



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
First Session

Alberta Hansard

Thursday afternoon, October 29, 2015

Day 12

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta
The 29th Legislature

First Session

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Feehan, Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)	McCuaig-Boyd, Hon. Margaret, Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley (ND)
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Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)	McKittrick, Annie, Sherwood Park (ND)
Bhullar, Manmeet Singh, Calgary-Greenway (PC)	McLean, Stephanie V., Calgary-Varsity (ND), Deputy Government Whip
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Connolly, Michael R.D., Calgary-Hawkwood (ND)	Notley, Hon. Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (ND), Premier
Coolahan, Craig, Calgary-Klein (ND)	Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (W)
Cooper, Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (W), Official Opposition House Leader	Panda, Prasad, Calgary-Foothills (W)
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Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (ND)	Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie (W)
Drever, Deborah, Calgary-Bow (Ind)	Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (ND)
Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (PC), Progressive Conservative Opposition Whip	Rodney, Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC)
Eggen, Hon. David, Edmonton-Calder (ND)	Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (ND)
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Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (PC)	Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (W)
Gray, Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (ND)	Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC), Progressive Conservative Opposition House Leader
Hanson, David B., Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (W), Official Opposition Deputy House Leader	Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)
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Horne, Trevor A.R., Spruce Grove-St. Albert (ND)	Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)
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Jean, Brian Michael, QC, Fort McMurray-Conklin (W), Leader of the Official Opposition	Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)
Kazim, Anam, Calgary-Glenmore (ND)	van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)
Kleinstuber, Jamie, Calgary-Northern Hills (ND)	Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND)
Larivee, Hon. Danielle, Lesser Slave Lake (ND)	Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)
Littlewood, Jessica, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (ND)	Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)
Loewen, Todd, Grande Prairie-Smoky (W)	
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (ND)	
Luff, Robyn, Calgary-East (ND)	
MacIntyre, Donald, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (W)	

Party standings:

New Democrat: 53 Wildrose: 22 Progressive Conservative: 9 Alberta Liberal: 1 Alberta Party: 1 Independent: 1

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Margaret McCuaig-Boyd	Minister of Energy
Shannon Phillips	Minister of Environment and Parks, Minister Responsible for the Status of Women
Irfan Sabir	Minister of Human Services
Lori Sigurdson	Minister of Advanced Education, Minister of Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour

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Kazim	

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, October 29, 2015

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Deputy Speaker: Let us reflect. As we conclude for the week our work in this Assembly, we renew our energies with thanks so that we may continue our work with the people in our constituencies, that we represent.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Deputy Speaker: I understand we have some school groups today. Welcome.

The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly the grade 6 class of Neerlandia public Christian school. I'm proud to say that Neerlandia public Christian school was the school I attended for the first nine years of my education. As well, all five of my children attended there. With them today is their teacher, whom I consider a personal friend, Mr. Jim Bosma, and chaperones Dr. Egbert de Waal, Mrs. Mistie Renfert, Mr. Keith Wiart, Mr. Wesley Vold, and my niece-in-law Mrs. Sherri Hiemstra. I would invite the class, their teacher, and the chaperones to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-South West.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is my great pleasure today to introduce to you and through you a distinct group of students who are leaders in our community today and will continue to be leaders in our community tomorrow. I had the pleasure of visiting this class from George P. Nicholson school a few weeks ago. Their teacher, Lorelei Campbell, joins them today with parents Coral Haggett, Darina Alyward, Tracey Kalke, Lisa Ladd, and Lingyun Huang, who are no small part of helping them become leaders of tomorrow. If they would please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Mr. Carson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly 46 students from the Centre for Learning@Home, located in my constituency of Edmonton-Meadowlark. They are a fully accredited, publicly funded Christian school offering distance learning, summer programs, and home-schooling services. With the students is their recreational co-ordinator, Samantha Quantz, and some of their parents. I would like to invite them to stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any other school groups today?

I'd like to, then, call on the Minister of Advanced Education and Minister of Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour.

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's an honour today to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly a

valued group of employees from apprenticeship and industry training within the Ministry of Advanced Education. They are here today as part of a team building and recognition day. These fine people are to be commended for their hard work and dedication. They are seated in the members' gallery this afternoon. I ask that they rise as I call their names: Terry Grunsell, who organized the visit today, Elaine Cope, Kevin Martin, Jenna Sarty, Richelle Waters, Ashley Brightnose, Anne Rothery, Emily Nhan, Digna Ferrer, and Julia Nhan. Please join me in giving them all the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: Minister of Transportation and Minister of Infrastructure, you have a guest today?

Mr. Mason: Yes. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's a wonderful opportunity for me and a great honour to introduce to you first of all my lovely wife, Karin Olson, who is here with her sister Denise Nord and her husband, Larry Nord, who are visiting us from Duluth, Minnesota, where my wife is originally from. It's wonderful to have a great visit with them. I would ask that they please rise and receive the warm traditional welcome of the Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: The Minister of Environment and Parks and Minister Responsible for the Status of Women.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my delight today to introduce to you and through you staff from across five ministries who join us here today. These dedicated staff are participating in the government of Alberta leadership program and are here on a team building exercise. They will be touring our Legislature, seeing the House in session, and later meeting with me. I'd like to read their names now as they stand: Kata Jhukoutaiy, professional services and health benefits, Department of Health; Emily Sambhudyal, project manager, Service Alberta; Ryan Eberhardt, unit supervisor, Justice and Solicitor General, young offender centre; Alexandra Bykowski, policy analyst in my own Department of Environment and Parks; and Adele Powell, contract administration engineer, Transportation.

I am proud of the incredible work of our public servants across Alberta. It is my honour to have them here today. I ask that they receive the warm welcome from our Assembly.

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

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise to introduce to you and through you two employees of Edmonton Meals on Wheels. Caitlin Fleming serves as their engagement and fund development manager, and Ashleigh Pardy serves as their fund development and communications co-ordinator. I'm sure that all members are familiar with the good work that Meals on Wheels does, providing healthy, nutritious food to those who are mobility impaired. I'd like to ask Caitlin and Ashleigh to rise and receive the warm welcome of this House.

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

Ms Miller: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you Mr. Don Crisall. I have known Don for about eight years, and I'm proud to call him a friend. Don is a strong activist and very socially conscious. Don is well known to many in this House, and they can attest to his dedication to the cause. He is also my mentor. He has supported and encouraged me to accept the opportunities that have come my way and has always believed that I can accomplish anything I put my mind to even when I have

doubts. Don, could you please rise and accept the traditional warm welcome of the House.

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

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Well, every day it looks better and better for Liberals in Alberta, and it's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you three members of the Alberta Liberal Party, stalwarts, in fact, in Edmonton: Dr. Donna Wilson, Mrs. Irene Hunter, and Harpreet Gill. All three individuals are driven by the cause of making this province a better place to live through their public service. This past spring Harpreet and Donna both stood for election in the ridings of Edmonton-Mill Creek and Edmonton-Riverview, with Irene serving brilliantly as Donna's campaign manager. All were concerned that the budget leaves Edmonton on hold with respect to its hospital infrastructure and are here to remind this government particularly that Edmonton and infrastructure for hospitals and health care has to be a priority. We're all sitting in this place because of the diligent work of volunteers like Donna, Irene, and Harpreet, and I'll ask them to rise and receive the warm greetings of the Legislature.

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

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It is my honour to rise and introduce to you and through you to the Legislative Assembly a constituent and leader in Alberta's postsecondary community, Dr. David Docherty. He is the president of Mount Royal University, and Mount Royal University adds a tremendous amount of vitality to the already vital constituency of Calgary-Elbow. No stranger to Legislatures, as a political science professor Dr. Docherty wrote a comprehensive but very accessible book outlining the role of Canadian Legislatures and our role as legislators. I encourage everyone to pick up a copy if you haven't already. David, please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

1:40

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow.

Ms Drever: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all the members of the Assembly three people who work tirelessly both inside and outside my constituency. Pathways Community Services Association is an aboriginal not-for-profit which engages with communities with a focus on meeting the needs of children, youth, and families. I'd like to introduce Ronni Abraham, associate director; Michelle Jones, communications and advocacy lead; Jennifer Fox, team leader of the mentor home program. I welcome them, and I ask that they receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

Members' Statements

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein.

Affordable Housing in Calgary

Mr. Coolahan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am a strong proponent of affordable housing in this province and for my constituency. In fact, the people of Calgary's greatest constituency, Calgary-Klein, are also strong advocates for affordable housing. The work of the Thorncliffe Greenview and the Highland Park community associations comes to mind. While we share this common

goal, we also share the knowledge that ending homelessness must be done using a housing first model rather than a readiness first approach.

Madam Speaker, the people of Calgary-Klein have endured several years of uncertainty in regard to what type of housing will be built in a hotel located at Edmonton Trail and McKnight Boulevard that was purchased by the Calgary drop-in centre. Without going into detail, the consultation process between the proponents of the impacted communities regarding the use of this building was neither robust nor clear on direction. As a result, the Calgary city Planning Commission recently rejected the application that would allow the plans to move forward. Again, without going into detail, this building was purchased in part using a provincial government grant issued by the previous government. The previous government then attempted to retract the money due to the fact that what was proposed in the grant and the reality of the project did not align.

Madam Speaker, I'm asking our government today to consider the alternate possibilities for affordable housing that this project presents. This land may prove to be a worthwhile site for affordable housing, including seniors' housing, particularly if a project can be developed in partnership between the Calgary drop-in centre and a proven expert in the housing first model such as the Calgary Homeless Foundation. I would ask the government to encourage such a partnership, with the community's full support. Doing this is in the best interests of everyone, including the communities, the drop-in centre as well as those struggling to attain affordable housing.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Diwali

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Right now Indo-Canadians across the country are getting ready to celebrate Diwali, the festival of lights. This five-day celebration celebrates victory over defeat, good over evil, and triumph over despair. For Hindus everywhere the act of lighting the diya reminds us that no matter how dark the night may be, light will always prevail.

Diwali is a reminder that in order to reach a brighter future for all of us, we must first dedicate ourselves to service and kindness to others. This message and this meaning reach beyond the Hindu community and into the hearts of all well-meaning people. Diwali is now celebrated all over the world and in important institutions like the Canadian House of Commons and the White House. Indeed, at the end of the day, we all want peace and prosperity for our families and for our communities, and Diwali is a time to reflect on how best we can achieve those goals.

