does have a powerful and distinct meaning to every Albertan. Whether they were born and raised on the land or whether they came from across our country or from around the world, they have chosen our great province as a place to build a life and to live their dreams, with the benefits of the Alberta advantage as their beacon.

But let us be mindful that we are stewards of this legacy and that ego, dogmatic ideology, and blind ambition have no place in the formula for our future and for our future success as individuals, as a people, or as a province. One of the most admirable traits for any individual or community is indeed a simple characteristic: humility. We must work together collectively as passionate Albertans, but we must listen to and respect the views of others while defending their right to hold differing opinions. That is what our forefathers fought for and what we must respect and honour their sacrifice for. We must ensure our legacy is not one of irresponsible, unsustainable behaviour, sacrificing generations of wealth and resources for our own enrichment, while also ensuring that we do not leave a trail of debt and burden for future Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, ladies and gentlemen, hon. members, guests, and fellow Albertans, we have been entrusted with the power and ability to do great things, but with that power comes great responsibility. Let us honour that as we live, learn, prosper, and grow together as the 29th Legislative Assembly of this great province.

Thank you.

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

Are there any questions and comments?

The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my absolute pleasure to stand today as the elected representative for the people of St. Albert. I'm equally proud to rise today and share some information about this wonderful community. The beautiful city of St. Albert is also known as the Botanical Arts City. It is the second-largest city in the Edmonton capital region and shares its wonderful home with more than 63,000 proud citizens.

Many of you will know that St. Albert was originally settled as a Métis community and was founded in 1861 by Father Albert Lacombe. St. Albert boasts a large, thriving francophone community, which adds to the unique community feel. In fact, it may surprise you to know that roughly 10 per cent of St. Albertans can actually speak French today.

The people of St. Albert are proud of their community, and so they should be. In 2014 St. Albert was named the best place to live in Canada by *MoneySense* magazine, and just a few weeks ago St. Albert was named the best place in Canada to raise a family by that same magazine. Few in St. Albert were surprised by this recognition because they realize how fortunate they are to call St. Albert home.

St. Albert is home to the world-renowned International Children's Festival, that runs for five days each spring and entertains over 55,000 children of all ages. Albertans come from all over the region to enjoy this event and share in the welcoming community and arts. As well, the St. Albert outdoor farmer's market is the largest of its

kind in western Canada, with over 250 local vendors offering homegrown, homemade, and home-baked goods for thousands who shop there.

I can't talk about St. Albert without paying respect to the honourable and extraordinary Lois Hole. I know the entire community of St. Albert was bursting with pride when Lois Hole was named Alberta's 15th Lieutenant Governor in 1999. This successful businesswoman, writer, gifted gardener, and mother of two was a tireless advocate for public education, and she was a tireless community activist. She was the driving force behind the Lois Hole hospital for women, for which thousands of Alberta's women are grateful. Lois Hole once joked that schoolteachers should earn as much as NHL players. Not a bad idea.

She was an inclusive woman, kind, and always ready to lend a hand to anyone who asked and even some who didn't. This kind, practical, and loving woman, affectionately called "everyone's grandmother," was an amazing ambassador for the city of St. Albert. One of my favourite pieces of public art in St. Albert is a statue honouring her. It's a depiction of her kneeling down in front of a small child and both looking at each other lovingly. Knowing what I do of her, I think this statue and this piece of art is very appropriate. The Lois Hole hospital for women houses a banner that bears this now famous quote from its namesake: my hope is that when people come to this new hospital and see my name, they're going to have a little extra hope, that real, uplifting hope that things will turn out okay. She was a breathtaking woman.

As in all communities, the growth and joy that is experienced now is always preceded by opportunities to learn and grow. Five decades ago two residential schools for indigenous children operated in St. Albert. The two physical structures burned down long ago, but the scars remain. St. Albert can be proud of its commitment to forge and nurture relationships with the aboriginal community members by moving beyond just speaking about truth and reconciliation to living reconciliation.

As is the case throughout Alberta, unfortunately, St. Albert is also home to many women, men, and children who struggle daily due to poverty and its results. Poverty was once thought to be contained in the inner core of big cities but is now receiving wider recognition throughout the province.

### 3:10

Two weeks ago I was able to spend some time at the St. Albert food bank. I was astonished to hear from the staff and volunteers at the food bank that over 600 individuals and families regularly use the food bank to feed themselves and their families. Over the last 12 months food bank usage has steadily increased and shows no sign of slowing down. As you might expect, economic uncertainties and related job losses have contributed to increased food bank reliance. But that is not the biggest contributor to the increased reliance on the St. Albert food bank. Domestic violence is the single largest cause of reliance on the food bank, and I want to thank the Premier for her initiative in the creation of the women's issues ministry to help those already taxed agencies addressing these needs.

I, like so many, was thankful to hear our new government's commitment to addressing violence against women in the Speech from the Throne. The people of St. Albert clearly recognize the need for education, action, and prevention related to domestic violence. The SAIF Society, which stands for Stop Abuse in Families Society, is a community-based organization that has, since it began in 1989, offered support to individuals and families that experience domestic violence.

St. Albert is truly a beautiful city, both in appearance and in spirit. It's a fine example of what an inclusive city and government can

achieve. Inclusivity is not simply a word sprinkled in local policy but is a way of life there.

For the last 14 years I have worked as the executive director for the Lo-Se-Ca Foundation of St. Albert. This nonprofit organization supports people with disabilities so that they're able to live and work in their communities. During my 14 years there I was able to see first-hand how the community of St. Albert worked with local leaders and activists to promote inclusion. Local government and community leaders sought out assistance from residents with disabilities and advocacy groups in order to create inclusive employment policies and practices and accessible and affordable transportation and housing. What this community got right is that it is imperative to include people in decision-making when those decisions impact their lives.

In 2013 I was fortunate enough to participate in something that forever changed my life. I was part of a group of 19 that travelled to Tanzania. The group was made up of Lo-Se-Ca Foundation staff members, people with disabilities, and some of their family members. For over a year we fund raised and trained together so that we could climb Kilimanjaro in order to raise money for a small charitable group in rural Tanzania that worked with children with disabilities. Only two people who set out to climb the mighty Kilimanjaro had to turn back before reaching the summit. During this gruelling five-day trek I learned that it is the journey that matters most. I learned that anything is possible if you believe it is, and I learned that every person is capable of great things if they are supported, valued, and included.

We left our final camp for the summit just after midnight on the last day. At almost 20,000 feet the air is thin and quite cold. The exhaustion and smell after days of endless trekking is physically and mentally draining. Approximately eight hours after leaving camp, we arrived at the rim of the crater and knew that we only had about an hour of trekking left. At this point I had literally run out of energy and couldn't fathom taking one more step, let alone trek for another hour. At that precise moment a young man, who happens to have a developmental disability, took me by the arm and told me that we would walk the rest of way together. We did walk the rest of the way together, and we did reach the summit together, and I was the one that was most vulnerable that day.

Together all of us have much to do to restore power in decision-making and inclusion for the people of Alberta. I believe that over the last few years we've lost our way and focus by choosing not to really hear and consult with the people of Alberta, not just those who have big voices and powerful voices but all people. Community consultation is not simply a stand-alone exercise but the building of nurturing relationships. We can't create policy without listening, listening to the people whose lives are impacted by the policy.

Through my work and in my personal life I've witnessed the dangers of well-meaning policy created without real community consultation and impact assessment. Recently slight adjustments in budget line items to support people with developmental disabilities literally put thousands of men and women at risk. Current changes to housing safety standards for people with developmental disabilities have inadvertently put people with disabilities who want to live independently in their communities at risk of losing that very housing. The intent was good, and the result is not.

Similarly, the labels we assign to people can innocently chip away at their dignity. The language we use to describe people in our community is important. I am grateful that this new government, on both sides, has chosen not to refer to people with disabilities as our most vulnerable but as people first, people who need and deserve our support.

My brother, like so many others, struggled his entire life with an illness, a disability, schizophrenia. My brother had a great deal to offer his community when he had access to help and the support he needed. However, when necessary mental health care supports were not available, he fell through the cracks, like many people. Even the most loving and supportive families cannot rescue people from cracks that can become deep canyons. My brother was one of the many who believed that ending his life was his only solution. Every time I hear about another family losing a child or a loved one to suicide, I'm physically reminded of the acute pain of loss and the necessity to ensure that mental health supports are available to people whose very lives depend on them.

I'm honoured to sit in this Assembly, with the vast collection of life experiences and individual goals, which are as diverse as the very people we were elected to represent. Now more than ever it is vital that we find a way to work together to meet the collective needs of all Albertans. Hope is a powerful thing. Albertans are hopeful when they look at us assembled here. People are hopeful we will make decisions that will guide them into an inclusive future. People are hopeful that we will set aside party-first mentality and replace it with Alberta first.

Thank you for allowing me to share a little bit about St. Albert and myself.

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

Any questions or comments?

The chair recognizes the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed an honour to have the opportunity to address this Assembly in response to the Speech from the Throne as MLA for the people of Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills. Congratulations on your election as Speaker of the House. I understand it is a very challenging role, and I look forward to working together with you and the rest of this Assembly to make this, the 29th Alberta Legislative Assembly, an effective and fair government for all Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself and the many communities I represent and some of the main issues that I will be addressing over the next few years. I was born and raised in the Two Hills area, more specifically, Duvernay, Alberta. My parents are Billie and Joyce Hanson. My wife, Donna, and I now live on a farm that we purchased from my grandparents' estate in and around the hamlet of Owlseye. Both my wife and I have spent most of our lives living within my constituency. Donna, the daughter of Florence and Joseph Labant, was raised in the Cork Hall area west of St. Paul, and we will be celebrating 34 years of marriage this August.

We are a very multicultural family, with English, Swedish, Ukrainian, and Irish heritage. With the marriage of our son Dean to Sara Dargis in 2011 and the marriage of our daughter Nikita to Adrian Pomerleau this September, we will be adding French to our family of united nations. True Canadians, I think you would agree. Our son Dean is entering his last year of medicine at the U of A, and his wife, Sara, is a practising veterinarian. Our daughter Nikita is an RN at the U of A hospital and is marrying Adrian, a carpenter. I should be well taken care of in my old age.

My grandfather Lesley Tennant was the blacksmith in Owlseye for many years and was married to Elsa Bergman. My children are the fourth generation to live on the property at Owlseye, the fifth if you include that my great-grandfather Lancelot Tennant also resided there for a time.

3:20

Owlseye was once a thriving community with three grain elevators, two stores, and two gas stations and was a hub for local farmers to get together at the community hall for celebrations. Now, like many small communities in Alberta, after the loss of the railroad branch lines we were reduced to just a few families.

My great-grandfather Swan Hanson was a successful farmer in both the Glendon and Fort Saskatchewan areas and was a true pioneer. Records show him settling here prior to 1905, while Alberta was still considered Rupert's Land. I have very strong ties to this area and am very proud to be here representing the people and communities of the Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills constituency.

I represent a number of very interesting and unique communities. This is one of the larger constituencies in the province and has a very diverse economy, including agriculture, oil and gas, tourism, and innovative technologies. We are also home to four First Nations: Beaver Lake, Heart Lake, Saddle Lake, and Whitefish Lake. We cover two treaty areas, treaties 6 and 8. There are also two Métis settlements, Kikino and Buffalo Lake, within my constituency. These communities add an incredible historic richness to our cultural diversity. I was very proud to have received my very first eagle feather at a recent graduation at Portage College in a ceremony conducted by Elder McGillivray. It was a very moving experience.

Our communities share a very long history in the province of Alberta, a few of them from before we even became a province in 1905. The Lac La Biche Mission was established in 1853, making it one of the oldest established communities in Alberta. Lac La Biche is a very vibrant community with a proud history and a strong base in tourism and agriculture as well as being a major hub for the oil and gas industry of northeastern Alberta.

There are a few small neighbouring communities in that area as well: Plamondon, Venice, and Hylo. I recently visited Venice for their annual Venice days and discovered they were celebrating 101 years of Italians settling in that area. This event is held the first Sunday in June, and I would recommend the fresh pasta dinner to anyone.