This year is a very special Diwali for me because I'm here among all of you, celebrating the cultural diversity and embracing the pluralism, in the temple of democracy, freedom, and peace. By celebrating Diwali in the Alberta Legislature, we embrace Alberta's rich cultural diversity and pluralism.

I want to close by wishing good health, wealth, peace, and prosperity upon all of you, my new peers, and all Albertans. Though we may disagree, at the end of the day we are working towards the same goals for Alberta, our great province, which is down but not out. Let us use this Diwali to reflect on the privileges we enjoy as Albertans and how we can best use those gifts to help others. Saal Mubarak. Namaste.

Thank you.

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

Ashura

Ms Kazim: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Today I would like to talk about the day of Ashura, meaning the day of remembrance, which was on October 24 this year. Ashura is on the 10th day of Muharram, and Muharram is the first month in the Islamic lunar calendar. According to Muslims Ashura is the most tragic, painful, and mournful day in the history of Islam and in this world. On the day of Ashura Muslims, particularly Shiites, also known as Shias, commemorate the martyrdom of Prophet Muhammad's grandson Hussain. Shiites mourn this melancholy occasion by wearing black clothes, reciting poems and prose, slapping their chests, and parading through the streets to remember the struggles Hussain, his family, and companions shouldered to save the religion of Islam and spread the message of peace in the world.

It was the day when the army of Yazid, consisting of approximately 30,000 people, killed 72 companions of Hussain, even his six-month-old son. Not only that, but they blocked water for Hussain's family and comrades on the 4th of Muharram, massacred Hussain, and ruthlessly imprisoned the mothers, sisters, daughters, wives, and children who accompanied Hussain, in 680 AD, on the plains of Karbala in Iraq. The defence of Hussain against Yazid's attack in Karbala was the fight against injustice, oppression, and tyranny. It was the fight where Hussain was victorious not because he killed Yazid but because he sacrificed his family and his life for the sake of freedom, justice, and peace. Thereafter, the religion of Islam was preserved as a true example of freedom, honour, dignity, justice, and peace for his successors.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Cross.

STARS Air Ambulance

Miranda: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Last month I had the opportunity to visit the Shock Trauma Air Rescue Society for their 30th anniversary celebrations.

In 1985 a young mother died en route from her rural home to a faraway hospital. Dr. Gregory Powell became deeply moved and touched by what happened. He had a vision to change this reality for all Albertans, and he based his experience on having worked in a MASH hospital during the Vietnam War. He saw how helicopters could actually make an impact on reducing the time to get patients needing immediate care to the hospitals that could provide that care.

Madam Speaker, yesterday's vision is today's reality. STARS is an integral partner in Alberta's health care system. While most of us are aware of STARS' red helicopters, one of the other things that I learned in my visit was that they have 24 dedicated staff and actually cover workers working in Alberta's north in the oil industry, providing 24/7 care. As we all know here, we can all feel very safe about the fact that they are there to provide the service. I, of course, wish that none of us will ever have to rely on that service, but I think all of us can breathe a little easier knowing that they are there and provide that service for all of us and for all Albertans. So today I want them to know how much this Chamber, this government appreciates the work that they do.

Thank you very much.

1:50

Oral Question Period

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Job Creation and Protection

Mr. Jean: At job sites and offices across Alberta human resources staff are making the rounds, delivering the news: you don't have a job anymore. Families across Alberta wake up to the awful anxiety of not knowing if today is the day mom or dad loses their job. Yesterday Devon Energy had to cut 200 good-paying Alberta jobs. Gone. Vanished. This NDP budget does nothing to help them: higher taxes and more uncertainty. How will this Premier's budget do anything to stop the job losses in Alberta?

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, which is a lovely thing to say, by the way. Let me just say at the outset that our government is and has been, right from the very beginning, very concerned about the strain and the stress and the anxiety that job losses mean for families, for their neighbours, and for the communities in which those people live. That's, of course, why we put so much focus on that in our budget this time. But I wanted to say as well – the member opposite is talking about insecurity and instability – that, quite frankly, if we had moved forward on a fraction of the cuts that those folks over there had proposed in the last election, we would be blinded by the level of instability and insecurity faced by Albertans.

Mr. Jean: You're right. It is a fraction; 2 per cent of the total budget was our proposal in the last election.

This NDP government seems determined to make Alberta's industries less competitive. While businesses are being hammered, the NDP is plowing ahead with risky economic experiments, and their so-called \$5,000 jobs grant is a laughingstock among the business community in Alberta. No one believes it will create one single job. To the Premier: how will her \$5,000 jobs grant help any of the people who lost their jobs at Devon or elsewhere in Alberta or any other company that is laying off workers?

Ms Notley: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The idea with the jobs incentive program is that it will incent roughly 25,000 jobs in Alberta, some of whom may be the folks that the member opposite talks about. I find it very fascinating that this is his approach because this is actually a plan that was modelled on one that was adopted by the former Conservative government that this member was a part of, that he voted for.

Mr. Jean: Madam Speaker, the town of Peace River is reeling today after 1,400 jobs were lost with the cancellation of the Carmon Creek project. The Alberta branch of the Canadian manufacturers' association said today that this budget does little to, and I quote, improve industry's competitiveness and to help stem the loss of jobs in the manufacturing sector, end quote. How can the Premier be so oblivious to the impact her policies are having on jobs all across Alberta?

Ms Notley: Well, Madam Speaker, I would suggest that one thing that doesn't help the state of the economy in Alberta is groundless fearmongering. To suggest for one moment that the announcement of the Shell project cancellation had anything to do with our budget or our policies is ridiculous, and the member over there knows that. I have here a letter and a memo from Shell apologizing for the fact that it happened to happen on that day, because there was no connection.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition for your second question.

Legislative Procedures

Mr. Jean: Madam Speaker, when the Premier won the last election, I was very concerned for our economy, but there was one reason for me to be pleased. I took the Premier at her word that she would make positive changes to improve democracy in this Legislature. As a result, in May Wildrose sent the Premier 12 legitimate proposals to improve this Assembly. Six months later: zero progress. Why did the Premier change her mind on democratic reform once she got elected to the Premier's office?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. We've haven't changed our mind. We have a committee that is chaired by the very, very capable Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, and that committee is doing its work right now. There are a number of complicated issues that have to be addressed. It is an all-party committee that we created for the sole purpose of addressing the kinds of recommendations that that member opposite put forth, and we look forward to working together with you on them because I think we actually have a lot in common that we can work on to improve.

Mr. Jean: Madam Speaker, I was privileged to work under Stephen Harper in Ottawa. Now, left-wingers call him controlling and all sorts of names, but while he was Prime Minister, the opposition had powers and privileges that we could only dream of here in Alberta. In Ottawa committees do real, meaningful work. In Ottawa opposition parties have opposition days. Here we have none of that whatsoever. Is the Premier proud that democracy in this Assembly under her rule is a joke compared to what the NDP opposition has and had in Ottawa?

Mr. Mason: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Well, we know what the Official Opposition is interested in when they actually have a chance to debate changes. We want to have morning sittings of this Assembly so that we're family-friendly and people don't have to work late at night. But they don't want to work at 9 o'clock in the morning, so they're filibustering. Most Albertans go to work before 9 o'clock in the morning, but the Wildrose can't be bothered.

Mr. Jean: Madam Speaker, you may have noticed yesterday that the opposition was very deliberate in its actions. Under a majority government the opposition can be steamrolled by the government. The only tools we have available to us are parliamentary debate, parliamentary privileges, and, of course, the protection of the standing order that this government wants to change. We will use all of these tools for the benefit of Albertans. But the Premier could change her mind. She could allow democracy and keep her promise to do things differently. To the Premier: will she live up to her seven years of promises?

Ms Notley: Yes, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition. Third main set of questions.

Budget Debate Process

Mr. Jean: We have now learned that the government wants to push this budget through estimates in just seven days. The NDP's schedule will have as many as five different ministries having their detailed budget analysis done on the very same day. In opposition this Premier called over and over again for one ministry to be examined per day so that Albertans could follow what we did here, but now as Premier she gives us just parts of seven days to analyze

17 ministries and over \$50 billion of Albertans' money. Does the Premier think this is democratic or appropriate given her promises?

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much for the question, hon. member. The schedule for the estimates was negotiated with opposition House leaders, including the Opposition House Leader just sitting to your right, hon. member. We actually offered to the opposition additional time for selected ministries. This was a government suggestion, not an opposition suggestion. We actually suggested that you take more time on the larger ministries and the larger budgets, and that's been accepted. If we can pass the standing order today, we will put that into force, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Jean: Breaking promises to Albertans and to the opposition has consequences. Madam Speaker, I don't think it's appropriate, what they're doing, and I'm not the only one. Let me quote a former MLA from this place.

When you consider the vast operations of the Alberta government today, I frankly don't think that it is out of line at all for us to spend more time in legislative session rather than less, and I just don't follow the argument for the need to reduce the time [for estimates].

That was the former MLA from Fairview in this Assembly. To the Premier: why is she breaking her promise and pushing through over \$50 billion in Alberta taxpayer spending money . . .

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

2:00

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much for the question. Madam Speaker, you know, the member opposite is attempting to suggest that we actually restricted the amount of time. We actually suggested that it be expanded so that additional ministries and additional questions – so I don't know what the hon. leader is talking about. He's so vague about broken promises and so on, but his own record, I think, in the House of Commons is something that he is breaking.

Mr. Jean: Let me stick with the former member from Fairview.

We should take whatever time is required. If that means we have to sit an extra two or three weeks or a month . . . so be it. Let us do that rather than attempt to save time and in the process possibly limit debate, possibly limit the full discussion of the departmental estimates.

To the Premier: why are we going to do multiple estimates at once? Why are you being so undemocratic on this after so many years of promises to do things differently?

Mr. Mason: Madam Speaker, a question to the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition: why are you now saying that . . . [interjections] I'd like some silence so I can resume.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member has the floor, please.

Mr. Mason: Why is the Leader of the Official Opposition now attacking an agreement about the handling of estimates that his own House leader agreed to? Why?

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

Provincial Budget

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Speaker. This tax, spend, and borrow budget takes away the Alberta advantage with a massive increase on railroad diesel fuel, and it was done without the minister consulting the railways. Railways are the Alberta pathway to the ports of the world. It is now more expensive to send forestry, energy,

and agricultural products to world markets. Jobs will be lost, and consumer goods will cost more. To the Premier: after you're finished making almost every industry in Alberta less competitive and taking away even more jobs from hard-working families, who will be left to pay taxes for your unrestrained spending and out-of-control debt?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It is true that some taxes did go up in this budget – there's no question – but here's the thing. We continue to be the lowest taxed jurisdiction in the country. There's no question that every time you raise a tax on someone, they may well complain. It's lovely that those folks over there are going to raise that, but at the same time the fact of the matter is that we are dealing with the results of having an unnecessarily strong reliance on one particular price because one government in the past . . .

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. leader.

Mr. McIver: Well, it's good to hear the Premier backing the previous government again.

The NDP government has widely criticized almost everything previously done. They have promised full-scale change, and they were elected promising full-scale change. Since then the government has publicly promised to hang on to every public-sector job in place at the time of the election, which is in the neighbourhood of 215,000 publicly funded positions. That's a lot of nonchange, Madam Speaker. It can't be both; either the government wants change or they liked how it was. To the Premier: is this change of heart a result of the so-called budget consultations, and if so, why aren't the details on the website?

The Deputy Speaker: Madam Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you, Madam Speaker. What this government proposed to do, on the basis of the conversations that we had with Albertans during the election, both during the consultations on the previous government's budget as well as consultations on ours, was that we were not going to move ahead with the billions of dollars of unallocated, undefined cuts that the former government over there planned to impose on Albertans. That was not what we were going to do. We're going to take a measured approach to restraining spending. We're going to do it carefully so we understand the consequences of the changes that are made. That's what's laid out in our budget over the course of the next four years, and I know it's a change, but . . .

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. leader.

Mr. McIver: Thank you. They haven't restrained any spending. At \$5,000 per job in the new job creation program, this actually only supports 17,800 jobs and not the 27,000 advertised. At 27,000 jobs the annual grant available is only \$3,300 and not \$5,000. Madam Speaker, the government is only supporting these jobs, and at \$3,300 per grant at 10 per cent it supports jobs worth \$33,000, which according to Action To End Poverty in Alberta is below the poverty line for a family of four.

Ms Notley: Well, Madam Speaker, I do find it incredibly rich that this member over there thinks that a job that pays \$33,000 a year is not good enough when they insisted on having the lowest minimum wage in the country for year after year after year. It's outrageous. That being said, those estimates are based on a maximum of \$50,000.

Some salaries will be lower than that, and some salaries will be part-time. That's the way that number was reached.

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

Job Creation and Protection (continued)

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Well, at the risk of being redundant, Alberta has lost 35,000 to 40,000 jobs this year, with each loss affecting a family and sending shock waves throughout our economy. Albertans are looking for real leadership to create an environment of job creation rather than a convoluted tax scheme that Edmonton Economic Development and the Calgary Chamber of Commerce have said won't work. I'll table some documents today to that. My question to the Premier: why subsidize companies to create low-wage jobs when you can more effectively reduce or eliminate small-business tax and sustain the job incentive?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Well, as the member rightly points out, you know, we are concerned about the fact that people are losing their jobs in Alberta. That is absolutely a critical issue, and that is why we've appointed a minister in charge of economic development and job creation. That is why we introduced a multifaceted plan to attempt to incent job growth: capital spending, access to capital, and the job incentive program. It's a large package. The difficulty that we have right now is that what we need to do is diversify the economy away from a single price, and we haven't done that yet because . . .

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The government prides itself on its extensive consultations and deservedly so. Well, when you have Jack Mintz, David Dodge, Calgary Chamber of Commerce, Edmonton Economic Development, Canadian Federation of Independent Business all questioning the value of the tax credit scheme, the government would do well to listen. To the Premier: whose advice did you follow in adopting this scheme?

Ms Notley: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Well, you know, overall, I think we've gotten a fair amount of positive feedback. The president and CEO of the Alberta Chambers of Commerce says, and I quote: most importantly, this budget signals we have a government willing to listen and capable of taking a measured approach to managing the province's finances; this is what Albertans and businesses need right now.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Small-business confidence in Alberta is at its lowest level since the great recession of 2008. Surveys by CFIB indicate that as many as 1 in 5 small businesses are considering cutting staff. The report also noted that tax and regulatory costs are a major concern for small-business owners. Again to the Premier: rather than adopting a complicated tax credit scheme that will create more work for accountants, would you consider eliminating or at least reducing small-business tax and let small business do what it does best, create jobs and diversify the economy?

2:10

Ms Notley: You know, as I've said, one of the things we did hear from small and medium enterprises is that they were struggling to get access to capital in order to grow their businesses and to capitalize on the good ideas and the hard work that they want to contribute to our economy. That is why we worked with ATB and AIMCo and AEC to come up with a plan to allow for more access to capital for those good, hard-working small businesses. I've heard good, positive feedback from that, and we'll look to see how well that works, and if it doesn't, then we'll look at other strategies.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Cancer Services

Dr. Turner: Thank you, Madam Speaker. For more than 38 years I've been an oncologist in one of Canada's strongest provincial cancer programs. I can speak first-hand to the burdens that cancer places on Albertans. I can also relate to the pressures on treatment centres as well as their staff across this province. Albertans know just how important it is that we preserve and strengthen these vital cancer services. To the Health minister: what is your department doing to ensure that all Albertans have access to the best possible cancer care?

Ms Hoffman: I'd like to thank the hon. member for his question and for the fact that he and many others served both of my parents, actually, through treatments at the Cross Cancer Institute, so as a family member of someone who's gone through that and as an Edmontonian, I want to say thank you. As the Minister of Health I also want to say how proud I am that we're investing in the Calgary cancer centre. The Grande Prairie cancer centre, when it's complete, will complete the Alberta north-south radiation corridor. We're also investing in Lethbridge and Red Deer as well.

Thank you.

Dr. Turner: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Given that Calgarians were subjected to years of delay in the construction of a cancer centre at the Foothills medical centre by the previous government, to the same minister: what assurance can you give that this vital piece of infrastructure will be built as soon as possible?

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I hear some heckling from members of the third party, who announced many projects without budgets and timelines that were at all accurate or even cautioned in any way. I know that the people of Calgary deserve a cancer centre. It's been 12 years since they initially received the first announcement. We have a plan that's going to be building the cancer centre on the Foothills site, where Calgarians have said they need it. We also are going to be working towards that being open by 2024, and I'm really excited about . . .

An Hon. Member: Four years after we promised.

Ms Hoffman: Yeah, it is four years after the other party promised, which was not realistic at all.

Dr. Turner: Madam Speaker, given that Alberta is facing some very tough economic times, can the same minister assure Albertans that our public health care system, including critical projects like the Calgary cancer centre, won't be subject to the reckless cutbacks that we saw under the previous government?

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I want to assure the member and all Albertans that this government is committed to

providing stable health care funding and bending the cost curve. That's why we're doing our due diligence in building a comprehensive cancer centre on the Foothills campus but also why we're talking about, instead of what the previous government proposed around having a 6 per cent cut in the very first year, phasing the reduction in a very gradual way, making sure that we have 4 and a half per cent this year, 4 per cent the next year, 3 per cent the year after, and 2 in the out-years after that, as opposed to what the Official Opposition is proposing, which is cutting billions of dollars from essential front-line services.

Mr. Cooper: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: A point of order has been noted.
The hon. Member for Little Bow.

Capital Plan

Mr. Schneider: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Yesterday the Infrastructure minister assured me that the prioritized sunshine list he promised during the election is still coming, but he also released a budget with \$4.4 billion in new projects and program spending with no details. This money leaves the back door open to the same kinds of dirty, backroom politics we saw with the previous government. To the minister. You've committed to spend this money. When exactly will Albertans know what projects will benefit from this mystery spending and what projects won't?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. I take exception to the hon. member's assertion that we are willing to do dirty political spending like the previous government. It's our intention to look carefully at the projects that might be needed across the board, to make sure that we use due diligence to do business cases, to run economic models to make sure that all of the work is done before we announce the projects. We've seen the example of the schools, where political announcements were made before an election about a whole bunch of extra schools, and there wasn't the capacity . . .

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Schneider: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Someone somewhere must have the list of projects that was used in order to come up with the 4.4 billion dollar number for the new projects and programs line item. Minister, surely you're not committing to spending billions of dollars of taxpayer money with no real plan. Are you shooting in the dark, or will you commit to tabling the list you used to create the capital plan today?

Mr. Mason: Madam Speaker, if we had the list of projects, we would have included it in the capital budget. What I've told the member over and over again is that we want to do an appropriate assessment of what the needs are. We want to make sure that when we announce something, it's the right facility in the right place, that it's going to be on time and on budget. When we have those facts, we will share them with the Assembly and with Albertans.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Schneider: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I've relied on the website projects.alberta.ca, which is meant to help Albertans stay up to date on school projects. Unfortunately, in the last week this website was pulled and replaced with a link to a list of delayed schools. Again to the minister. This doesn't help anybody. If you're

not going to release a prioritized sunshine list for all to see and soon, why are you standing in the way of Albertans getting up-to-date information from your department?

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Our government is committed to an open and transparent approach with respect to all of the capital projects that we will consider, and when we have made decisions based on good evidence, we'll make that information available. It's unfortunate that the opposition won't support that approach. Their plan is to cut \$9.4 billion out of investments in schools and hospitals and roads in this province, and that's not something Albertans support.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

Environmental Protection

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Alberta has a rich history of developing its natural resources: Turner Valley, Leduc, and all the way to the oil sands in Fort McMurray. From day one Albertans have been leaders through innovation and technology. Our natural resource industry has been the leader in environmental stewardship, monitoring, and reporting. In addition, we're the only jurisdiction that produces heavy oil that voluntarily agreed to put a price on our carbon. To the environment minister: if we're already number one in industry-led environmental policies and initiatives, what announcements are you planning to make in Paris that would improve our status on the world stage, what's the cost, and what will be the impact on Albertans?

Ms Phillips: I'm pleased, Madam Speaker, to rise to update the House on these matters of climate change. I note that we're in the last day of session before Halloween, so we all wore our black and orange, I think, in homage to the fairly scary Wildrose policies on the environment. You know, the hon. member from the third party is quite right that Albertans want to get serious about climate change. So does industry. We know that it is a serious challenge. We need to work together to come up with a made-in-Alberta solution.

2:20

The Deputy Speaker: Your time ran out, hon. minister.
Point of order noted at 2:20.