The people of Lac La Biche are, obviously, also very patient. Here it goes: they have waited for 10 years to get a proper dialysis unit in the hospital and have been putting up with a broken-down bus in the parking lot as a stopgap for the past four years. That's news to everyone, I bet. In that same hospital they have been patiently waiting for AHS to replace the therapeutic bathtub, that quit four years ago. A new one has not been installed despite the community raising funds for it and purchasing it three years ago. It's been sitting in a crate ever since. You will be hearing a lot about these issues in the upcoming months and years if need be. I will not let up until they're fixed.

Down in the southwest quadrant of my extensive constituency we have many smaller communities, mostly settled by Ukrainian immigrants in the early 1900s. There are a string of them running along highway 45 and the railroad: Willingdon, Hairy Hill, Two Hills, Beauvallon, Musidora, Myrnam, and Derwent. These mostly farming communities still maintain strong ties to their proud Ukrainian heritage.

In recent years the town of Two Hills and the surrounding area have seen an influx of Mennonite families, who have served to revitalize this community. The increase in population also comes with increased infrastructure demands. The Mennonite community has been promised a new school for some years now, and indeed construction was started two years ago. However, the project is fraught with difficulties that have made me conclude that the project should be scrapped and renewed in a safe location. Construction is

currently halted due to structural failures, before the walls have even gone up.

The issues with this project include that the site is built on an artesian well, there are methane buildup issues underneath the new school, and there will be no room for a playground or staff parking because the school is being built on the existing schoolyard, with zero room to grow. Finally, the school is designed to house 500 students while current enrolment sits at 650. This community deserves a safe school that will support community growth. The existing plan does not serve the needs of the community. It is unsafe and needs to be halted immediately. You'll be hearing a lot more about this from me as well.

Following east along the North Saskatchewan, we have Heinsburg, Lindbergh, and Elk Point. Lindbergh is home to the Windsor salt plant, that was established in approximately 1948. The Elk Point area was settled around 1908, and in 1955 10,000 people showed up at Elk Point to witness the opening of the bridge over the North Saskatchewan River, huge numbers for 1955. The Elk Point area has experienced significant growth over the past decade due to rich oil and gas resources. Two trading posts, Fort George and Buckingham House, were established along the North Saskatchewan River in that area in 1792.

The town of St. Paul originally was settled as a Métis colony in 1896 and incorporated into the village of Saint-Paul des Métis in 1912. It is home to a very strong francophone community as well as an ever-increasing diversity of cultures as we welcome new immigrants from all countries.

The St. Paul area is well known for its abundance of lakes and wetlands, all of which deserve our stewardship and protection. Water is our future. The St. Paul area also has many smaller hamlets such as Ashmont, Mallaig, Lafond, Vilna, Lottie Lake, St. Vincent, St. Lina, Spedden, Bellis, St. Edouard, and, of course, Owlseye, my hometown. The village of Vilna claims the world's largest mushrooms, beautifully constructed by a welder-craftsman friend of mine, Richard Hawiuk, and it's definitely worth stopping in if you're ever going down highway 28.

The people in my constituency are very hard working, whether in the extensive oil and gas industry, agriculture, or the many other support services that make up a true community. They are very generous people, which can be shown by our many volunteer groups and charities. For instance, the hamlet of Mallaig hosts an event every August long weekend called Haying in the 30's to raise money for a cancer support group of the same name, started by a great man in our area, Edgar Corbiere.

Haying in the 30's is celebrating 16 years this August. The weekend is very entertaining and showcases farming as it was done by early Albertans, by hand and by horse. It's very interesting, and the trip is worth while. What I love about this organization is that it is one hundred per cent volunteer, meaning that 100 cents out of every donated dollar go to support people diagnosed with cancer to help with unexpected costs and to show that the community cares. There are a lot of organizations out there that could take a lesson from Mr. Corbiere's vision.

My constituency is also a valuable resource to all Albertans, with many lakes and recreational areas. Our fishing and hunting opportunities are second to none. The people of this constituency deserve good representation and support from their provincial government. As an area that accesses and holds large natural resources, we deserve reliable, reasonable access to health care and emergency services. The loss of medevac access to the municipal airport in Edmonton was an insult to all northern Alberta people and the industry involved out there. We have had to fight to keep hospitals open in communities that have grown significantly and that support thousands of uncounted workers that support the oil and gas

industry and live here temporarily but are not considered when our needs are analyzed from bureaucrats' offices in Edmonton.

We deserve support for our local schools and infrastructure that recognizes the significant contribution this area provides to the provincial economy. Our infrastructure was not designed for the growth we have experienced, and we can no longer be ignored. Schools need to be built. Highways need to be maintained and upgraded. We deserve support for seniors, to whom we owe so much, and I will work toward local seniors' facilities that respect the needs and traditions of our elders in their own communities.

I am very proud to have been chosen to represent the people of Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills, and I hope that during my time at the Legislature my work will improve the future for this constituency and all Albertans.

Thank you for this opportunity.

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

Are there any questions or comments? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Dr. Turner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My comment, actually, is to congratulate the member on an excellent presentation. I do want to echo his appreciation for the Haying in the 30's organization. As an oncologist at the Cross Cancer Institute I'm very aware of the excellent work that they do. They are the most selfless and highly motivated individuals in this province, I believe. I really do appreciate it in my work.

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

If the House might allow me, we need more of that kind of comment across the hall.

**Dr. Turner:** If you want me to, I could say some more.

**The Speaker:** But only when I ask you to stand up. Hon. member, I have you on a list that indicates you would like to speak in addition to the question's answer. Is that correct?

3:30

**Dr. Turner:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, I'm prepared.

**The Speaker:** Please proceed.

**Dr. Turner:** Sorry; I misunderstood you. I have trouble understanding English, I guess.

I really appreciate this opportunity to speak in response to the Lieutenant Governor's Speech from the Throne. That speech was one of the highlights of my life, being able to participate in hearing it. I am celebrating my 67th birthday today, and I can say that for about 60 years I have been interested in political life. One of my earliest recollections of my father, who was a strong supporter of another party, was his disappointment in hearing the results of the election that saw Mr. Diefenbaker assume a minority government in, I believe, 1957 or '56. I have remained eager to see the defeat of Conservatives ever since.

I do want to speak in response to the Speech from the Throne because it really invigorated me. It motivated me. It is a pathway for the future of this province. We are going to see change in this province. We're going to see the public services of this province elevated to a level that we Albertans deserve. That's the promise that the Speech from the Throne gave us. I think our job as legislators in this Assembly is to make sure that that vision is fulfilled. To fulfill it, we need to look carefully at the way our tax monies are spent. I'm in complete accord with the members of the opposition in wanting to review boards and commissions and make sure that all of the management of our important public services are

administered in the best way. In my opinion the best way is a publicly administered system that is publicly accountable and which gives the best possible service to all of us Albertans.

It is evident that I'm interested in health care. I have spent the last 38 years – and it's almost my anniversary of arriving in Edmonton. I chose to come to Edmonton because Edmonton and Alberta had a cancer program, that was actually started through the foresight of a Social Credit government. Mr. W.W. Cross, after whom the Cross Cancer Institute is named, was the Health minister in the Aberhart government, I believe, and he established the Alberta Cancer Board. The Alberta Cancer Board, until the previous government destroyed it, was a model in the world for a comprehensive cancer service.

In the Alberta Cancer Board I joined with nurses and technicians and hospital cleaners and secretaries as well as advanced nurse practitioners and clinical researchers. I could go on and on. We are a team, and our team is focused on providing the best possible care for all of our patients. Any patient that shows up at the Cross Cancer Institute can count on me advocating for them if they're my patient or that whole team advocating for them.

When I was running in the by-election and in the general election, I would say at the door that I really wanted to see health care in general be modelled on what the cancer program does. I still am of that opinion, and I've been in discussion with the Minister of Health and Seniors as to how we can promote that model: teamwork, accountability, making sure that we provide world-class service. No patient in Alberta needs to go to the Mayo Clinic to get better care. We can provide superb cancer services in this province by Albertans for Albertans.

One of my great privileges has been to do a lot of clinical research over the years. In fact, I was the site leader at the Cross Cancer Institute for clinical research for several years. I enjoyed that work because it allowed me to be able to give my patients access to medicines and other treatments that they might not otherwise have access to, but it also was a way for us oncologists to tell the government, or at least the health service, what the evidence was that would support getting this particular treatment in place in this province.

Now, to do clinical research, you need a big team as well. You need statisticians. You need people that can keep data, basically IT specialists. You need people that are experts in ethics. We have to be able to consent our patients, and those patients have to be able to understand what's going on. Sometimes we have to do it in another language so that they truly understand. We have to be very careful with that. We have to be very conscious of things like confidentiality and privacy, and I think that's something that all of us as legislators need to be paying attention to as well.

You may have heard over the years that I actually went outside the system at times to advocate for my patients. I advocated within the last year and a half for the addition of a medicine called brentuximab, which is a monoclonal antibody treatment that is very, very effective for a form of Hodgkin's lymphoma, and I had a patient who desperately needed this medication. So what I had to do was to marshal all of the evidence that I could get from the medical literature, and then I went through our tumour group in the cancer program and was able to get their support for this. Despite that, the powers that be that were in place at the time decided that we Albertans couldn't afford it. So to get further action on that, I did go to the media and made a public appeal, and that public appeal was successful. I can tell you that that patient as well as several other patients have benefited from the addition of brentuximab to the list. I'm very proud of that sort of achievement, and it's the sort of thing that all health care workers in this province will be doing and can do if they're given the appropriate environment.

As I said, I'm a very proud Albertan. I'm here by choice. I came from the United States and made a conscious choice to come into Alberta. I'm still proud of the fact that I came to Alberta. I'm particularly proud of the fact that we had such a fantastic throne speech, that is going to help all achieve the sort of satisfaction that I have.

I want to turn just for a few moments to what the other members have done, and I really want to compliment the people that have given their responses, their maiden speeches. I've enjoyed every one of them. I'm humbled to stand here and speak because my experience is only one of the 87 that exist in this Legislature, and I'm really looking forward to working with all the legislators in this Assembly.

I was born 67 years ago, actually in the hospital in Brandon. I'm a prototypical baby boom baby. In fact, the boom was on – and I have sympathy with the previous speaker's situation. The Brandon hospital was so busy that my bassinet was a peach basket, so I spent the first few days of my life in a peach basket, apparently. I don't recall that. I think that some of the pressures that we're seeing on the health care system now really reflect what was going on in 1948 or 1950, in that era.

I spent the first nine years of my life on a farm in southwest Manitoba. I still have an ownership interest in that farm, and when agricultural issues come up, I don't want to be excluded from their discussion just because I'm a big-city representative. One of the things I learned from growing up on the farm is that farmers are very capable and they can achieve lots of things, but they do need the government's help from time to time. They do need things like, for instance, something that we had in 1948 that we don't have now, a wheat board to help us sell our wheat, which was very important on that grain farm in southwest Manitoba. We also need water regulations, and we need regulations that control pests in our animals. You cannot farm without some regulations, and I would say that we cannot live as citizens of this province without some degree of help from the government in making sure that health and safety and financial services and pensions and hospitals and schools are run in a collective way to make sure that everything is done well.

**3:40**

I mentioned that I grew up in southwestern Manitoba. I had the great opportunity to go to McGill University. I lived for eight years in Montreal, and then I went to the United States to complete my training in hematology and medical oncology. I still practise, although I would hasten to mention to all members that unless you have a cancer problem, I'm not much use to you. The Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo is probably a much more capable person for dealing with medical emergencies than I am, and we have several nurses, at least in our caucus, that, again, would be much more capable of dealing with the colds and flus. I did help one of my colleagues with a nosebleed the other day, which I'm pleased with. I didn't submit a bill either.

I want to turn just because we were talking about collegiality in this Assembly. There was another instance of collegiality today that I participated in that I want to bring to the attention of the whole. The Member for Strathmore-Brooks was expounding on all the rodeos and exhibitions in his area, and he mentioned that there was going to be a running of the bulls. Immediately – I tell you, immediately – I sent him a note saying: what would I have to pay to see him running with the bulls? In fact, I would pay for the Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills member to run with the bulls and maybe the Drumheller member to run with the bulls.