Mr. Fraser: Well, that's interesting, Madam Speaker. Given that the minister is using all the Progressive Conservative environmental policies but simply elevating the timelines in those policies, that has put industry and investment at risk because you can't control your spending, Minister, do you have any environmental policies of your own, and can you admit right here, right now that hard-working Albertans in industry have been leading in environmental stewardship since day one?

Ms Phillips: Well, you know, one of the reasons why we've had to undertake this work is because the previous government failed so miserably, Madam Speaker, at ensuring that we could get our product to market, at ensuring that we could go with our heads held high to international conferences. That's why we have appointed this panel of experts to provide us with advice on transitioning to renewables, an appropriate way to price carbon, an appropriate efficiency strategy, and that investment in technology that he talks about so that we can take the previous government's approach, which was to tilt at windmills after a technology unicorn, and make it into real intellectual horsepower.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Premier recently said: I have to go to Paris in the fall, and it won't be any fun if no one's talking to me. Respectfully, Premier, I'm guessing that the thousands of Albertans that have lost their jobs are not worried about whether you'll have fun or not. But, Premier, instead of focusing on fun, shouldn't you be sharing with this House and all Albertans what your strategy and agenda will be for Paris, how it will protect our jobs, and how it will protect our economy?

Ms Phillips: Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to report that the panel is examining exactly these matters, how we can grow our economy on the backbone of the energy economy that we already have and build that economy for tomorrow, ensuring that our green economy, that we are building and diversifying on top of our energy resources now, includes everyone. That's why we've done so much work with indigenous communities and others to make sure that we are sharing the benefits of a new economy, that we'll build for all Albertans.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Long-term Care Facility Survey

Mr. Yao: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Health Quality Council of Alberta has released its annual report on long-term care facilities within our province. It's disappointing that little has improved in the province over the last five years, since the last study was conducted. We all know that seniors within our province deserve the utmost respect and the highest quality service in their later years. To the Minister of Seniors: what will this government do to immediately improve on the serious concerns raised by the Health Quality Council and families at our long-term care facilities?

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

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Of course, making sure that our seniors are well cared for is a priority for us. They helped build this province, and we need to make sure that we continue to help support them.

I'll tell you that one thing that's really important is making sure that we fulfill our campaign commitment of building 2,000 beds, long-term care beds, for this province. I know that not everybody thinks that keeping your promise is the best thing to do. Members of the Official Opposition have actually criticized us for doing that, but that's what we were voted in to do, and that's what we're going to do in this term. Also, I want to say that investing and making sure that we continue . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, your first supplemental.

Mr. Yao: Thank you, Madam Speaker. In the Health Quality Council survey the results show staffing levels as the most highly recommended area for improvement. The simple fact is that the bureaucratic ranks of AHS are swelling when front-line workers are clearly needed. Will the minister acknowledge that while the AHS bureaucracy is bloating to record levels, they continue to bungle providing basic care for our seniors?

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much for the question. What family members did say is that they really do value the care that is being provided by the workers in these facilities, and that's why they've elected a government that's going to continue to invest in those

front-line service providers. Members of the Official Opposition campaigned on cutting billions of dollars from operations, which would impact those front-line service workers, which would impact significantly the staffing ratios. We're going to make sure that we continue to move forward in fulfilling our campaign commitments and investing in long-term care.

The Deputy Speaker: Final supplemental.

Mr. Yao: Thank you, Madam Speaker. One instance of elder abuse at our long-term health care facilities is one too many. In the Health Quality Council survey Carewest Garrison Green scored last for Calgary's facilities. As the minister is aware, just last week three care workers from the facility were sentenced to jail after assaulting a 92-year-old patient. It is of the utmost importance that we learn from this terrible incident and make sure that it never happens again. What is the minister doing to ensure that our caregivers are trained properly to give our seniors the respect and protection that they deserve?

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. The facility that was lowest ranked in the survey: the department immediately was working in consultation with them, and we've made significant strides there.

In terms of the incident that the hon. member mentioned, absolutely, I couldn't agree with him more about how that was absolutely wrong. I'm glad that the officials have acted swiftly to make sure that the individuals are held to account, and we're going to make sure that through awareness campaigns, including elder abuse, which we've invested a million dollars in, there continues to be more awareness so that we can act to ensure that all of our seniors are safe.

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

Energy Industry

Mr. MacIntyre: Thank you, Madam Speaker. On page 18 of his budget speech the Minister of Finance suggested that we need to phase out coal, promote energy-efficient technology, and promote the use of renewables to cut down on carbon and that these are a "necessary prerequisite" for getting our energy products to market. Are we to understand from this statement that unless these three necessary prerequisites are met, this government will not push our energy products to market?

Mr. Ceci: Madam Speaker, oil and gas are going to be the keystone of our province for many decades to come. No, I'm not suggesting that if those things don't happen, we can't get energy to markets, but we need to be a better partner with the rest of the world. We need to cut our carbon. We need to ensure that we're a good neighbour to all of Canada so that we can get our pipelines across this country.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. MacIntyre: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Finance minister did use the word "prerequisite."

However, along with being embarrassed about Alberta, our Premier recently made comments giving another province a near veto over our energy industry's access to markets. Well, we over here are proud to be Albertans, and the Wildrose doesn't think Alberta needs to be taking environmental lessons from a province that right now is dumping 8 billion litres of raw sewage into major

waterways. So why does the NDP insist on giving this environmentally irresponsible province a veto over our most important job sector?

Ms Notley: Well, if the introduction was correct, I guess there would be a problem, but in fact I've never, ever suggested that we give a veto to any province with respect to our pipelines. I think there's a difference between – anyway, I think you can torque something beyond a point at which it is credible, and I think that may be what's going on over there. What I have said, though, is that along with another Premier, that I met with today, from New Brunswick, who also very much wants the Energy East pipeline. . .

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. MacIntyre: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Wildrose knows Albertans can work towards lowering emissions, but we don't need to give environmental vetoes to provinces that prefer raw sewage over pipelines. Let's be clear on that.

Given that we know that in the least populous state in the United States, Wyoming, electricity generation alone emits about as much CO₂ as our oil sands production, is this government planning to tell the Americans to clean up their environmental act before we import any of their energy products?

Ms Notley: You know, here's the actual record, Madam Speaker. Under this Official Opposition's federal cousins' approach to the environment not one single pipeline has been built, and it is because the rest of . . . [interjections]

2:30

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Premier has the floor. [interjections]
Hon. members, the hon. Premier has the floor.

Ms Notley: Not one single pipeline has been built while there have been people in charge who have taken the head-in-the-ground approach to whether or not markets internationally are concerned about greenhouse gas emissions, and we're going to change that.

The Deputy Speaker: I just wanted to acknowledge the point of order in the previous set of questions by the hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Moving on, the hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Madam Speaker. We can all see that the energy sector is struggling. However, with a budget that has increased spending to just about every other department of government, this ought to be good news: more money for resource development and management, more money for innovative projects that would make a real difference in the function of the industry. However, you thought wrong. To the minister of environment: why have you not increased funding above what was planned in March for resource development and management, and why are you reducing the funding for carbon capture and storage by \$24 million despite your promise in the summer to follow through on the carbon trunk line and the Quest project?

Ms Phillips: Well, Madam Speaker, Alberta has made its fair share of investments in CCS, and as those investments wind down, we'll see that reflected in the budget papers. The other piece of this is, of course, on the overall Environment budget, and the fact of the matter is that outside of the large departments most of us are taking zero or 2 per cent, and that's because we need to ensure that we are working within the existing budgets, that we have right now, in a fair way and a balanced way.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, your first supplemental.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Given that about 30,000 jobs and counting have been lost in the energy sector alone this year, which does not even begin to include contract workers, who do not show up on the job-loss radar, and given that Devon Canada just announced yesterday the layoff of another 200 staff, which represents about 15 per cent of their workforce, and Cenovus is cutting another 700 positions in the second half of this year, to the minister of economic development: what is being put forward in this budget that is going to boost jobs and investment in the energy industry, and if it's there, why is it hidden so deeply in the numbers?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I don't think it's hidden deeply in the budget. The Finance minister outlined the various initiatives that our government is taking on: first of all, the job creation grant that we're rolling out, and more details will be coming in the following days. As well, our government is working with ATB, with AIMCo, and with AEC in order to provide capital to small and medium-sized enterprises so that they can grow and expand their business, which will, in turn, create jobs. The key point is that we are working with the private sector, who are the job creators.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, your second supplemental.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Given that Royal Dutch Shell has just quit its Carmon Creek oil sands project, citing "the lack of infrastructure to move Canadian crude . . . to global commodity markets," and given that pipelines are statistically the safest method to transport raw crude, to the minister of environment: do you share the enthusiasm for immediate pipeline development, as stated by the Energy minister in Beijing, or would you prefer that these goods be shipped by rail, which has recently incurred a massive increase in fuel taxes?

Ms Phillips: Well, you know, Madam Speaker, a large part of this pipeline debate centres around us getting it right on climate change. The previous government's efforts in this regard were not satisfactory for our trading partners and, in fact, not satisfactory to the majority of Albertans and Canadians. That's why we've appointed the panel that we have, so that we can get it right on that conversation about pipelines, so we can be proud and hold our heads high and ensure that the energy development is proceeding in a way that is environmentally responsible, that involves indigenous peoples appropriately, and that all of the benefits are shared by all Albertans.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-South West.

School Infrastructure Funding

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Madam Speaker. We know that our existing schools were neglected by the previous government. We needed repairs, and we needed equipment upgrades. Unfortunately, those did not happen. We are experiencing phenomenal growth in this province. I see that every day in my riding of Edmonton-South West, and our riding continues to grow every day. We hear about crises arising every day due to the absence of adequate school infrastructure. Now, in hopes of not repeating the mistakes of the past, to the Minister of Education: what is the government doing to

ensure that important public services are preserved by providing the best for our schools?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you for the question. Certainly, it's important that all Alberta students have a place where they can learn and that we're building the schools to meet the increased enrolment across this province. We see rapid growth in all areas of the province, and we intend to build the schools that we need. To that end, we moved \$350 million forward to ensure that we start the infrastructure projects that we need, and we also brought in the Auditor General to look for a way to increase efficiencies in the systems so that we'd get the schools built where we need them.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Again to the Minister of Education: given that the ministry is planning this significant infrastructure revamp, what additional funding is being provided for infrastructure maintenance in Budget 2015?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Certainly, this is an important addition to the budget for Education this year, an increase to the infrastructure maintenance and renewal program. I met with all 61 school boards over the last few weeks, and I heard it time and time again, that we not just build the schools but that we make sure that we invest in the maintenance so that the schools last the full length that they should. To that end, we have put \$180 million into this program, an increase of 50 per cent over last year. Of course, we're also providing \$483 million through plant operations and maintenance to ensure that we not just build the schools we need but that we actually look after our investments.

Mr. Dang: Madam Speaker, to the same minister: just how many modernization projects are in progress in this province, and can you provide some details on this important work?

Mr. Eggen: Thank you. It's very important to know that we're not just building new schools, but we have 93 modernization and replacement projects across the province. A couple of examples: in High Level we're building the existing space for career and technology studies; an example in Calgary is a replacement facility for special-needs students at Christine Meikle school as well. It's important that these sorts of projects are done as well. Just as a little help to the Member for Little Bow, check infrastructure.alberta.ca and click on the PDF, and there are those schools and when they're going to be built.

Thank you.

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

Affordable Supportive Living Project Approval

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. In our June session I asked the Minister of Health about the status of the ASLI grant for the Bassano project in my constituency. I'm pleased to hear that this project was approved just a few hours ago. However, there are dozens of other communities that are still waiting for word of their projects. Will the minister help Albertans who are waiting for answers understand which have been approved and which have not?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to address this question. I really enjoy having an opportunity to talk about the great news of what this government is doing. Of course, if we had elected a different government, one that was campaigning on significant cuts, that would have been very difficult.

In terms of the projects that aren't going forward, there are only six projects that we've decided don't meet the criteria. I've reached out to each of the individual MLAs who are impacted and the ridings that are impacted, and the proponents have been contacted directly. The other 25: good news. So if you didn't hear from me, the project met the criteria. We're confident that it's going to be financially viable and that it's going to meet the needs of the community.

2:40

Mr. Fildebrandt: The secrecy behind this announcement is concerning. The minister announced that of the 31 projects on the list, 25 were approved, meaning that six were not. If they're following the Fildemath, maybe they can know what's going on. The minister seems unwilling to tell us what the criteria were. Maybe she has good reason for cutting these projects; maybe she doesn't. Would she tell us why these projects were not approved?

Ms Hoffman: Absolutely, Madam Speaker. Thank you for the question. You might notice that a lot of us are wearing orange today. It's because it's our last sitting day before Halloween, and Halloween can be a scary time of year. There are some scary things, and one of them is the proposal for significant cuts from the members opposite.

In terms of the criteria that were used, we wanted to make sure that there were evidence-based decisions, that they were actually going to meet the needs of the community, that there were actually citizens who needed to be in long-term care that were either in hospital or at home. We want to make sure that we're investing capital dollars and fulfilling those highest level needs first.

Mr. Fildebrandt: We've seen no evidence given today, Madam Speaker.

The Newell Foundation has told me just this morning that even with the ASLI grant the Bassano project cannot go forward until they have confirmation from the minister that it will be integrated with the local hospital. Will the minister commit to my constituents to integrate that Bassano project with the hospital so that we can get this critical project started now?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Madam Speaker. We did actually call each of the individual proponents. The ministry staff called yesterday the ones that weren't moving forward and today the ones that were moving forward, and they're going to be having follow-up conversations. We want to invest that capital money in the highest levels of care, so long-term care and dementia beds. They're absolutely having follow-up meetings with each of those proponents. Individual questions asked about individual sites can be raised at that time. Within the next couple of weeks I'd be happy to table the numbers of each of the individual sites if you'd like that.

Members' Statements

(continued)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Health Link 811 Phone Line Dementia Support

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise and speak today regarding this government's commitment to supporting the health of all Albertans, including rural Albertans. This summer our Health minister implemented the new Health Link 811 phone number, that gives every Albertan easy access to the advice of a registered nurse. This service was made even more valuable as of October, when specialized dementia support services were added. Now Albertans living with dementia and their caregivers have 24/7 access to a specialized dementia nurse with extensive training and experience in seniors' health. This specialized dementia nurse can perform an in-depth assessment to gain an understanding of each individual's situation. This project was started in rural Alberta, with expansion to Edmonton and Calgary coming later in the spring, because rural Alberta is where the greatest need for these supports is.

I have seen how rural and remote areas do not always have access to the same level of services as urban centres. Alberta Health Services identified a gap, and our government has invested \$1.1 million to help 40,000 Albertans living with dementia. These numbers are expected to double. By 2038 it is estimated that about 1 out of every 10 Albertans over the age of 65 and nearly half of those over 90 will be living with dementia.

My family has been touched by dementia, and I know that many if not all families here have been affected as well. I know how overwhelming it can be when you start asking yourself: "Is this happening to my family? Worse, is this happening to me?" This gives Albertans the ability to privately take that next step and make a simple phone call.

I applaud this government's continued commitment to the mental health of all Albertans and look forward along with the rest of the House to the steps we will take as we move forward with the mental health review.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow.

Pathways Community Services Association

Ms Drever: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I would like to start off by recognizing that we are currently on Treaty 6 territory and that my riding falls on Treaty 7 territory. I'm honoured today to rise and speak to an invaluable organization that operates in my riding and works with families in need from all over Alberta. Pathways Community Services Association works on the pillars of community dignity, unity, and wellness, drawing on the intersections of traditional aboriginal culture and Western evidence-based practices. Tapisahotiwin is the act of connecting, which lies at the heart of Pathways as it engages with communities.

With the focus on meeting the needs of aboriginal children, youth, and families through a continuum of resources and support services, one of the programs they are proud to offer is their mentor homes program, where they work with aboriginal youth in care and match them with a sensitive and culturally aware family as an alternative to group care. In this program the focus is put on family building and cultural supports and cultivating a respect for oneself and one's community.

Pathways also offers nehiyaw kihokewin, aboriginal families visiting with the spirit of the grandmothers, a healthy families program for aboriginal families with newborns up to the age of three that builds off family strengths and fosters parenting skills.

Pathways builds stronger communities both inside and outside my constituency, and to them I say hai hai, thank you, for all the hard work that you do to strengthen families and communities.

Thank you.

Introduction of Bills

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Bill Pr. 1

The King's University College Amendment Act, 2015

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I request leave to introduce a bill being Bill Pr. 1, the King's University College Amendment Act, 2015.

[Motion carried; Bill Pr. 1 read a first time]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Bill Pr. 2

Bethesda Bible College Amendment Act, 2015

Mr. Nielsen: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I request leave to introduce a bill being Bill Pr. 2, Bethesda College Amendment Act, 2015.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill Pr. 2 read a first time]

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

Bill Pr. 3

Rosary Hall, Edmonton Repeal Act

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I request leave to introduce a bill being Bill Pr. 3, Rosary Hall, Edmonton Repeal Act.

[Motion carried; Bill Pr. 3 read a first time]

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

Bill Pr. 4

Canadian University College Amendment Act, 2015

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I request leave to introduce a bill being Bill Pr. 4, Canadian University College Amendment Act, 2015.

[Motion carried; Bill Pr. 4 read a first time]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

2:50

Bill Pr. 5

Concordia University College of Alberta Amendment Act, 2015

Ms McLean: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I request leave to introduce a bill being Bill Pr. 5, Concordia University College of Alberta Amendment Act, 2015.

[Motion carried; Bill Pr. 5 read a first time]

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

Bill Pr. 6

Covenant Bible College Amendment Act, 2015

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I request leave to introduce a bill being Bill Pr. 6, Covenant Bible College Amendment Act, 2015.

[Motion carried; Bill Pr. 6 read a first time]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Bill Pr. 7

Living Faith Bible College Amendment Act, 2015

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I request leave to introduce a bill being Bill Pr. 7, Living Faith Bible College Amendment Act, 2015.

[Motion carried; Bill Pr. 7 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation and Minister of Infrastructure.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm rising to table an alternative budget estimates schedule to take effect if the standing orders have not been approved by the end of today.

The Deputy Speaker: Sorry. Hon. member, did you have a tabling?

Mr. McIver: Two, Madam Speaker, with your permission. The first one is the correct number of copies of a printout from the Action to End Poverty in Alberta website, showing that the government's job plan is, actually, to support jobs below the poverty line.

The second one is the Alberta short-term employment forecast 2014-2016. I hope it is a gentle reminder to the labour minister that this year's report is about three months late in being released to this House.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any other tablings? The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Madam Speaker, I just rise to table the appropriate number of copies of a document I referred to at length yesterday in the House, Restoring Trust: Wildrose Proposals to Strengthen Alberta's Legislature and Democracy.

I have an additional one as well, a document that I referenced at length yesterday during a point of privilege. It's an Alberta government press release that clearly states that the budget says, when speaking about reducing costs, that this includes "a salary freeze for Cabinet ministers, MLAs and political staff for the entire term of this Legislature," as we talked about yesterday, presupposing a decision of Members' Services Committee.

The Deputy Speaker: Any further tablings?

Hon. members, that brings us to the points of order. We had three today. The first point of order, I believe, was from the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Mason: Madam Speaker, if I may. At least two of those points of order are very similar, and they're also similar to the ones that the Speaker has ruled upon in the last couple of days. I wonder if we could take them together instead of dealing with them separately.

Mr. Hanson: That's acceptable.

The Deputy Speaker: That's acceptable?

Mr. Hanson: Yes.

The Deputy Speaker: All right. Go ahead, hon. member.

Point of Order

Allegations against a Member

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I called a point of order today under section 23(h) and (i), actually two of them, and if it pleases the House, I will deal with both of them at the same time. I realize that this point of order has been raised and defeated a couple of times this week already; however, I take personal offence to the suggestions made by the hon. Health minister at approximately 2:10 and 2:25 this afternoon.

I personally campaigned very strongly in defence and protection of front-line health workers and the promise to take care of their jobs. I realize that the general stabs have been made directly to this side of the House as a whole. I sat quietly listening to these misrepresentations in the past but will no longer do so. I have a daughter working as a permanent RN, and my son will be graduating from med school in the spring of 2016. The accusation that I would be anti front-line health care workers is absurd, and I do take it personally.

I would appreciate that these comments be retracted, and in the interests of keeping the flow of business going in the future in the House, I would ask that members cease and desist from this particular line of derogatory comment.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Well, this is now the fourth and fifth times that we are dealing with exactly the same point of order, which has been dealt with by the chair on three previous occasions. In each case the chair ruled that there was no point of order, yet the Wildrose opposition persists in making these points of order and pretends to be personally offended by the arguments that are being made on this side of the House that the program of the Wildrose of cutting substantially into the budget \$2 billion a year is in fact going to produce a loss of front-line jobs. Whether the hon. member is personally offended by that or not, the fact is that it will impact front-line services in this province, and it will result in the layoff of front-line workers. There's not enough bureaucracy in the entire province to pay for the depth of cuts that this opposition party wants.