**An Hon. Member:** We'll all pitch in.

**Dr. Turner:** That's right. I think some of the repetitive questioning might be diminished.

I am a proud husband, a proud father. I'm actually a grandfather now, since I'm 67. My wife, Joan, is a professor of oncology at the University of Alberta. She is a radiobiologist. She claims that she is the real doctor of the family since she earned her PhD, whereas I'm a glorified tradesman. You can imagine the discussions over the dinner table. One of the things that Joan has accomplished is that she was an active member of the 35-and-over soccer teams that we have a plethora of here in Edmonton. In fact, she played on the Riverbenders team. For those of you that don't know, we have more vintage – i.e., 35-plus – women playing soccer in this city than other place in the world, apparently. You can see the kind of support that this has led to in terms of getting the world-class tournaments that we're enjoying right now.

My children are both doctors. One is a surgeon, like me a glorified tradesman. The other is a genome scientist. They are the products of what I consider to be the best education system in the world, Edmonton public school board, and I say that without any reservation. Edmonton public and, I daresay, the Calgary board of education, the Catholic equivalents, and the school boards in rural Alberta produce some of the best students. When my daughter went to McGill University to follow in her father's footsteps, she was shocked to see that she was about two years ahead of Ontario and Quebec students at the same level.

Like the Member for Strathmore-Brooks, who unfortunately is not here, I have a Scottish grandmother, and I actually listened to my Scottish . . .

**Mr. Strankman:** Point of order.

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

#### Point of Order

#### Referring to the Absence of Members

**Mr. Strankman:** Point of order, Mr. Speaker. It's not proper to refer to a member that's not in the House.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I believe the hon. member is correct.

**Dr. Turner:** I certainly withdraw the statement and apologize.

#### Debate Continued

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I must tell you that many of the points you were making were, I think, well received by all of the House, but your time is up.

Are there any questions or comments to the hon. member? The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to ask the hon. member if he could finish his comments with respect to his Scottish grandmother.

**The Speaker:** Before the member rises to do that, I think we need a unanimous vote to allow that to happen. Is that agreed? [interjections] That was a . . .

**Mr. Mason:** Oh, a joke.

**The Speaker:** My apologies.  
Any questions or comments?

**Dr. Turner:** Sorry; am I allowed to complete this? Thank you. Thank you to the legislators for allowing me to do that.

My grandmother and grandfather emigrated from Glasgow about a hundred years ago. They came to Manitoba and worked hard, and their values were the values that I have, of valuing education as well as hard work and commitment to the community. I am very appreciative of their influence on me, and I thank the members for the indulgence of allowing me to express that.

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

Any questions or comments now? The hon. member.

**Mr. Nixon:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. First, I'd like to congratulate the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud on his maiden speech. While I respectfully disagree with many of the things you said, particularly in regard to the wheat board, I would like to just briefly recognize my good friend the hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler, who fought very hard to see that ridiculousness stop, up to and in fact even being in prison to stop that.

With that said, though, I would like to just acknowledge the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud. While we may disagree on many things, I credit him with keeping a very dear friend of mine alive, who I had the privilege of speaking with this morning. The work that he does for patients across Alberta with cancer is amazing, and I thank him for that service.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I hesitate to interrupt because the tone sounds so optimistic.

The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I must confess, though, that I'm a little bit unsure. I was going to thank Ms Notley, et cetera, but she isn't in the House, so is it appropriate? [interjections] I'm sorry. That was wrong altogether.

**The Speaker:** You withdraw the comment? Thank you.

**Mr. Orr:** I'll just skip over it. I was going to get through congratulations, but we'll let it go.

Sometimes I'm accused of being a dreamer. I've been often drawn toward a dream for a better world, and I couldn't help but notice that the Speech from the Throne was somewhat like that as well. The difficulty, though, for all of us is that getting from dreamer to doer is a distance. Bridging the difference between the way things are and the way they could or should be is challenging. The great people in this world are the ones who see a better tomorrow and actually help to create it. So I do believe in the good land, the good life, and the good society, except, of course, if somebody is trying to sell it to me. Then I have to admit I'm a bit skeptical. But that's why I've always sought to be both a community and a capacity builder in our world.

3:50

During the campaign we heard quite clearly that math is hard, but the painfully obvious thing was that politics, in fact, is much harder. It's never going to be easy, it will always be a challenge, and it wasn't easy for those who came before us. I think of my four grandparents. One each was Irish, Danish, Norwegian, and German. They came here to a new land with incredible challenges. My grandfather arrived by himself, a 15-year-old, in about 1911. My mother's family came to a homestead and built a sod shelter for the winter of 1906 close to Drumheller. So life is a challenge for all of us. I'm not the first in my family to actually serve in a Legislative Assembly. I follow in the footsteps of my great uncle, who spent 20 years as a state senator in the North Dakota Legislature, and after him his daughter Ruth became the first woman Lieutenant Governor of North Dakota.

I've been fairly self-reflective in life, and finally, by 60, I think I've begun to figure myself out just a little bit. One day in a foggy blaze of brilliance six Ws that define my self-understanding began to emerge, and the alliteration, by the way, has helped me not forget who I am, at least not so far, anyway.

Wilderness. My refuge is the wilderness. I prefer to holiday in remote and wild places.

Wood. I love wood: its sturdiness, its diversity, its smell, its feel, its colour. For strength and beauty it's a wonderful artisan material.

Work. I get a great deal of reward from work, actually. It gives me purpose and identity and camaraderie. It draws out of me creativity and learning and growth. I actually get up excited in the morning to go to work.

Words. Words are the bodies of ideas that awaken and speak to me. Words are visions crafted with care. We travel by words into one another's minds and souls.

A woman. A certain woman, Donna Marie, is in many ways the very centre of my life. We've been married 39 years as of Friday. Together we have three wonderful children and now seven grandchildren.

Lastly, worship. I can't pretend to know much about God because He is, after all, the great mystery, but I do know that all worship begins with a sense of incredible wonder and awe. I share some of that because I actually truly believe that many of the people in my riding would embrace similar values and self-understandings, although each would be unique to themselves.

I'm truly delighted to live amongst and represent the 40,000 stable, hardy people of Lacombe-Ponoka, which actually should soon, I hope, become Lacombe-Blackfalds-Ponoka, since Blackfalds has grown larger than Ponoka now. Lacombe-Ponoka is in the central parkland region of Alberta. It is lush, verdant, and fecund, one of the most fertile and amenable zones of the province. West it's too cold, and rocky east is too dry for good farming; the central corridor is just right, but that's made it a place of conflicting visions.

The people of Maskwacis, Bear Hills, where there are now four treaty reserves, found berries and abundant game and wholesome life there. Ponoka is a word from the word for elk. These Cree and Blackfoot peoples have their vision of life. I've met some of their elders. I know some of their people, good people, finding a new vision for life.

Next there came a wave of farm settlers with their vision. They settled in this area early because it was the best, but that has also put it at risk. Prosperity came, and roads and industrial and residential development are paving over the very best agricultural land in the province. Should we not preserve land and protect farming? Food does not originate in grocery stores. Farmers are getting harassed by those who don't like the smell or the noise or the big equipment on the roads. Increased regulation and legislation is not often supportive of farming, yet agriculture is absolutely one of our most sustainable industries. It contributes to our economy independent of the oil and gas treadmill.

Food production and processing in Lacombe county includes cereal grains and oil grains, seeds, and many huge produce greenhouses that have been erected in recent years. The Alix malt plant ships malt to brewers across the globe. Beef, cattle, hogs, chicken, eggs, and milk production are all intensive in my area. Alberta produces 44 per cent of all of the beef in Canada, and the most concentrated production is in central Alberta.

Rural communities contribute something else, generations of strapping young men and resourceful women. The labour shortage for oil and gas and construction workers would be a lot worse without the steady stream of family farm progeny, but rural communities, schools, and health care are often not priorities for or even understood by massive, centralized political bureaucracies.

Just give rural people the power and the resources to manage their own lives, and they will thank you for it. These are some of the concerns of rural Alberta people.

Then there are the needs and the visions of industry and business. Understand that Lacombe-Ponoka is bustling with job- and wealth-generating industriousness. Joffe petrochemicals plant is an example of an \$8 billion value-added oil and gas industry in Alberta. It is the largest single enterprise in the riding, and it's currently in the middle of another \$1 billion expansion. I have a personal interest in that plant because my father was a site manager for one of the early expansions in the 1980s, but there are other numerous gas and oil plants at Prentiss, Content Bridge, and Haynes. There are a whole number of secondary oil and gas service and manufacturing small businesses, "small" meaning up to 50 employees, and there's yet another group of agricultural manufacturing and service businesses with world-wide sales.

Then there are the urban centres and an ever-increasing demand for acreages. Urban centres of Lacombe, Blackfalds, and Ponoka have been facing tremendous growth. They have worked together to develop regional infrastructure. The north Red Deer River regional water commission now supplies water to all these major communities. There is still the need to complete a regional wastewater treatment facility, which we hope the provincial government will be able to proceed with soon. It's urgent because the amount of untreated water now overflowing into the Red Deer River is unacceptable. There's an especially great need for a reliable and adequate funding model for municipal governments. Blackfalds, as I mentioned earlier in the day, doesn't have a registry office. The whole town struggles with this.

But the areas where the challenges of competing visions will most arise are the areas of land and water use, rights, and management. The previous government enacted what many of my people consider to be terrible land legislation. It's unacceptable, and it needs to be repealed or amended. I've been to surface rights and Synergy land-use meetings. I've sat and listened to the competing visions for water at the Red Deer River watershed annual meeting. These are areas of concern. Our aboriginal peoples of Maskwacis, rural agricultural communities, urbanites, and business communities all have their own visions, and it's only as we listen with respect and learn to work together that we will build that better future.

Of course, there are extremely important concerns regarding health and education that we're all aware of. The culture in these institutions just does not seem to be healthy. Both have become – the word I've heard is "dysfunctional." Both are so frustrating to work in that teachers and nurses whom I know personally are pulling their hair out. These are just simply not best-place-to-work environments. Home care and seniors' care facilities are insufficient and would open up hospital beds.

We are proud of the Centennial centre in Ponoka, Alberta's world-class centre for brain injury and mental health. We're also thankful for private education, specifically the benefits socially and financially from the Canadian University College in Lacombe.

#### 4:00

The people in Lacombe and Ponoka are industrious, productive, and innovative. Good leaders have arisen from among them in the past. Part of our heritage there would be Edward Michener, elected in Lacombe as the Leader of the Official Opposition from 1910 to '17. His son the Rt. Hon. Roland Michener, 20th Governor General of Canada, was born in Lacombe. Provincial Premier John Brownlee served in this riding from '21 to '35. Irene Parlby, the first woman in Alberta to be appointed a cabinet minister and one of the Famous Five, was from Alix, again part of this riding. Good

leaders will arise from this riding again. We need to give them the resources and the authority to manage their own lives, and they will thrive.

I would be remiss, too, if I did not point out the thriving art and culture of our area. There are bands and fiddle contests and choral groups and comedians. Gord Bamford, a country star, hails from Lacombe, as does Anna Maria Kaufmann, a world-renowned soprano. Oh, and there are the dance studios and the visual artists and arts in every village, from the murals of Lacombe to the encaustic wax painters, pottery studios, a woodworkers' guild, soap makers, you name it. And there's cowboy culture. The Ponoka Stampede is second only to the Calgary Stampede, or if you want something a little different, you could go to Long Ears Days in August in the village of Tees, where mule and donkey owners meet from across the province and hold their own unique rodeo.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for a few moments to brag about the central corridor riding of Lacombe-Ponoka and to outline some of the needs that I hope to address in the coming days in this House. These are the dreams for a better life of my people. Thank you to the people who have honoured me with their trust and trusteeship. Thank you especially to those who helped to get me elected, and thank you to my wife, who has walked with me, knocked on doors, and encouraged me in every way.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member. I noted the comment that you made about where you vacation in wild and remote places. The Speaker noted that, and we hope that you're not on a vacation now. Questions or comments?

Hearing none, the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Ms Gray:** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to move that we adjourn debate on the Speech from the Throne for today.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

## Government Bills and Orders

### Third Reading

#### Bill 3

#### Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2015 (No. 2)

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

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to rise today to move third reading of Bill 3, the Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2015 (No. 2).

**The Speaker:** Are there any other members to speak? The hon. member.

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in this Chamber to discuss this government's spend, spend, spend package. Bundled together in Bill 3, the interim supply act – the NDP is referring to it as a minibudget, which must refer to the details provided. . .

**Mr. Mason:** Point of order.

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I wish to correct the hon. member. It has been the Wildrose opposition that has repeatedly referred to this as a minibudget. It is not. It is an appropriation bill and not a budget in any form.