Madam Speaker, I would ask that we rule again in the same manner with respect to this question. These are legitimate comments from government members in response to questions. It is, at best, a difference of opinion between members over the facts and not a point of order. Quite frankly, I think this is part of the ongoing campaign of the Wildrose opposition during this session to waste the Assembly's time.

The Deputy Speaker: Go ahead, hon. member.

Dr. Starke: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Hesitant though I am to wade into the debate, as the hon. Government House Leader said, I have to say that based on some of the exchanges we had earlier this afternoon, the Official Opposition rather reminds me of the chippy hockey player that hacks and slashes in the corner and then, as soon

as something similar happens back to them, goes running to the referee.

Earlier this afternoon we heard the Member for Little Bow talk about past practices within the government that I was part of as being dirty. Now, I didn't raise a point of order at the time, but as the hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills has appealed for a greater degree of respect for all members of the House, that has to flow both ways, sir. I would strongly suggest – and I think that we've reached Thursday of this first week, and there's always a little bit of a rising of the temperature – that it'll be good for us to go home and just relax a little bit and, you know, maybe put our feet up and enjoy a cool beverage, beer, that is now cheaper thanks to the Minister of Finance.

3:00

Madam Speaker, Mr. Speaker has ruled on this before. The argument really is no different. These are questions of fact. They are disagreements. I know that they are strongly held, but they are not points of order, and I would ask that you rule accordingly.

The Deputy Speaker: Does any other hon. member wish to speak on this point of order?

Seeing none, I would like to acknowledge that, as the Government House Leader has pointed out, this has been raised a number of times now, and a previous ruling was that it's kind of part of that essential disagreement that has been going on. However, I would like to remind the members that in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, page 634, it says:

A Member may not direct remarks to the House or engage in debate by raising a matter under the guise of a point of order.

It's just something to be aware of as we go forward here, to perhaps be a little more cautious of the type of language that we are using and to not use points of order as a way to continually disrupt the business of this House.

So I will rule that this was not a point of order.

Let's move on, then, to the next one, which was raised by the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Madam Speaker, in light of your gentle reminder, I'll withdraw the point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: That concludes the Routine.

Orders of the Day

Government Motions

Committee Membership Changes

20. Mr. Mason moved:

Be it resolved that the membership for the following committees of the Assembly be replaced as follows:

- (1) Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund: Ms Miller, chair; Mr. Nielsen, deputy chair; Mr. Cyr; Mr. Ellis; Ms McKittrick; Ms Renaud; Mr. Sucha; Mr. Taylor; and Dr. Turner.
- (2) Standing Committee on Legislative Offices: Cortes-Vargas, chair; Ms Sweet, deputy chair; Mr. Bhullar; Mr. Connolly; Mr. Cooper; Mr. Horne; Mr. Kleinsteuber; Mr. Nixon; Mr. Shepherd; Mr. van Dijken; and Ms Woollard.
- (3) Standing Committee on Private Bills: Ms McPherson, chair; Mr. Connolly, deputy chair; Mr. S. Anderson; Mr. W. Anderson; Ms Babcock; Ms Drever; Mr. Drysdale; Mr. Fraser; Mr. Hinkley; Mr. Kleinsteuber; Mrs. Littlewood;

Ms McKittrick; Mr. Rosendahl; Mr. Stier; and Mr. Strankman.

- (4) Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing: Mrs. Littlewood, chair; Ms Fitzpatrick, deputy chair; Mr. Carson; Mr. Coolahan; Mr. Cooper; Mr. Ellis; Mr. Hanson; Ms Kazim; Mr. Loyola; Ms McPherson; Mr. Nielsen; Mr. Schneider; Dr. Starke; Mr. van Dijken; and Ms Woollard.
- (5) Special Standing Committee on Members' Services: Mr. Wanner, chair; Mr. Schmidt, deputy chair; Mr. Cooper; Mr. Fildebrandt; Ms Luff; Mr. McIver; Ms McLean; Mr. Nielsen; Mr. Nixon; Mr. Piquette; and Mrs. Schreiner.
- (6) Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future: Miranda, chair; Mr. Schneider, deputy chair; Mr. S. Anderson; Mr. Carson; Mr. Connolly; Mr. Coolahan; Mr. Dach; Ms Fitzpatrick; Mr. Gotfried; Mr. Hanson; Mr. Hunter; Ms Jansen; Mr. Piquette; Mrs. Schreiner; and Mr. Taylor.
- (7) Standing Committee on Families and Communities: Ms Sweet, chair; Mr. Smith, deputy chair; Mr. Hinkley; Ms Jansen; Mrs. Littlewood; Ms Luff; Ms McPherson; Mr. Orr; Ms Payne; Mrs. Pitt; Mr. Rodney; Mr. Shepherd; Dr. Swann; Mr. Westhead; and Mr. Yao.
- (8) Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship: Ms Goehring, chair; Mr. Loewen, deputy chair; Mrs. Aheer; Ms Babcock; Mr. Clark; Mr. Dang; Mr. Drysdale; Mr. Horne; Ms Kazim; Mr. Kleinsteuber; Mr. MacIntyre; Mr. Rosendahl; Mr. Stier; Mr. Sucha; and Ms Woollard.

The Deputy Speaker: Does any hon. member wish to speak to this motion?

Seeing none, the hon. Government House Leader to close debate.

Mr. Mason: I don't need to do that, Madam Speaker.

[Government Motion 20 carried]

Alberta Property Rights Advocate

21. Mr. Mason moved:
Be it resolved that:

1. The 2014 annual report of the Alberta Property Rights Advocate office be referred to the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship for the purpose of conducting a review of the recommendations outlined in the report;
2. The committee may, without leave of the Assembly, sit during a period when the Assembly is adjourned or prorogued;
3. In accordance with section 5(5) of the Property Rights Advocate Act the committee shall report back to the Assembly within 60 days of the report being referred to it if the Assembly is then sitting or, if it is not then sitting, within 15 days after the commencement of the next sitting.

The Deputy Speaker: Does any hon. member wish to speak to this motion?

I see none.

[Government Motion 21 carried]

Government Bills and Orders

Second Reading

Bill 4

An Act to Implement Various Tax Measures and to Enact the Fiscal Planning and Transparency Act

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

Mr. Ceci: Thank you, Madam Speaker. To all members of the House: I'm pleased to present Bill 4 to you today, An Act to Implement Various Tax Measures and to Enact the Fiscal Planning and Transparency Act.

Bill 4 proposes two important streams of legislation changes. The first relates to fiscal rules and budget format. The second relates to tax changes. I'll focus my comments first on the new fiscal planning and transparency act. This act is the foundation of our responsible fiscal planning. It formalizes a commitment to transparent reporting using nationally accepted public accounting standards. Finally, it sets firm limits on borrowing and spending growth. This is a key part of our overall fiscal plan and, coupled with the budget and strategic plan presented earlier this week, represents the principles upon which our government will operate.

The Fiscal Planning and Transparency Act. The changes in the proposed bill that relate to the fiscal rules and budget format reflect our government's desire to present Alberta's finances in a clear format that follows generally accepted public-sector accounting standards. The changes also reflect our government's commitment to ensure that Alberta remains in a strong financial position as we work to implement our platform. Bill 4 will repeal and replace the Fiscal Management Act of former Finance Minister Horner.

While this act will reflect many changes, some parts are already familiar to you. Alberta's finances will be presented in a three-year fiscal plan. The budget will be presented on the same scope and basis as the consolidated financial statements in the annual report. This means that the financial impact of the SUCH sector, which includes school boards, universities, colleges, and health entities, will be reflected in the budget on a line-by-line basis. Other entities included fully are the Alberta Innovates corporations and the Alberta Environmental Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting Agency. The fiscal plan will also include annual noncash changes in pension liabilities.

Moving on to the next item. Bill 4 requires the government to introduce a strategic plan and ministry business plans as well as the requirement for government ministry annual reports to be released by June 30. Quarterly fiscal updates will provide Albertans with regular updates on the state of the province's finances. Unlike the previous government, that introduced amendments to move to semiannual reporting, our government will provide open and transparent reports four times each year. The contingency account will also remain open, with its defined purpose to provide funding for those years in which actual expenses of the government exceed actual revenue.

So what's new in this? Madam Speaker, our government takes seriously our role as stewards of Alberta's treasury. That means managing debt in a prudent manner. To that end, Bill 4 proposes a legislative debt cap based on a nominal debt-to-GDP ratio of 15 per cent. For the purposes of this bill debt means borrowing for the capital plan, P3s, the pre-1992 teachers' pension plan, and operating deficits when required. It does not include borrowing for the purpose of on-lending to provincial corporations and agencies where we have offsetting financial assets.

3:10

The debt cap provides sufficient flexibility to the government as it implements its financial plan while maintaining a manageable limit on the amount of debt government can take on. Comparatively speaking, the proposed limit of 15 per cent is one-half of the average debt-to-GDP levels weighted by each province's nominal GDP. For your information, Madam Speaker, two out of three credit-rating agencies that rate the province report net debt to GDP as a measure of their credit reports. Dominion Bond Rating Service states that a triple-A rated province should have debt-to-GDP ratio of less than 15 per cent.

I should point out that each credit-rating agency includes different items when calculating a province's net debt. Although agencies use debt to GDP as a measure of credit worthiness, they have other criteria as well such as debt to revenue. The bottom line, Madam Speaker, is that a 15 per cent debt to GDP is a prudent benchmark for limiting government debt. With this cap in place, Albertans can be assured that the government's borrowing will not get out of hand.

The next item I wish to draw your attention to is related to savings. Under the proposed act we will continue to inflation-proof the heritage fund through the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund Act. We still think that it's important to set aside a larger portion of Alberta's resource revenue for future generations. Right now, however, our focus is on the extraordinary economic and fiscal challenges we face as a result of oil prices. Our government will take another look at growing our savings once we are back in balance. In the meantime we will protect the value of the heritage fund against inflation so that it can continue supporting the priorities of Albertans now and in the future.

Moving on to the next item. There are times, Madam Speaker, when government might have to adjust its spending plan partway through the fiscal year due to emerging cost pressures that cannot be ignored. At the same time Albertans expect the government to stick to their budget as close as it can. The proposed legislation will retain what is known as the 1 per cent rule. The rule limits in-year increases in operating expenses to no more than 1 per cent of the budgeted total. The 1 per cent rule balances the need to control spending with the need to maintain some built-in flexibility to address emerging issues.

For your information the 1 per cent rule will not apply to an increase in spending to respond to disasters, an increase in the amount authorized under a supply vote or an increase in any other expense offset by additional revenue received for a specific purpose of that expense, commitments made in collective bargaining or other negotiated settlements or remuneration, commitments made in the fiscal year for the cost of settlement with a First Nation, and in the case of a SUCH sector entity an increase in operating expense from an unbudgeted drawdown of reserves or accumulated surpluses from unbudgeted revenue. In that last scenario I mentioned, the SUCH sector would need to obtain the approval of the Treasury Board before any spending happens beyond the current exemptions. Future budgets will include the use of reserves within a total approved budget for the SUCH sector.

There are some tax changes in Bill 4. With respect to tax changes Bill 4 does three things: it implements Budget 2015 initiatives, it gives legislative authority to the fuel and tobacco tax changes made on March 27, 2015, and it proposes a number of other technical and administrative changes to the provincial tax statutes. To do so, the proposed legislation will amend our personal and corporate income tax acts as well as the Fuel Tax Act, the Tobacco Tax Act, and the Tourism Levy Act. These changes are separate from those that were made to the personal and corporate income tax acts in June 2015

with Bill 2. I'll briefly provide some details now on the most significant proposed changes, starting with the personal and corporate income tax acts.

Alberta Corporate Tax Act. This legislation will implement the Budget 2015 decision to increase the current insurance premium tax rates by 1 percentage point. It will also move Alberta's tax on qualifying environmental trusts, or QETs, from the Alberta Corporate Tax Act to the Alberta Personal Income Tax Act. This change is required so that the Canada Revenue Agency can administer our QET tax under the Alberta federal tax collection agreement.

This bill also proposes a monetary penalty for taxpayers who manufacture, distribute, possess, or use software devices to suppress sales data to avoid paying taxes, often called zappers. This change parallels federal legislation and is another measure to help combat tax avoidance.

With respect to Alberta's Personal Income Tax Act, Bill 4 will implement Budget 2015's plan to introduce a new Alberta child benefit program and increase the benefit under the Alberta family employment tax credit program.

The proposed bill will also update the dividend tax credit rates for dividends paid by small businesses to individual shareholders. This amendment is necessary to ensure Alberta's current policy is maintained and to avoid an inadvertent tax increase on these shareholders.

With regard to the Fuel Tax Act, moving on to that, the legislation will implement the Budget 2015 decision to increase the tax rate for locomotive fuel by 4 cents. This is effective November 1, 2015. In addition, the act will give legislative authority to the fuel tax increase that took effect on March 27, 2015. It will also cap the benefits under the tax-exempt fuel user and the Alberta farm fuel benefit programs to 9 cents per litre, another change that took effect on March 27, 2015.

Bill 4 also proposes to protect officers from prosecution when they contravene the Fuel Tax Act as part of their duty; for example, during undercover operations or investigations to sting people breaking the law. This amendment parallels protection provisions under the Tobacco Tax Act.

Further, the bill proposes to give the minister authority to garnishee tax debtors' portion of a joint payment between a debtor and another person by a third party. This is consistent with other Alberta tax acts.

With regard to the Tobacco Tax Act this act will give legislative authority to the tobacco tax rate increase that took effect March 27, 2015. It will also implement the Budget 2015 decision to further increase the tobacco tax rate by \$5 per carton of cigarettes. Comparable changes will also be made to the tax rates applicable to other tobacco products to maintain parity. This tobacco tax increase came into effect on October 28, 2015.

Technical and administrative changes. Lastly, the act proposes technical and administrative changes to a number of Alberta's tax statutes. These are changes that ensure continued consistency between Alberta and the federal tax regimes, clarify or correct technical deficiencies in the legislation, repeal expired provisions, and standardize administrative policies across Alberta's tax statutes.

In conclusion, to summarize, Bill 4 will allow government to produce a fiscal plan that aligns with the audited year-end consolidated financial statements and the annual report on a line-by-line basis. The Fiscal Planning and Transparency Act, which Bill 4 will enact, strikes a balance between maintaining legislative fiscal controls while providing the necessary flexibility to respond to the current fiscal and economic challenges we are facing. Further, Bill 4 proposes important legislative changes required to implement or give authority to several tax changes that have already been made and are proposed in Budget 2015.

Bill 4 will implement the Budget 2015 decisions to introduce a new Alberta child benefit program, enhance the Alberta family employment tax credit program, and raise taxes on tobacco, locomotive fuel, and insurance premiums. Bill 4 will also give legislative authority to the tobacco and fuel tax rates, changes that came into effect on March 27, 2015; enable the Canada Revenue Agency to administer Alberta's QET tax under the Alberta federal tax collection agreement; implement the technical and administrative changes that clarify our tax statutes; correct technical errors in the legislation; repeal expired provisions; and standardize administrative policies across Alberta's tax statutes.

Together these changes will help enable government to manage current economic challenges and provide a path to balance as we work to create jobs, diversify our economy, and support programs that are important to Albertans and their families. I ask that all members of the Assembly support this bill.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. I now move to adjourn debate on Bill 4.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Government Motions

(continued)

Provincial Fiscal Policies

13. Mr. Ceci moved:

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

[Adjourned debate October 28: Mr. Schmidt]

Mr. Schmidt: I yield my time, Madam Speaker.

3:20

The Deputy Speaker: Does any other hon. member wish to speak? We are on Government Motions, Motion 13. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Mr. Jean: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to speak to the first budget of our first new government in 44 years. Congratulations. I would like to say that it's a pleasure to be here and to speak to this, but in many ways it's not a pleasure to rise to speak to this budget.

Alberta is in economic crisis. Albertans are looking for leadership, but they are not finding it in either the previous government or in this one. Albertans voted for change in the last election, and in many ways they voted for hope. Albertans remain hopeful, and I would suggest, after six months of travelling this great province, that everywhere they remain hopeful, but they are getting concerned. I truly believe they were hopeful with this government, as I was hopeful for this government. As I mentioned in question period, I was hopeful especially for the ability for democracy and accountability and transparency to return or to come for the first time ever to this place in real, meaningful ways. I saw it in Ottawa, where there was democracy. There was good debate. There were opposition parties that had the opportunity to keep me in my seat for a full 24 hours to vote.

There were opportunities for committees to study bills, for you all in this place, Madam Speaker, to have an opportunity to speak about particular bills that may interest their constituents. I truly believe that that opportunity remains with us, that we, each and every one of us, can have the ability to represent the constituents who put us here. We are not here for ourselves; we are here for the people of Alberta. That means Albertans, whether they come from Fort McMurray or Medicine Hat or Calgary or Edmonton, should have the opportunity to speak through their elected officials. Their

elected officials should have the opportunity to debate motions and to examine budgets, \$50 billion in budgets, the most ever spent by the government of Alberta, and we are going to have the least amount of time ever given to an opposition party to study it.

This NDP government claims, Madam Speaker, to represent democracy and that it's the same as it's always been. Well, I myself would not ever lay claim to fame to be like the previous government, especially not when it comes to democracy and the ability for opposition parties to have their say.

I think Albertans wanted a balanced and measured budget. Certainly, I have said openly outside of this House that I respect and approve of some of this budget, especially in the realm of mental health and in the elimination of mandatory school fees. Of course, the elimination of mandatory school fees: during the campaign the Wildrose actually asked for a complete elimination, and this government has only come forward with 50 per cent of that elimination. But I know Albertans want a balanced and measured budget. I know that Albertans wanted a budget that would reassure the job creators. We heard it from the minister of economic development that the private sector are the job creators, yet the only jobs this government is intending to create with this budget are jobs for the public service. I'll get into that later in my speech.

I was hoping to reassure the private sector with my communications. In particular, I was hopeful that I would be able to say: business community, this budget will bring economic confidence. We spoke about confidence. We spoke about how important confidence was during the campaign and later on, yet we saw three particular announcements that brought a tremendous amount of uncertainty into our economy. I truly believe that the NDP, the government, the 13 people that control \$50 billion of taxpayers' money, don't get it. They certainly don't get it because they haven't changed anything. They continue with business as usual. Business as usual: sending shock tremors through our economy to the private sector, to the oil and gas industry, that employs hundreds of thousands of Albertans directly or indirectly. What do we see? Almost daily announcements of layoffs.

What Albertans received is what they did not expect, what I did not expect given some past governments across this country. We've seen other examples of NDP governments that were not ideological in every single thing they did, but here we have an ideological budget, a budget that is not based on common sense or what the business community is saying, a budget based on NDP ideology that has failed and consistently failed right across the country. This is a budget without any focused efficiencies whatsoever, a budget completely out of step with what Albertans expect. It's completely out of step with Alberta's values.

This budget has record spending and a plan for even more record spending than ever before in our province's history. This is, right here in Alberta, the most expensive government in Canada by far. Before the NDP took power just six months ago, it was already the most expensive government in Canada by far. Yet what do we have in this budget? Seven hundred more spaces, more employees, at Alberta Health Services, the fourth-largest employer in the country, and the government is adding more employees.

This budget has record borrowing, and for the first time in a generation we are borrowing for government operations. We're borrowing money to keep the lights on. We're borrowing monies to employ Albertans, to give services to Albertans. This is not acceptable. This is not what a good government does, what a government does when it is accountable to the people. We are borrowing money for employees' salaries, and we are borrowing money for programs. Borrowing is not an answer. In fact, if you look at the status currently of borrowing in North America, it is at record highs.

I saw this before. Many of you in this place are much younger than me, but I was in Fort McMurray during the '80s, and I saw what bad policy can do to a town, where I saw every single business go bankrupt except for two. One was a government lottery, an outlet to sell tickets. The other was my parents' business, which had no debt, and they barely survived the national energy program of the Liberals. It was a terrible policy, and there were tens of thousands of Albertans out of work. It is troubling, but be clear: your policies will have a tremendous effect on Albertans' lives, not just on the social sphere but on the economic one, which will affect everything.