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

**Mr. Cooper:** Mr. Speaker, thank you so much. I didn't quite catch the citation that the Government House Leader was rising on. However, I'm guessing that it was a slight misstatement by the hon. member, and I'd be happy to withdraw it on his behalf.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member. I didn't hear "given" before it. Thank you.

The hon. member may now proceed.

**Mr. Nixon:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

**An Hon. Member:** Given.

**Mr. Nixon:** I don't have to do that. I know the people in my riding want to know what is in this budget. Heck, I'd like to know. This feels like the NDP is writing a blank cheque with no details. I can't help but feel surprised, Mr. Speaker: three hours to debate \$18 billion of spending, and the details are so thin. We have three numbers from each ministry to ask questions on. The minister's answers are vague. Frankly, the Finance minister himself doesn't seem to be clear about how much money is being voted on. With so many questions and such little time to discuss them, this government is hiding in the shadows. Why won't this government open up the books and let us know what is in this budget?

Albertans would like to know why this minibudget is being rushed through the Legislature without a full debate session, why this bill is hardly being publicly discussed for all Albertans to hear. My wife and I spent more time debating what truck we were going to buy this past fall than this government is spending talking about this budget. The thing is that this isn't even their budget; it's former Premier Alison Redford's. That's three Premiers ago, Mr. Speaker. Maybe there's another sky palace in there. We don't know. They won't show us the numbers. Frankly, I can't for the life of me understand why anyone, never mind a government that got elected on change and transparency, would want to align themselves with not only a budget of a widely unpopular Premier but of a different party altogether. Is it possible they don't know what is in the budget? I'm starting to think that may be the case. The communications from the Finance minister and his team certainly would allude to that. How much money is being added? Which of the many numbers is it? Shouldn't we know how much taxpayers are on the hook for?

Are the NDP playing politics with taxpayer dollars? How come they can't commit to a day when the budget will be posted? September seems reasonable, Mr. Speaker, tons of time since the NDP became government on the 5th of May, a whole summer with the Legislature not sitting, time to consult with stakeholders. Why do we keep hearing dates like November, October, December? I'm hesitant to suggest this has something to do with maybe a federal election. Do the NDP have to wait until the federal NDP come out with their platform before they can write their own budget? Are we tied to what the NDP activists in Ottawa think? I sure hope not, but a budget after the election sure would lead me to believe it.

I'm here to help. I want the best for Albertans. We all want open, transparent government that is accountable to all Albertans. I'm keen to help to get a budget to take to my riding and explain to the citizens of Alberta, but right now all we have are three numbers and no answers.

Thank you very much, Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for this opportunity to speak to Bill 3. Personally, I'm truly amazed at how quickly this new

government has lost all perspective when it comes to the value of a tax dollar. I can appreciate that some of the members across the way have never had to monitor a payroll, overlook expenses, or manage a budget, but it requires transparency, openness, and a dose of reality for what we can and cannot afford. When we're talking about \$18 billion, it's easy to lose perspective.

When looking at the interim supply act, even a million dollars suddenly seems to be not a lot of money, but it roughly equates to almost 400,000 person hours for a worker in the \$25 per hour range who pays 10 per cent of their wage to income tax. Four hundred thousand hours. So every time we mention a million tax dollars in this Chamber, think about an Albertan making \$25 an hour for approximately 200 years to provide that money to the government. Now it appears that a billion dollars is just another number. Maybe if we say it as 18 thousand million dollars, it will put it back into perspective. Eighteen thousand million dollars. You can do the math to figure out how many years it would take a person to do that. You are going to vote on spending 18 thousand million dollars of your constituents' money, when some of you may not even know how to balance your chequebook, on a budget that has provided this House zero details on where the money is coming from or where it is going. Good luck explaining your position to your constituents over the coming months.

Thank you.

4:10

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there any others who would like to speak to the bill?

The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just want to reiterate what this is and what this is not because some hon. members opposite are misrepresenting the situation. First of all, this is not a budget. It is not a minibudget. It is a bill of appropriation that allows the government to continue to operate past the end of this month, when the spending authority which was obtained by the previous government runs out. In order to continue to operate the government and to pay the bills and to pay our employees and to maintain the programs that Albertans depend upon, we need to bring forward – clearly, we couldn't prepare a budget in a matter of a few weeks as a brand new government.

So we had two choices. We could have brought forward the appropriation bill, which we did, and have it debated in the House and give the opposition an opportunity to debate the spending of the government over the next five months, or we could have used special warrants, which would have essentially just borrowed the money to keep going without reference to the Assembly. Those were the only two choices we had, Mr. Speaker. We chose, I think, the riskier option, which is to bring forward an appropriation bill to the House and face the opposition in order to get authority to continue operating the government of Alberta while we prepared a budget in the fall.

That's the first thing, Mr. Speaker.

Secondly, the hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre has characterized this as a continuation of Alison Redford's budget. Mr. Speaker, that was three Premiers ago, and it is absolutely a false statement that this is somehow based on any budget that was brought forward by that particular Premier. This is, as we have said, based on the appropriation bill that was brought forward by the previous government. That was not Alison Redford.

Mr. Speaker, I want to make a point. I think that though there is sharp disagreement and, you know, a high level of criticism on the opposition side with respect to this particular piece of legislation, we have maintained a very good tone overall in the Assembly, much

different, markedly different, than the previous Assemblies of which I've been a part. But when members start making false statements in order to create propaganda for their side in the House, then that breaks down. I just want to caution hon. members on the other side that if they want to characterize this budget in clearly incorrect terms, if they wish to rewrite history, then the tone of this place will not last the way it has been. I just want to provide that as a caution.

Mr. Speaker, this appropriation bill does a number of things, and we've talked about that. It provides additional money so that we can ensure that there are teachers for expansion in the schools, that we can replace the cuts that were in the previous government's budget for health care and postsecondary education and human services.

It also provides funding in order to cancel certain taxes and charges that the previous government's budget contained. For example, the health care levy is cancelled by this bill, and that's a significant amount of money that would have been brought in. It was a tax on the middle class, a significant tax increase on the middle class which this government is cancelling.

There were also many different charges for different things – birth certificates, death certificates, all of those things – where there were increases in the previous government's budget that are cancelled. That also requires money to compensate for the loss of revenue that would have otherwise been obtained.

So that's what this bill actually does, and it provides the funding for the government to continue with those changes for the next five months. We will prepare a budget, which will be fully discussed and debated in much greater detail than this particular appropriation bill.

I just wanted to leave the members with those thoughts, to put this in context. I know that the opposition needs to create a certain narrative, but I would urge members opposite to make sure that the narrative is based on an honest difference of opinion and not on falsification of the record of the government or of the history that precedes it, Mr. Speaker.

With those comments, Mr. Speaker, I will move that we adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

## Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

### Bill 2

#### An Act to Restore Fairness to Public Revenue

[Adjourned debate June 22: Mr. Ceci]

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, please proceed.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to rise and address Bill 2. We've heard a great deal about the possible impact of this bill, from deterring foreign investment to being the nail in the coffin of the Alberta advantage, from driving companies away from the province to fears that the wealthy who earn more than \$125,000 per year will file their taxes elsewhere or just move.

4:20

Mr. Speaker, one thing that we have not heard too much about is the impact on everyday Albertans. I would like to raise some concerns of my constituents as an example of how this bill is going to impact the economy, stability, and the direct effects that this bill will have on hard-working Albertans. I'm from the Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Bonnyville riding – sorry, not the Bonnyville riding; the Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills riding, but I have worked up in the Bonnyville area. We are south of what most people think of as

the oil sands area in Fort McMurray. In our part of the province crude oil is extracted by pumping steam downhole by using either cyclic steam stimulation or SAGD to recover the oil product. Projects in my riding are smaller than the mines surrounding Fort McMurray although there are some very large companies active in the area, including Canadian Natural Resources, MEG Energy, Cenovus Energy, and Imperial Oil.

With the low oil prices we have seen this year, several big projects are on hold and much of the drilling has been cancelled and pushed back to the third quarter of 2016. For instance, CNRL deferred the \$1.45 billion Kirby north project near Lac La Biche, and MEG Energy has reduced their 2015 budget by three-quarters. Meanwhile, Cenovus is holding off on developing long-term projects elsewhere in northern Alberta.

The area has a sizable population of temporary residents who've come to work in the region and live in hotels and camps. The 2013 Lac La Biche municipal census found that this group made up 26 per cent of the county's population of 12,000 people. There have been fears that the lower price for crude oil may force companies to slow down or even outright halt operations. This action would result in fewer customers for local businesses and lower profits. It would also discourage people from moving into the area. So all related industries in the local economy such as housing, car sales, and even groceries will feel the effect. The economy will stagnate at best or crash at worst.

For example, the operations manager at Lac La Biche Transport was reported as saying in January that with the lower prices and reduced workload he may have to start laying off workers. This is now a reality. Their oil field operation is at a standstill, and the freight division is slowing considerably due to that. Oil sands operators hire his company to haul equipment in northeastern Alberta, and he said in an interview with Global News that the business was down by about a quarter compared with the same time the previous year. That was in January, and it's slowed down considerably since then.

There are so many other examples of how the economic base in northeastern Alberta is suffering. MRC Global supplies pipe and fittings and other materials for the oil industry. They have had to lay off staff, and there are many more layoffs to come as the few projects that are still under way start to wind down. Welding companies in the Bonnyville area that I have talked to are reporting that as the big oil companies are cutting back projects and slashing contractor charge-out rates by 10 to 25 per cent – I've seen those; the requests come from the oil companies: slash your charge-out rates by 10 per cent, 15 per cent, 20 per cent, up to 25 per cent, or we won't be hiring you – they face increasing difficulties maintaining their bottom line. This flows down to the workers. Companies have no choice but to cut back hours, slash salaries, or lay off workers. This, of course, will destroy the local economy. Many of the businesses in our part of the province, as across the entire province, rely in one way or another on the oil and gas industry salaries paid to the workers in that industry. Cars, homes, groceries are based on a strong resource industry. The service and supply companies live by the drill bit and unfortunately also die by the drill bit.

Mr. Speaker, that is just the impact of lower oil prices. Most Albertans are used to that boom-and-bust cycle, but many are about to experience it for the very first time. Though there is a lot of concern over the effects of the price of oil, I believe that there is a general sense that this bust will be followed by a boom, as it usually is, and we'll be on track again in time, hopefully soon.

However, I don't think anyone ever expected that at a time of such economic uncertainty, when the lowest oil prices in years are threatening all aspects of our economy, the government would do

exactly the thing guaranteed to hurt us even further. Local businesses have already experienced reduced revenue due to the pullback by the oil companies related to oil price reductions. Their rates have been cut, anywhere from 10 to 25 per cent as I mentioned earlier, but now businesses are expected to pay another 2 per cent on their already lowered revenue. The NDP's focus on tax grabs and job-killing royalty hikes is the wrong way to address economic instability. [interjection] That's funny is it? It may be funny to you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member.

Please proceed, member.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Sorry about that.

The government needs to curb the unbelievable cost that our public service incurs. We do not have a revenue problem. We have a spending problem. Wildrose put out a very reasonable budget during the campaign that would have cut spending without hurting the front-line service delivery. Our plan was to make reductions in budgets over time, and many of those reductions would be from government travel, consultants, advertising, and conference costs. Most reductions have come from ending corporate welfare and cutting middle management in Alberta Health Services and not from eliminating front-line staff. The Wildrose plan pointed out possible savings of over \$2 billion, which is more than the NDP government hopes to realize by raising taxes. What's more, the NDP have not been very sure of the expected revenue to be gained from these new taxes and have gone about making all sorts of irresponsible funding promises based on their faulty math.

Mr. Speaker, businesses and Albertans across the province should not be expected to bear the weight of government mismanagement and overspending. You cannot tax your way out of debt, and in trying to do so, this government and this bill are threatening Alberta's competitive edge both here at home and abroad. The government expects Albertans to shoulder the costs, and that is simply unfair. Small and medium-sized businesses continue to be hit from all sides, from reduction in charge-out rates, reduced activity in the oil and gas sectors, and now from increased taxes. The cost of your ill-advised business tax increase will be job losses, reduced salaries, and reduced hourly rates, business and personal bankruptcies, and stagnant economic growth.

The province has experienced record revenue over the last couple of years, not because of royalties alone, but because of the massive amounts of man-hours that have been put in in our construction in the oil and gas industries and the resulting windfall of personal tax paid in the province. In 2015 and 2016 this will not be the case due to the pullback in oil and gas exploration and exploitation. Many projects have been cancelled or put off indefinitely. Contractors have had to reduce rate sheets in order to maintain what contracts are left, resulting in lower wages and layoffs. An increase of business tax by 20 per cent is only going to make a bad situation worse. If this new government is really interested in increasing revenue at the expense of working Albertans, it will do whatever it can to get our construction, oil, and gas people back to work. That is where the real money is, real prosperity now and in the long run. You can have higher taxes if you like, but it will mean nothing if the bulk of your workforce is sitting at home on pokey.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there any questions or observations?

I would recognize the Member for Edmonton-Centre.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I recognize that our work here in this House involves a certain level of theatre and performance. We are here in part to act out the parts that are

assigned to us as representatives of the people in line with the great traditions that proceed us. At times, that involves some drama, whether genuine or feigned, and at times it leads to hyperbole on both sides of the House. That said, I think it's important to note that this bill we are considering today, Bill 2, is not a radical proposition. The proposals put forward in this bill are not unusual, they are not unreasonable, and they are not unprecedented. These amendments to our tax structure do not represent a radical restructuring of our tax system. They will not cause the sky to fall or Alberta's economy to grind to a halt. These changes simply represent a reasonable correction of our fiscal course.

4:30

In regard to income tax this bill will return Alberta to the same form of progressive tax structure found in every other province in Canada. In fact, the small percentage of Albertans who will be affected by this bill, those who, like ourselves, earn more than \$125,000 a year, will still pay less income tax than in any other province in Canada with the exceptions of Ontario and Newfoundland.

The introduction of the flat tax in 2003 put us on a road of increasing dependence on resource revenues to fund the services that Albertans depend on by replacing a stable source of revenue with one that we could not predict or control. This flat tax played no small part in creating the fiscal difficulties we're dealing with here today. We simply can't continue to depend on the price of oil to determine whether or not we can provide the services and build the hospitals and schools that Albertans need and deserve. The flat tax was simply poor policy, rooted more in ideology and political strategy than in fiscal prudence or considered choice.

As I said, this bill simply corrects that error by restoring the fair, progressive tax structure that we have in every other province in Canada. This is not unreasonable. This is not an unfair overreach on the part of government. This is the change that hundreds of thousands of Albertans voted for; in fact, far more Albertans voted for parties who supported a return to a progressive tax system, 1 million Albertans, to be exact, 70 per cent of everyone who cast a vote. That's a resounding and decided majority. Albertans support a progressive tax system, and that's what this bill delivers.

In regard to the increase in our corporate tax rate a survey conducted by the previous government showed that 69 per cent of respondents favoured increasing the corporate tax rate in Alberta. For years we've maintained some of the lowest taxes in Canada by far, and it's simply not sustainable. We need higher revenues to ensure that there's adequate funding for our social programs, our services, and the infrastructure that we so badly need and that I've heard so many members on both sides of the House advocating for us to build.

Our corporate tax system continues and will continue to be competitive with other provinces. Alberta will continue to be an attractive option for investors thanks to our infrastructure, our cities, our diverse industries, our growing and skilled population, and the many investment opportunities that remain. The Alberta advantage does not lie solely in having the lowest bargain basement rate across the country. It is not unreasonable, it is not unprecedented to ask those corporations, the large, profitable corporations who have benefited from what we as a province have to offer, to pay a little bit more.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions or observations? The hon. member.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In your words it may not be unreasonable, unusual, radical, or unprecedented, but it is unwise. It may not be unreasonable, unusual, radical, or unprecedented, but it will hurt the economy.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the advice and the concern from across the aisle. As we're well aware, you are here to help. I appreciate your opinion, but I think we'll see. These are the actions that Albertans voted for. We were clear in our platform. We didn't hide this under a bushel. This was out there. Albertans looked at it. As I said, nearly 70 per cent of Albertans who voted voted for a progressive tax structure.

I look forward to seeing this bill implemented, I look forward to seeing this new tax structure put in place, and I look forward to the increased prosperity that we are going to see in Alberta.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner. We're in the five minutes for questions and clarification.

**Mr. Hunter:** I just have a question. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the comments of the hon. member. However, my question to you is: can you show me a precedent where \$18 billion has been introduced in an interim supply bill?

**Mr. Shepherd:** Mr. Speaker, I would note that that question has nothing to do with my comments or with the bill that is currently under consideration.

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

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you. I think it had everything to do with what you said there. You were asking for a precedent. You said you had precedents, so I wanted to find out what precedent that was.

My other question to you. In business we have a competitive and comparative advantage. This is what the Alberta advantage was. When we are the same, where is our comparative or competitive advantage? This is my question to you.

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

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the question from the hon. member. Alberta still has many advantages. We do not have a sales tax. We do not have a health levy, which is often required to be paid by the employers. We offer a skilled populace. We offer a fantastic place to do business. We offer great resources here available for use and for extraction. These are advantages that still remain, and I don't believe that this small rise in the corporate tax rate is going to cause those to fail.

**Mr. Hunter:** I guess the only comment that I want to make on this is: you said that we will wait and see. This is a terrible risk – this is a terrible risk – to wait and see. You need to do your studies. You need to make sure that it is grounded on fundamentals that have worked in the past. This is what's going to be able to help Albertans and make them feel comfortable with what you're doing. This is the concern that we have. Now, when you make an argument and say, "We got the mandate when we were in the election," I will remind you that not a majority of people voted for the NDP government. Not a majority. You do have a majority in the House – you do have a majority in the House – and that does allow you the legal right, but it does not give you the moral right to do what you're doing.

**Mr. Shepherd:** I thank the hon. member for his comments. In terms of looking at what effects this might have, we can always look to B.C., which raised their corporate tax rate and, in the years following, increased the number of jobs. At this point there is speculation on both sides of this issue. Certainly, we've heard plenty from certain economists in Calgary and other individuals who choose to predict doom and gloom. We will see.

In regard to your comment about moral authority we . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, your five minutes have been allocated.

I recognize the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

4:40

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It would seem that the change that some Albertans were so eagerly anticipating when the New Democratic Party was elected is not the change that perhaps they had expected, but it may be the change that, I would argue, a majority of Albertans are fearing. Hoping to be released from the overspending that marked the 44 years of Progressive Conservative government, we thought that we might see a more responsible, long-term approach to fiscal management from the new government. Instead, many are saying that their worst fears are being confirmed.

I talked to a constituent yesterday who phoned me up. He said that what he was seeing and what he was hearing was, in his words, scary. "Two times as much work," he said; "I've had more work than I can handle." Then the price for oil drops. We see that he's having a hard time finding work for his company. He's afraid of the increase in the minimum wage and what that's going to do to his business. These are his words; they're not mine.

Albertans are worried, and I don't think that's a partisan statement. Instead of tackling the real challenge to economic stability in Alberta, instead of attacking a bloated, expensive, and unmanageable public service, we are seeing that the NDP is going to combine the worst of the previous government with its own brand of personal and business tax hikes. Does this NDP government really want to live up to the stereotypes that are out there of the other NDP governments' fiscal mismanagement?

Albertans hoped, we believed that this NDP government would be a unique Alberta variety, and I say that honestly. You have many of Alberta's peoples – they're giving you a chance. What I hear out there is that people are willing to give the hon. Premier – they have a lot of respect for her, and I've heard over and over at times that they're willing to give you the chance, but they don't want a rehash of Ontario or some of the other failed experiments. So we're hoping, the people of Alberta are hoping that in this New Democratic government ideology will not trump proven practices and policies of fiscal conservatism and restraint.

Those of us who've lived in Alberta for any length of time have become accustomed to a boom-and-bust cycle. It plagues a resource-based economy. We understand that, but we fear that we're going to move from a boom-and-bust to a bust-and-bust cycle, with oil prices as low as they have been. We've seen the effects of that across the entire economy. Last November the Alberta NDP leader said that it will be families who will pay the price for the PC government's failure to responsibly manage the resource revenues, and according to our Premier the governing PC Party claimed that there was a crisis every time oil prices dropped. Our Premier is quoted in a newspaper article, stating, "It's time we finally moved to a more fair, stable, predictable revenue system." I think we've just heard you try to defend that comment. Fair enough.

Albertans were forewarned that an NDP government would focus on the wrong end of the equation when attempting to address the

economic instability based on a falling oil price. Instead of addressing overspending, they focused on raising revenues by raising taxes on businesses and families. We're going into an economic slide and we raise taxes, yet the reality of the extent of the new government's misunderstandings of economic principles and potential mismanagement is only just now becoming clear.

We see a perfect storm coming: low oil prices; lower than expected revenues; the most expensive government in all of Canada; the \$500 million miscalculation in revenues required to meet spending requirements; business tax hikes, which make Alberta a much less attractive place to invest for both international and national companies; and eventually an increase in debt. While there is very little anyone can do about the price of crude oil, government can and it must develop sound fiscal policies to ensure that the economy stays competitive and strong in the long run.

At the very time that the government needs to be attracting investors, you intend instead to scare them away by hiking business taxes. Alberta currently has the lowest business tax rate in the country; however, under this bill our tax rate will tie with Manitoba, New Brunswick, Saskatchewan and will be 1 per cent higher than Quebec. At the very time that the government needs to be encouraging business start-up, they are putting obstacles in the way by increasing business taxes. At a time when the government needs to be increasing our competitive edge in the international economy, they are putting the final nail in the Alberta advantage. At the very time that the government needs to stimulate investor confidence, they instead are doing the very thing guaranteed to steer investors out of Alberta. At the very time that the government should be addressing a spending problem, instead they throw taxpayer dollars on the fire.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta runs the most expensive government in all of Canada, and Wildrose believes that we need to make government more efficient before we jump to any other serious suggestions for how to deal with the economy. Wildrose put out a very moderate budget during the campaign that would not have impacted front-line services. For instance, with a reduction of 50 per cent of the AHS managers, consultants, travel, advertising, and conference budgets, we projected a savings of approximately \$300 million. This is roughly the same size as the damaging business tax being implemented. That is only one approach to addressing a volatile economic climate while preserving a standard of life and the level of service.

It is not too late to back away from this disastrous idea to raise business and personal income tax. Wildrose would be happy to help the government to find a more workable, long-term solution. To paraphrase a famous songwriter, at least in my circles: the NDP are mortgaging Alberta's future to pay for the PC bankrupt past.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, questions and observations? The hon. Government House Leader.

4:50

**Mr. Mason:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the hon. members opposite and their view. They have a very different view, of course, in our view a very ideological view. Of course, to them it just looks like common sense, I suppose, but from over here it looks like dogma.

Now, the hon. members opposite have repeated over and over again that they're here to help. Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to tell them that I'm here to help, too. The hon. members have been raising the issue. They don't want to have any increase in revenues, whether it be taxes or royalties. They don't want to borrow any money, yet there is a huge gap between expenditures and revenues.

They claim that this can all be corrected by eliminating waste and mismanagement, cutting down on the bureaucracy, and so on. I severely doubt that.

At the same time as they're asking us to curtail spending in a major way, billions of dollars actually, they're asking for our help, and I'm happy to try to provide that if I can. They're asking for help with their crumbling hospitals; for example, in Wainwright. They want road improvements in Little Bow, Chestermere. They want a new school in Two Hills, and they want a new registry office in Blackfalds. That's just a very, very short list of the requests that have been made in this House since we began sitting just a bit more than a week ago.

Mr. Speaker, you can't have it both ways. If the hon. members want these things – and they are important things. I'm not diminishing that in any way. Those are things that their constituents need and want and which the government, if it can, will help to provide. But if they insist on heading down the path of a huge, huge cut in government expenditures, which is what they're saying that they want to see, these things will not be possible. I think they have an obligation to be straight with their constituents. If they want the policies that they say that they want fiscally, then many of these things will never be fulfilled. I think they have an obligation to be straight with their voters.

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

**Mr. Cooper:** Mr. Speaker, thank you so much, and thank you to the hon. member for your comments. They are much appreciated.

I'll just take a brief moment here. The Wildrose has been very clear that we would take the steps to release a priority spending list. Never once have we said that we would not spend, just that we would undertake the appropriate steps to ensure that the spending which is done by the oversized bureaucracy here in the province of Alberta is done in a much more responsible manner.

For the hon. member to rise and say, you know, that we've seen them talk about a registry in Blackfalds and an intersection where there have been lives lost in Chestermere-Rocky View as well as lives lost in the last 12 months in Little Bow – clearly, these intersections create a significant safety concern where lives are being lost, and Wildrose has never once advocated to stop government spending wholesale. The things that we're wanting to ensure happen are that we are reducing waste within the government, that we are prioritizing every tax dollar, and this is the path forward that creates an environment where spending isn't so loosely looked at.

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

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My first opportunity to speak to Bill 2, An Act to Restore Fairness to Public Revenue. The bill proposes to amend the Corporate Tax Act to increase the general corporate income tax from 10 per cent to 12 per cent effective July 1. However, the bill is not proposing to change Alberta's lower small-business corporate tax rate, which is currently at 3 per cent, something that the Alberta Liberals were suggesting. The bill also proposes to amend the Alberta Personal Income Tax Act to end the province's single-rate personal income tax of 10 per cent and reintroduce a progressive income tax system effective October 1, 2015, which the Alberta Liberals have supported.

In conjunction with Bill 2 the NDP government also announced that it will not proceed with a number of fees imposed on Albertans by the previous government. The government will eliminate the health levy and scrap proposed fee increases on vehicle licences and registration, land title searches, mortgages, marriage licences, birth certificates, and death certificates.

These changes in general were supported by the Alberta Liberal caucus as a recognition that we are slipping further and further behind not only in infrastructure, not only in maintenance but in critical social programs. We spend 20 per cent per capita less on social supports for people than the national average in Canada. It is resulting in serious backlogs in mental health issues, early childhood risk, poverty issues, mental health and addiction resolution. So we are creating a debt, a social debt, for not only this generation but the next.

We have an infrastructure debt not only for ourselves but future generations, and we have an environmental debt. Massive cleanup costs will be facing all of us in the next couple of decades, whether it's the oil sands or whether it's upstream oil and gas wells. We have to be conscious that we are already spending beyond our means. At the same time, we have to start generating from our pockets. Our current generation, we who are the baby boomers, has to start paying more, or we're going to leave huge debts of all three types to our children.

There's no question that last year the government gave back \$11.6 billion more – \$11.6 billion more – than any other province in the country to corporations and the wealthiest in the province. That is the Alberta advantage, right? And who benefits from the advantage? Well, about 7 per cent of Albertans, in fact, and with the new tax rate moving on a progressive level to individual incomes, the top 7 per cent of tax filers will see an increase in their taxes. The top 7 per cent of income earners. The proposed rates, I think you know, start at \$125,000 a year.

I for one want to pay more taxes on my income. I want to see our social programs solved. I want to see our infrastructure solved. I want to see a serious investment in environmental monitoring. I want to see groundwater actually monitored before people frack. I want to see some assessment of what has happened to our groundwater in a hundred years of drilling and fracking. We still don't know in 2015 what is happening to our groundwater.

Of course, corporations only pay taxes on profits. If they don't make profits, they will not be paying extra taxes. The first \$500,000 of profit in a smaller corporation: they will not see that 10 per cent or even an increase.

**An Hon. Member:** Three per cent.

**Dr. Swann:** It will be 3 per cent, yes.

In our view, we should be reducing small-business tax because that will stimulate new economy, that will stimulate more jobs, but this government has not chosen to do that. I would hope they would consider that in the future as a stimulus for some of the new jobs and new economy that we need desperately in this province, whether it's renewable energy, conservation measures, better building codes, and new businesses that can spring up around alternative technology for reduced carbon emissions. There are some tremendous opportunities for us to not follow the world but lead the world on carbon-reducing technologies.

**5:00**

Small businesses make up 95 per cent of all businesses in Alberta and 35 per cent of private-sector jobs. In 2013 there were 158,000 small businesses, businesses with fewer than 50 employees that bring in less than \$500,000 in profit in a year. I think we could stimulate that part of the economy in a very substantial way and rebuild some tax advantage, ensure that we have that tax advantage in Alberta, with a win-win for jobs and our economy.

Revenue generated by the 10 per cent general corporate tax for 2015-16 is estimated to be \$4 billion. Revenue generated by the 3

per cent small-business tax for 2015-16 is estimated to be \$500 million.

In 2001 Alberta introduced Canada's first and only single-rate personal income tax of 10 per cent. We are the only province in the country to have bought into, under the Klein government, a flat tax. It has not served us. We have gone further and further behind in social programs, in environmental monitoring and environmental reputation, and now we're having trouble getting our oil to market because of severe challenges.

But I want to make another recommendation to this government. Not only does Alberta currently tax corporations the least; it also has been doing an increasingly poor job in collecting corporate taxes according to our Auditor General in 2014. All provinces except Alberta and Quebec use the Canada Revenue Agency to collect corporate taxes. Alberta does not. Alberta has set up its own administration to collect corporate taxes.

The CRA pays other provinces the amount of provincial taxes assessed, whether or not it collects them. It bears the credit risk. Why should we bear the credit risk of uncollected taxes, penalties, deferrals, and interest when the CRA will pay us the outstanding amount and try to collect it on our behalf? It would save a bureaucracy, and it might even improve our return on corporate tax owing.

In the October 2014 report the Auditor General was critical of our system for collecting corporate taxes given the dramatic increase in overdue taxes, penalties, and interest. Of the \$885 million in outstanding corporate taxes at the end of the 2013-14 fiscal year, the Auditor General suggested that the government might not be able to collect \$378 million, 43 per cent, in doubtful accounts. The CRA would have paid us that money and tried to collect it for itself. That's an opportunity to not only add to the treasury but to save the administration costs of corporate collections.

This report also showed that the government has written off \$108 million in uncollected taxes in the last three years. As of the end of 2013-14, 364 corporations were appealing \$557 million in taxes, penalties, and interest. Options for collecting that disputed amount are, quote, limited, according to the Auditor General, while the CRA would be paying us that money and taking the hit themselves.

Corporate profits are significantly higher in Alberta, both per capita and as a share of GDP, according to our former leader Dr. Kevin Taft's book *Follow the Money*. He and economist McMillan from the U of A analyzed our corporate returns compared to other provinces in the country. According to their research corporations in Alberta have brought in profits three times the rate per capita of any other province in the last decade. That has not always been the case, but in the last decade there has been a big jump in corporate take compared to the public purse. It accelerated through the 2000s and has now reached three times the average of \$5,000 per person in nine other provinces.

There is a recent precedent for reversing corporate tax cuts. The B.C. government went too far. They have now returned from a 10 per cent tax for corporations in 2011 back up to 11 per cent in 2014. There's a recognition that there is a fair share, and we don't have it in Alberta. Giving back \$11.6 billion more than any other province in the country left us in the position we're in today: over \$5 billion in deficit and looking at, according to the previous government, up to a \$30 billion deficit if we build all the infrastructure, the maintenance, and the social supports that are needed in the coming three years. That was what was presented by the existing government leading up to this last election, a \$30 billion deficit and debt by 2019.

Surely, we have to do something. We have to do something differently. Yes, there is no doubt that there will be waste. We're talking billions here. There's no question that we can't find billions of dollars in human services, in environmental monitoring, in

research and development. Just where are we going to find the \$5 billion and realistically think we're going to provide Albertans with the infrastructure, the social supports, and the environmental standards that we say we want to be champions of?

I'm in the position of not agreeing with everything this government has done. I believe they're moving in the right direction with this bill. The Liberal caucus will be supporting this bill. [interjections] We'll be pushing them to take . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, would you please be seated? Thank you.

**Dr. Swann:** Sorry, Mr. Speaker. I didn't see you.

**The Speaker:** You have two minutes left. Do you have some additional comments?

**Dr. Swann:** I do not.

**The Speaker:** Are there questions and observations for the hon. member?

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Mr. Speaker, the Member for Calgary-Mountain View says that he doesn't agree with everything the new government has done. I'm wondering if he can cite anything.

**Dr. Swann:** I think I've already said that I think small-business tax should be reduced. Along with that, there's significant red tape, I'm hearing from small businesses, that we could be reducing without loss of accountability and integrity in business. In fact, most of the tax measures that have been introduced in the House were very consistent with what we were planning to bring in, bringing in roughly \$1.4 billion more than the past government would have, which would have meant a slow and incremental base on which to bring harmony to the disparity, the growing inequality in our society.

We have the largest gap between rich and poor in this country, and that has to be examined from the point of view of its social impact but also recognizing that we have to find a way to get off the dependence on an oil market that is inherently volatile. We've had 44 years of not having a stable budget that we could count on for the essential services to children, families, the disabled: infrastructure, schools, health care, and, again, an environmental department that has been gutted, absolutely gutted. It responds only to complaints now. It does not initiate monitoring on any basic level. It still has not produced a cumulative impact assessment to understand how a whole river system is being impacted by all the developments instead of piecemeal environmental assessments. There are tremendous gaps in our knowledge as legislators to make better long-term decisions for this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Cooper:** Mr. Speaker, thank you so much. I just have one quick question, through you, to the hon. member. If the Liberal caucus does such a great job of recognizing that lowering taxes on small business would stimulate the economy, I'm just a little bit unclear as to why raising the taxes on other businesses wouldn't have the same effect.

5:10

**Dr. Swann:** Well, thank you for the question. There are two dimensions to this, from my point of view. One is that we are looking at fairness. What does fairness look like? Who benefits most from the public services: the public roads, the public hospitals,

the public education system? Surely, it's the largest corporations, who have hired the brightest and the most contributing members of our society, who have benefited most from our public education, health care, and infrastructure. There's no question in my mind that the large corporations, who also earn the largest profits, much of which leaves the province because most of our industry is not housed in Alberta – most of the corporate profits in Alberta leave Alberta. There is no question in my mind that they should be contributing a greater share to the public good because they're benefiting more than, certainly, the smaller corporations or Albertans in general.

I guess the other dimension to that is that small businesses are inherently less stable. They are more vulnerable to short-term changes in revenue and expenses. If we can in some way, especially in the start-ups, especially in the early days, contribute to some stability and to growth and to opportunity to the point where, I would say, that we should be considering eliminating small-business tax till they get to the point where they are making \$500,000 and then can begin to propagate the larger opportunities for Albertan jobs and for benefit to society.

Thank you for the question.

**The Speaker:** Any other questions or observations?

Hearing none, I would recognize the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to start off with a small story. My son is 18 years old, and he bought my van from me, my old, dilapidated van, and we charged him market value for that. A lot of his friends got new vehicles from their parents, and that was great. I'm sure it wasn't fair for him to have to drive my old, dilapidated van, but he paid for it. He earned it, and he acknowledges how important that is to him because he invested himself and his time and his energy into buying that old, dilapidated van, which, I must say, he's very proud to drive because he paid for it, because he was incentivized to do that. That's how we teach our children to function.

On that note, I'd also like to add, just on what everybody else has been saying, that we do not have a revenue problem. Are we not already being taxed? Is something not already coming in? We don't have a revenue problem; we have a management issue. We're already paying taxes, so I don't understand. There is no transparency here. The prudence is gone. We're on the last leg of the Alberta advantage, that we've boasted of in this province. Bring in families, bring in head offices, and have low taxes: this is something that we are proud of. It is an advantage.

The NDP is raising taxes for ideological reasons, increasing taxes for the sake of increasing taxes, without disclosing why. Why are we not speaking to balancing the budget, true fiscal responsibility? There's a lack of a coherent picture from the NDP about Alberta's economic future or budget. Where is the NDP's plan to balance the budget? Did that even make the platform relevant? We have not fully investigated the repercussions of these tax increases in Alberta, and we're not ready to implement policy. What will the net effects of this proposal be? I really think that perhaps it should be referred to a committee for further study.

I need to speak on behalf of my portfolio, too, to understand the effect that Bill 2 will have on the energy industry. The NDP has proposed a plethora of policies that will have a significant and negative impact on the energy sector, one of Alberta's most important job creators. The NDP has proposed an increase to the carbon levy, a royalty review, increases to minimum wage, a recent proposal to split up the Energy Regulator, and now increases on business taxes as well as income taxes. This is a triple-edged sword

when you add in that a royalty review will leave the energy sector speculating. The uncertainties discourage new capital investment. The energy sector, which relies on certainty and a regulatory framework to counteract price volatility, is already battling for market clarity because of the royalty review.

At least when Ed Stelmach conducted his royalty review of 2007, we had no way of predicting the financial downturn of 2008. The difference this time is that we know we're in an economic downturn, yet this government is plunging recklessly ahead with all of these things and is embracing instability.

A \$15 minimum wage increase will raise labour costs across the board, inflating all prices. The energy sector as a whole will be facing increased labour costs, and it negatively affects their ability to be competitive with other markets. This increase in the price of labour inputs is compounded by the NDP's unwillingness to commit to any of the proposed pipelines, and our lack of access to energy markets already reduces the competitiveness of our product. It already prevents Alberta's energy exports from obtaining their full market value.

The recent proposal to split up Alberta's energy regulator: again, the business in our energy sector has been left to speculate, adding to the instability of the NDP's royalty review. The cost-benefit analysis by the industry for staying in Alberta is changing and not in the favour of Alberta.

The negative impacts of this bill are so broad ranging, even beyond the energy sector. We do not need these tax increases. This year's revenue is projected to be the third highest in Alberta's history. This is in spite of the fact that Albertans are generating less income in this current economic downturn while the government collects more and more taxes. Alberta has a spending problem, not a revenue problem. Are you saying that you can spend dollars that you're collecting in taxes better than a taxpayer? You are taking dollars out of the pockets of individuals and businesses. Government stimulus does not work. We are concerned that this may diminish the incentives for entrepreneurs, which is un-Albertan.

A 50 per cent increase in personal taxes in a year for any Alberta family is radical, to say the least. The NDP gave up rent controls, which is a terrible economic policy. Will it give up this terrible policy as well?

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Questions or observations? I would recognize the Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to Bill 2. It says An Act to Restore Fairness to Public Revenue. I would suggest that possibly it could also read An Attempt to Raise Public Revenue. May I suggest that what we're striving for as trustees of Alberta is taxation balance, a policy that will take into consideration the needs of the most vulnerable in our society and the needs of Alberta families but at the same time provide the necessary balance that will incent investment and reward risk with competitive rates of return. This bill proposes to adjust the rate at which taxes are collected for businesses and individuals. But it does more than just adjust; it attempts to collect more revenue through taxes.

My colleagues opposite are known not to have faith in supply-and-demand economics, but let me discuss with you the trickle-down effect of decisions to raise taxes on businesses. Business tax is simply a cost of doing business to any business. The money has to come from somewhere to pay for the tax increase. At the end of the day, all business tax will be paid by individuals. Individuals will pay this tax increase. Businesses are accountable to shareholders. Shareholders put money at risk with an expectation of a reasonable return. Without a reasonable and competitive return investors move

their money. Businesses therefore are forced to address the extra cost of doing business, the extra tax, by either trying to increase revenue or lowering their expenses.

5:20

Businesses have products to sell, services to render. They try and increase revenue. They're in a supply-and-demand economy. There's a limit to where they can increase their revenue. It's a competitive economy that we're working in. If they cannot find enough extra revenue to cover off the extra cost of doing business from the extra taxes, they need to take a look at their input costs. They need to take a look at their other expenses. Are they able to adjust their expenses in a way that will still give them a reasonable rate of return? Why would they do it if they were not guaranteed or at least have a sense that they're going to get a reasonable rate of return?

One of the first line items that businesses will look at, because it's usually a fairly large item in their cost of doing business, would be labour costs, and might I suggest that with the business environment that has been established in Alberta, the Alberta advantage, all Albertans have benefited from the ability of businesses to be able to pay very competitive labour rates? When we increase expense on business by raising tax, businesses will be forced to take a look at their input costs for providing services and commodities to the general public. They will be forced to take a look at that line item, labour expense, and possibly need to adjust.

As I was campaigning through the Swan Hills territory in my riding, I learned that if they were not laid off or put out of work, most of that town experienced a 15 per cent wage rollback at Christmastime. That's a reality of working in the oil field. I do not want them to experience more reductions, more wage rollbacks based on the fact that we're trying to get more tax revenue from companies. The companies are going to pass the taxes on. Tax in a business situation is a cost of doing business. If there is no reward to the risk of doing business, there is no need to do business. So they'll look at rolling wages back. They'll look at adjusting salaries, adjusting hours worked, look at restructuring the number of employees they have. If the business is not able to adjust accordingly, shareholders move their investment because they have a lack of a competitive rate of return, or possibly, in the worst-case scenario, the business closes its doors.

Now, we also take a look at taxation balance. This bill is looking at restoring fairness to public revenue. The bill proposes to adjust the methodology used to collect taxes from individuals. Fair enough. Again, we need to focus our attention on taxation balance. Currently in Alberta personal tax exemption is marked at \$18,214, adjusted annually according to CPI. Might I suggest that if we're looking for taxation balance, we also take a look at personal tax exemption? Or is this bill really about more tax revenue? Adjusting the exemption of personal tax will protect our most vulnerable, will help protect Alberta families. Is the NDP considering taking a look at adjusting that end of the spectrum?

I truly believe we need to look at all angles. But first and foremost, before any taxes are raised, before the raising of any taxes, in any business it is critical when we're in a downturn, in a recession, in a time of shortage of revenue to examine our spending. In my business as a farmer when times are tough, the first thing we look at is: are we doing it as efficiently as we can?

**An Hon. Member:** Farmers know.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Farmers know. Farmers have felt it.

Mr. Speaker, I would leave it at that. I would ask this government to carefully consider all spending before we get into the habit of just raising taxes to try and fix our problems.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, any questions or observations? I would recognize the Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Every dollar earned by Albertans is earned through their sweat and drive to better themselves, their families, and their communities. That money is earned by Albertans because they decided to work hard for their own business or for another company that determined that their skills were worth paying for. Now the government is going to ask for an even larger share of hard-earned money from working Albertans and businesses because this government and the one before it were addicted to spending. This government is spending even faster than they can tax.

No society has ever borrowed or spent its way to prosperity. Most jurisdictions that have abandoned marginal tax structures for a flat-tax structure have increased their total revenues. Alberta actually collects more per capita from personal income tax than any other province in the country barring Saskatchewan, with whom we're tied.

Now for a slightly different and unconventional example. I wouldn't recommend very many things about Russia, but let's look at their experience with a flat tax. One of the most impressive single cases was Russia's 2001 move away from marginal rates towards a single-rate flat tax. Russia's revenues rose by 26 per cent in the first year of its implementation. Even lowering personal income taxes can increase revenues. When the United States dropped the top personal income rate from 70 per cent to 28 per cent in the 1980s, the share of all income taxes paid by the richest 1 per cent of Americans rose from 19.3 per cent in 1980 to 24.7 per cent in 1990 as wealthy Americans stopped hiding money in offshore accounts and became more productive. Nations prosper when taxes are lowered, not raised. Lower taxes encourage people to make more money. Higher taxes discourage people from making more money.

In this bill the proposed marginal tax system discourages people from jumping to the next tax bracket. Every dollar an earner makes in a higher bracket is worth less than the dollar he earned before it. At some point many earners will opt not to take that extra shift, not to upgrade their skills, and would enjoy the time off instead rather than make less per hour than they invested before. In 2010 one country raised its personal income tax rate by the same 5 per cent for their highest income earners. Five years later that country is much worse off than it was before. In fact, that country, Greece, is a millstone around the neck of the entire eurozone.

Now, I'm as tired as you are, Mr. Speaker, of hearing about Greece, and I'm tired of hearing my relatives outside Munich, who have worked their entire lives, continue to complain about bailing out Greek taxpayers. I'm not saying that Alberta is Greece, nor am I saying that Alberta is Russia or Norway or the United States, but it stands as a stark example of a society that traded away its future for the soup kitchen of the welfare state.

5:30

The taxes proposed will not even cover the spending that is planned in the Redford- and Prentice-inspired minibudget that was just passed. Who knows how much extra spending will be allocated in the actual budget? In fact, these taxes will only bring in at most \$800 million this fiscal year. This is compared to the new spending announced in the minibudget, which totalled a blank – I have no idea – which means that there will be a blank of more debt that our future generations will have to pay off.

Now, I actually didn't fill in the numbers in my speech, Mr. Speaker. I was going to fill them in last night, but I honestly have no idea what numbers to put in these slots. I can't even craft a

speech after almost six hours of debate on the government's mini-budget because we still don't know how much spending is being allocated. Let's take the last number announced by the Government House Leader, \$1.1 billion, that area. Subtract that from the highest possible revenue from these tax measures this year, \$800 million. That is \$300 million worth of extra debt passed in the Redford-Prentice minibudget. Alberta had a big spending problem under the previous government, and now Alberta's spending problem just got a lot bigger.

Businesses don't come to Alberta for the weather; they come to Alberta because of low business taxes. They come to Alberta because of what was once called the Alberta advantage. At 10 per cent we are for the next few days still the lowest in the country. This meant that Alberta had an advantage over every other province in the country. The previous government killed the Alberta advantage; now the NDP are burying it. The Alberta advantage meant that businesses flocked to Alberta, which meant more revenue for the government. If those businesses had not come to Alberta, then there would have been less revenue generated. I'm not sure if the hon. members opposite truly believe that as many businesses would have come to Alberta had their plan been in place over the last 10 years.

With the 20 per cent increase to business taxes Alberta no longer is the first choice for business in Canada. Businesses can choose from B.C., Ontario, or Quebec if they want a lower tax rate than Alberta. Good God, Quebec has a lower tax rate than Alberta. Just let that sink in for a moment now. Then if they want to pay even more taxes, they can go to Manitoba, New Brunswick, and Saskatchewan, which are at 12 percentage points. What incentive do new businesses receive from coming to Alberta? What incentive do businesses who are wanting to expand receive from Alberta? The advantage that Alberta has will be gone with this tax increase. Mr. Speaker, if you want to start a small business in Alberta, buy a big business, and elect the NDP.

Saskatchewan, our neighbour to the east, currently has a 12 per cent business tax. That was not always the case. In 2005 the Saskatchewan NDP authorized and paid for a study on their business tax rates. Do you know what they found, Mr. Speaker? The NDP that governed Saskatchewan discovered that they should lower their business and personal taxes. The NDP government there decided to take their own advice from their own research and lowered Saskatchewan's business tax rate by 5 per cent. But wait; there's more. In that same study they determined that the business tax rate should be lowered to 10 per cent. The Saskatchewan NDP decided that it was in the best interests of their province to lower business tax rates to the exact same rate that Alberta has for the next few days.

Saskatchewan implemented this tax cut in 2005. Since 2005 Saskatchewan has seen extraordinary economic growth. Coincidence? I think not. Lower business taxes encourage new business to enter into the market. Lower business taxes encourage businesses to stay in the province. Lower business taxes generate even more revenue over an extended period.

Mr. Speaker, there is a corporate giveaway taking place in this province, and it's not taxes; it's welfare. If we want to get our fair share from corporations, we should focus on cutting corporate welfare subsidies in this province. The previous government would accept large cash donations, which, thankfully, we have worked with the government to now ban. They would accept large cash donations, political favours from consultants and award them sole-source contracts. Navigator, the North West upgrader, Kananaskis: the list goes on and on and on.

Now, the Alberta advantage was premised upon removing corporate-welfare subsidies that had been in place from the 1980s and early 1990s: Novatel and other examples that live in infamy. Corporate welfare was eliminated in Alberta and sharply curtailed

in future use. The business financial assistance limitation act is now toothless and without any point on the paper. Corporate welfare was slowly allowed to set in, which had a corrupting effect not just upon the economy but upon the very government itself. Instead of raising taxes on honest businesses that work hard, that pay their taxes, that contribute to our communities, that donate to charities and give their time, we should focus on rooting out corporate cronyism and ending corporate welfare in this province.

The Saskatchewan NDP authorized their research to be done in their province to determine the effects of altering business tax rates. They did their homework. The Alberta NDP has not done its homework. In 2014 I had this to say about the Alberta advantage in my alternative budget, when I was at the Canadian Taxpayers Federation. I do love to quote myself, Mr. Speaker.

The Alberta Advantage had four pillars ... for its success: responsible spending, transparent budgeting, no debt and competitive tax levels. The first three of these four pillars have fallen on one another like dominos, with the last – competitive tax levels – now threatened.

I said that over a year ago, and I normally love to say that I told you so, but I don't now.

The NDP is pushing for these tax hikes for simplistic, ideological reasons. This bill is being pushed through the Legislature without due diligence, without proper study of the side effects of their bill. The effects of altering Alberta's business tax rate need to be studied before we foist it upon the economy. The fact that this government is pushing legislation through this House that affects the entire province, without a shred of research, is extraordinarily irresponsible.

If the government refuses to do its homework on business taxes, then it should at least consider amendments to the bill. Let's begin. Good God, I'm agreeing with the Member for Calgary-Mountain View. Note it for history. Let's begin by increasing the \$500,000 threshold for small businesses. Let's index it to the price of inflation. It has not been increased in years.

Let's even consider phasing in both personal and business tax hikes if they must be raised, just as the government is doing with the minimum wage. Although I don't agree with the increase to the minimum wage, a phase-in approach is better than the shock and awe of a 50 per cent increase overnight, a 50 per cent increase, as they are proposing to do, at the highest marginal tax rate.

5:40

Let's also amend the bill in the same manner that the Premier herself suggested in 2012 and that the Municipal Affairs minister suggested in 2014. The Premier suggested while in opposition decreasing the tax limit for small businesses from 3 to 2 per cent. The Premier campaigned on – and I quote – reducing taxes for small businesses by one-third to help them grow. Mr. Speaker, I agree with the Premier.

The Minister of Municipal Affairs said on April 22, 2014 – don't you just love *Hansard*? – "I'd like to remind the House that the Alberta NDP was the only party during the 2012 election that had in our platform a reduction in the small-business tax. We would have reduced it by a third." Well, jeez, in hindsight I may have even voted NDP in 2012 after all events.

I understand that this would mean the very first cut that the NDP would legislate. This cut would help small businesses cope with the increase to taxes and the minimum wage.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there any questions or observations?

**Mr. Cooper:** I have been so riveted by the hon. member's comments. I wondered if he might just like a couple of moments to continue.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** An excellent question from the Opposition House Leader. What is the term we use when we don't have a preamble? Given that, to borrow a quote from the Minister of Municipal Affairs, "small businesses really are what drive the Alberta economy," small business are to be protected. With the increase to the minimum wage small businesses are going to need some help, and we're here to help.

I do not agree with raising taxes, period. But since this government is intent on raising taxes, they could at least consider these reasonable amendments that the Premier and members of her cabinet themselves have already campaigned on. Let's not repeat the mistakes of history. Let's not be blinded by a knee-jerk ideological need to spend other people's money better than they can. Let's rebuild the Alberta advantage, not bury it.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

**Mr. Strankman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes. I'd like to ask the hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks – he gave some allusions to a small bit of a history lesson there in regard to Russia, and I was wondering if he could expand on that, when he talked about the timing and the increase of the tax revenue relating to the tax rate fall.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you to the Member for Drumheller-Stettler for the question. They're supposed to be puffballs from my own side, not asking for statistics. Well, I'm clearly an expert on Russian history and the Russian economy. As I said earlier, I'm not keen on following most things Russian in our government. It's generally ill advised, but there's a little bit of good in everyone.

Well, compared to their tax rates of the 1980s, it was extraordinarily radical. But I don't believe we're going to be going to that extreme in Alberta. Similar to what the government is proposing today, the Russian Federation had high marginal, what they would call progressive, tax rates and went to a single flat-rate tax. In the first full year of implementation they saw a 26 per cent increase in revenue. Now, the people of Russia, more than perhaps any other population on earth, had long endured a stifling economy that did not allow people's impulses and the free market to thrive. This was an excellent test-tube case of what happens when a people is allowed to succeed, when a people is allowed to make their own choices, not government making them for them. Unfortunately, they have since retreated from some of those excellent pieces of progress.

**The Speaker:** Any other questions or observations? The hon. member.

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks alluded briefly to the fact that Alberta pays more income taxes per capita than any other area in the country. I wonder if you could elaborate a little bit on that.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** I'd like to thank the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre for his question. There are many different reasons, and everyone can find their own set of facts to support their reasons, for why Alberta collects more in income tax than any other province except for Saskatchewan, with whom we are tied. Now, Alberta has the highest per capita spending in the country, which is why those of us on this side of the House, at least this side of this side of the House, believe that taxes should not be going up. We understand that we have a spending problem because we have the highest per capita spending in the country. The members opposite talk about us having a lower than national average spending as a

percentage of GDP, and that is why they believe there is a revenue problem and that we don't spend enough.

There is a fundamental reason for this difference in what numbers we use to talk about spending problems versus revenue problems. The reason that we collect more in income tax is because we have allowed a greater proportion of our economy to thrive without being inhibited, controlled, and consumed by the government. The members opposite believe that because we spend less as a percentage of GDP, we should therefore just be spending more. Because we're wealthy, we should be spending more. Mr. Speaker, I'd say that the reason we are wealthy is because, at least in decades past, we controlled our spending.

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

**Dr. Starke:** Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for the opportunity to speak on Bill 2. At this time I'm very pleased to be able to offer some perspective as a member of the past government and as being the first speaker from our caucus to address Bill 2 in second reading and also as a former member of Treasury Board that was involved in some of the decisions that were made leading up to the most recent budget, in fact, the budget that the interim supply estimates are based on, as correctly pointed out by the Government House Leader.

You know, it's been interesting over these past six or seven days that we've been sitting to hear the 44-year record of the Progressive Conservative government over that period of time be repeatedly vilified by members on both sides of the House. Quite frankly, I'm still very proud of that record regardless of what has been said here, and I would hasten to remind members within the House that you only stay in power for that length of time if you win elections throughout that period. Indeed, the Progressive Conservative Party did maintain the confidence of Albertans in 1975, in 1979, in 1982, in 1986, in 1989, in 1993, in 1997, in 2001, 2004, 2008, and 2012.

Mr. Speaker, it's worth while to point out that when members in the House criticize 44 years of Progressive Conservative government, they're indeed criticizing 44 years of electoral decisions made by Albertans. You are so praising the decisions that were made on May 5. I find it very interesting, quite frankly, the various interpretations of what that decision meant. I find it very interesting that the party opposite now in government feels that it is a *carte blanche* endorsement of all of their policies. I would encourage you not to fall into that trap. Indeed, people vote in an election for a wide variety of reasons, and you should be cautious that the endorsement that you received from the people of Alberta is a *carte blanche* endorsement of all your policies because it is not.

5:50

You know, I found it very interesting as well – I'm going to make a couple of references to the bill at hand because I do have some very specific concerns that nobody has addressed, and we will certainly address these in Committee of the Whole. Most specifically, on the very back page of the bill the coming into force date of the bill is listed as January 1, 2015, retroactively to the beginning of this year. This government wants to have the coming into force of this bill extend to a period five months before they were even elected. Mr. Speaker, I find that to be an incredible statement.

The other thing I find interesting on page 7, in section 6.1(2), is the calculation of the increase in the personal income tax, which is to go up on October 1, that because it extends for an entire year, it will indeed extend over the full year of income for Albertans. In no other way can you achieve the rates that you're asking for, or

demanding, I should say. Indeed, what this does is that it means that on income that has been earned by Albertans in the affected tax brackets between January 1 and the date of passage of this bill, they will be assessed additional income tax on that income.

Mr. Speaker, if you happen to be in a position where you retired or lost an election or for some other reason had your flow of income significantly drop from January 1 to the present period and then the subsequent period, you're now going to have the additional surprise from this government of paying additional tax on that amount if you're in the applicable tax brackets. I find these changes to be very, very troubling.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I represent the constituency of Vermilion-Lloydminster. I've made my home in Lloydminster for the past 30-plus years, and I live two miles from the Saskatchewan border. I live there by choice, and unlike a certain former governor of Alaska, I can see Saskatchewan from my front door. In fact, the joke is that I can see all the way into Manitoba. Saskatchewan, our neighbouring province, has indeed had an interesting history, and I will tell you that the border city of Lloydminster is a very interesting case study of differing government policies. In fact, it's a bit of a petri dish.

Let me sort of outline it for you. My hon. colleague next to me from Strathmore-Brooks has already pointed out that in 2005 the NDP government recognized that there needed to be some taxation changes. A couple of years later the good people of Saskatchewan recognized that there needed to be a government change, to turf out the NDP that had been dragging their province down like an anchor for so many years.

What do I mean by that? Well, Saskatchewan at one time was the third largest province in Canada. Behind Quebec and Ontario, Saskatchewan was third going back to the '30s. But thanks to a succession of CCF governments and then a number of NDP governments, Saskatchewan never grew. In fact, the province of Saskatchewan's population has fluctuated around the 1 million mark since the 1930s, and in the last few years of the NDP administration Saskatchewan's population was declining at a regular rate. People were leaving Saskatchewan in droves, especially young people, and there was virtually no growth in Saskatchewan. Businesses would locate preferentially in Lloydminster, at least on the Alberta side, not on the Saskatchewan side. And you're saying: oh, that's because of the sales tax. Well, there is no sales tax anywhere in the city of Lloydminster.

Let me give you some comparative growth rates that illustrate this. From 2001 to 2006 the Alberta side of Lloydminster grew populationwise by 21 per cent. During that same period of time, when the NDP government was in power in Saskatchewan, the growth on the Saskatchewan side of Lloydminster was a meagre 3.5 per cent. From 2006 to 2013 the Alberta side of Lloydminster grew by a further 26 per cent, and from 2006 to 2013, during which time the Saskatchewan province had the benefit of the Saskatchewan Party, a conservative party, the growth on the Saskatchewan side of Lloydminster was a whopping 41 per cent. People chose to locate to the Saskatchewan side of Lloydminster because there was an advantage to doing so.

Let me say a few other things that changed in Saskatchewan. Prior to 2008 Saskatchewan was a province that received equalization payments through the federal equalization program. It was a great source of pride to the residents of Saskatchewan when they no longer were a have-not province in 2008, and that was largely because of government policies that had been brought in to

make Saskatchewan a more competitive, more tax-friendly jurisdiction.

Mr. Speaker, you know, one other thing that I will tell you that is also a source of pride to the residents of Saskatchewan that may or may not have as much direct reference to political parties: the Saskatchewan Roughriders have won the Grey Cup three times. They have never once won the Grey Cup while the NDP was in power. If you want to ask people from Saskatchewan what is important to them, they will tell you that the success of the Riders is perhaps one of the most important factors.

Mr. Speaker, you know, one thing I will say with regard to this, and it's referenced back to my involvement with the past government. We did not bring in corporate tax increases in our budget because we recognized the damage it would create to the Alberta economy, to bring them in at this time and to this degree. To suggest that corporate taxes should never be touched or never be looked at, that's not what I personally felt, and it's not really what we were looking at at that time. At the time that we were talking about this budget, recognizing the fragility our economy, raising corporate taxes was a mistake. It is a mistake to raise corporate taxes now. That's not to say that there may not be a point in time where corporate taxes could be raised without damaging the economy. But I will tell you that right now, under the current economic circumstances, raising corporate taxes would be a terrible, terrible mistake.

Now, my friends to the far right of me will point out that we were going to raise personal income taxes as well, and that is true. We had a proposal to raise personal income taxes marginally and gradually. Our proposal would have increased personal income taxes to a maximum rate of 12 per cent and to a marginal rate of 11.5 per cent for those earning above \$100,000 in taxable income. But it was going to be phased in over the 2016 and 2017 taxation years, nothing like the sudden and dramatic increases that are contained within Bill 2.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to debating Bill 2 in committee and also to discussing amendments to Bill 2, which I believe are necessary and would assist with Bill 2 being a better piece of legislation. I do not fundamentally agree with a number of the precepts of Bill 2. I do not want to see Alberta become the Saskatchewan of the '90s. You know, quite frankly, that's not what Albertans want, and if the party opposite suggests that that's what Albertans voted for, I would suggest that you are seriously misreading the mood of the electorate.

I will further say that Bill 2 is certainly mistitled as far as restoring fairness to public revenue. I would say also, Mr. Speaker, that in conducting business within this House it is helpful to look at the experience of other jurisdictions. I'm concerned that this government has elected to not look at the experience of our neighbouring province to the east of us, to see, indeed, a province that is just as old as our province is, that shares many of the historical features of our province, and I think from whom we could learn many valuable lessons.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we are at 6 o'clock, and pursuant to Standing Order 4 and Government Motion 6 the Assembly stands adjourned until 7:30 this evening.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6 p.m.]







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