If the NDP were to cancel every single dollar of infrastructure spending – and I'm a big fan of infrastructure spending, I can promise you, being in Fort McMurray. We have the best infrastructure in Fort McMurray for 5,000 people. Unfortunately, we have about 85,000 to 90,000 people living there. It's been atrocious. So I like infrastructure. But let's say, for example here, that if the NDP government were to cancel every single dollar of infrastructure spending – every hospital cancelled, every school, every road cancelled, every building cancelled, every single infrastructure project – if this government were to cancel it and not spend that money, we would still need to borrow to pay for it, to pay for the operations.

This budget also has wildly out of whack revenue projections, and that's what troubles me the most. How do you increase revenues by that much with what we've had in the past few years with record oil prices? We know for sure, based upon expert evidence, including CAPP and other industry organizations, that we are not going to see those types of prices. If it all, we will probably see them in five or six years, but we are not going to see those prices at all during this term. In fact, they suggest that these prices will remain where they are or slightly above where they are for the next three years. Even industry organizations, even Moody's has said that your price projections on revenue of oil is \$20 off per barrel. Twenty dollars off per barrel.

3:30

How do you get revenue projections at \$20 off a barrel when you're only at \$40 a barrel right now? I see the Minister of Finance say \$45. Well, I say \$33 because you have to take into consideration the differential. You have take into consideration that this government is not going to build pipelines for a long time, which means we will not get access to tidewater, which means that we will not during your entire mandate ever have the opportunity to receive fair market value for our products.

Why do we not receive fair market value? Because we do not have access. We do not have access to tidewater. We have a customer, one customer, who holds us ransom, who decides when they take our product and when they don't, how much they're going to pay for our product based on what they need. That is not a good relationship to encourage. That's a relationship to build pipelines to the west coast, to the east coast, to the north, and to the south, wherever we can get capacity. That's what that relationship should tell us. We need pipeline capacity, yet this government says: Energy East maybe.

Of course, the NDP in Manitoba have sought intervenor status to stop that pipeline. Yes. That's right. The NDP, your cousins, the same party, in Manitoba have sought intervenor status to stop that pipeline. I don't believe Albertans are fooled by your suggestions that Energy East is a go. How can it go past Manitoba when there's a court action to stop it by your cousins?

The NDP government says that they're not in favour of Keystone – what kind of signals does that send to the Americans? – and not in favour of pipelines to the west coast. So we will never receive our fair market value for the work that Albertans do, the hard work

that they do, the 12-hour shifts they do. Seven in a row, 10 in a row 12-hour shifts: try doing that. I am very proud of the Albertans that work in the oil and gas sector, and I encourage you all to come to Fort McMurray and watch while they wait an hour and a half to two hours every day to get to the plant site on a 30-kilometre stretch of road because there's too much traffic and the previous government did very little about it. See what it's like to wait two hours to get home.

The question is: what are you going to do about it that's better? How do you encourage our men and women that work in the oil sands industry to feel they are providing value not just to their families with the great wages and great opportunities but also to the people of Alberta when you restrict their opportunity to sell their product to market, when you say that their worth is less than the worth that they should have because they do not get full market value for their product?

Now, I mentioned the wildly out of whack revenue projections. Do you have any idea, Madam Speaker? I know you must because you're very wise. It's up to \$50 million, the differential between what we get and what we should get. It's up to \$50 million a day – a day – that we lose. It's not \$50 million a year. It's up to \$50 million a day we lose because we don't have access to tidewater. Does that not trouble anyone in this room?

Yet we have this government that is suggesting and counting on about a 25 per cent – 25 per cent – increase in government revenues between now and the next election. I think what somebody did was grabbed it out of the air and pulled it down and threw it on the book because that's what you wanted to spend. How can you justify a 25 per cent increase in revenues when the revenues are the highest they've ever been already? I will talk about that in just a second. A 25 per cent increase in government revenues between now and the next election is a fantasy. Yesterday I called that a superboom, and I've lived through every boom in Alberta. A superboom? I really don't believe there's a superboom on the horizon. There is no superboom on the horizon. We've been through booms. It is not going to happen, and these revenue projections are simply a fantasy.

The record spending, the record borrowing, and the make-believe, fantasy revenue numbers will lead us to staggering debt. Let's be clear. At the end of the NDP government's mandate we will be at the highest debt levels this province has ever seen, yet only last year we had the highest oil prices we've ever seen. This government is projecting a \$47 billion debt by 2020. I think that's the lowest possible number that we'll see. I truly believe, based upon my analysis of the budget on a very preliminary basis, that number will be much, much higher. I believe the number will be more like \$55 billion or \$60 billion. I truly believe that Albertans will see in three and a half years that these revenue numbers were nothing but fantasy. I truly believe that the number will be far worse, which means that our quality of life will be much worse.

You cannot borrow your way into prosperity. You cannot borrow your way into paying off debt. You will not leave Albertans in a better position, which I think is ultimately what all of us want to do in this place. I do not think there is any nefarious theme to your decision to do this. I just think, frankly, you're not giving accurate numbers and providing an accurate picture of what will take place.

When people may have had, for instance, in some cases, as CNRL did, some wage decreases, those people that suffered the wage decrease obviously weren't happy, but that decision was made, and they kept their job. They went home after that, and they talked to their spouse. They sat down at the kitchen table, very likely, and they had a conversation. They said: "Last year we made this much, but in order to keep my job, in order to keep all our jobs, because the oil prices are low, the revenues are low, we've agreed

to take a cut. So now we have to cut our spending.” You might want to hear this. “Now we have to cut our spending.”

So the husband, the wife, the spouses, the partners decide that they have to cut some of their entertainment or other expenses. That’s what the government should do. If Albertans have to react as a result of this budget and as a result of low oil prices, why would our government be any different? Why is the government increasing salaries of the public sector, increasing the numbers of the public sector? Why? I think Albertans will be asking that question for the next three and a half years as thousands and thousands and thousands of Albertans continue to lose their jobs because of this government’s actions.

Even if we take the most optimistic number that you have brought us, that debt will lead to a lowering of our credit rating. There is no question; it will. When you have a great credit rating, it means that you can walk into a bank and they actually want to see you. It means that they give you the best rate possible to be able to borrow on your house or your car. It means that you save money on interest payments.

Interest payments are significant, especially with this government, because interest payments alone – alone – will be \$1.3 billion in four years. That’s right: \$1.3 billion in four years. Now, I don’t know if anybody knows what a billion is, but I’m going to tell you what I’ve learned a billion is. In 2005, representing my constituents of Fort McMurray-Athabasca, I collected in six weeks 7,000 signatures from Fort McMurray, out of three offices, to twin highway 63, the highway of death, where many of my constituents died.

3:40

In 2006, when I had the pleasure of announcing in February as the parliamentary secretary of transport with Minister Lawrence Cannon \$150 million to twin part of that highway, most of that highway, a decision by Stephen Harper and the Conservative government of Canada, the Alberta government came to the table. The PC government came to the table, and they invested \$170 million on that, and of course it was their responsibility to get that job done. Now, that was \$320 million to twin most of highway 63. Three hundred and twenty million. That’s not even close to the \$1.3 billion that this government is going to spend on interest payments as a result of nothing short of negligence.

Do you know what? I want to tell you another story about highway 63 and my 7,000 signatures that went to the federal government and went to the provincial government that I was able to petition and, I believe, forced the government of the day in Ottawa and the government of the day here to do something about it. Because they waited so long to get that twinned, it cost more than a billion dollars. That’s what timing means. That’s how important timing is in a government’s mandate, the timing to decide when to invest, when to save, and when to spend.

I truly believe, with respect, Madam Speaker, that this NDP government has it backwards. This debt will lead to a lowering of our credit rating. It will mean more expensive money for not just the government of Alberta but for all of those other organizations such as schools and other organizations that use this credit level and this incredible credit rating to borrow. It’s not just the Alberta government. There are scores and scores of organizations across this province that rely on that great interest rate. Guess how many provinces have that great credit rating? Too many answers. One, one province, has that credit rating. That’s this province, and this province will lose that.

Now, I have complimented this government on some parts of its budget. I have to admit it’s about that much of a that much budget, but I did, the same as I complimented the previous government for

some work that they got right. They did agree to twin highway 63. It was their responsibility. Unfortunately, it took them more than 10 years to do it. But they did some good work, and they gave us part of that great credit rating. They didn’t spend it all, almost. They didn’t spend it all, and we had a great credit rating. We are going to lose that, and the significance of that, folks, Madam Speaker, is very high indeed, and it will be a high price to pay for all Alberta families.

It will increase the cost of borrowing, leaving much less money for programs. That means we’ll have to borrow more money and more money just to pay the interest on the debt. Now, we’ve all seen the budget and the line items, but what’s the third-biggest number that’s going to be on the budget in three years no matter what happens? It’s going to be interest payments, interest payments for debt borrowed by this government. One point three billion dollars means fewer hospitals, fewer schools, fewer roads and bridges, and, most importantly, fewer front-line services.

We need to protect our front-line services. We need to protect our nurses, our teachers, our doctors, and all those people that are front-line workers providing services to Albertans. Yet this government, with its reckless spending and budget process, is threatening that, is threatening our front-line workers. No matter how you suggest that you can do otherwise with numbers, the truth is that you cannot, because sooner or later if I don’t have to pay it and if you don’t have to pay it, my children will have to pay it and my grandchildren will have to pay it.

I have two grandchildren that live in this city. Now, I don’t want to see those grandchildren have to pay for debt as a result of bad performance by the NDP government – I truly don’t – and I am concerned for my grandchildren, as I wish that all of you were, because I want my grandchildren to walk into a hospital and speak to somebody and get in there. If they’re sick, I want them healed and I want the nurses to be there ready for them. I want the doctors to be there ready for them. I want the teachers to give my grandchildren what they deserve, which is the number one education in the world. Right now our education system is rated about fifth in Canada.

An Hon. Member: In the world.

Mr. Jean: That’s fifth in Canada. I appreciate the help. Yeah, I really do. Thanks. If you could maybe stand over here a bit.

Truly, truly, folks, it’s not a laughing matter. You think you’re doing the right thing by borrowing so much money and by spending so much money, but who has looked at any possible efficiencies in the government, the most expensive government in Canada? Not one person has said: we can save some money here; we can look at some efficiencies. There are a lot of opportunities. All Albertans know that.

As you can tell, I’m fairly passionate about this because people work hard for their money. Albertans work extremely hard for their money. The people in the oil and gas sector work so hard for their money and usually away from their families, from their loved ones for long periods of time. This debt spiral: you will see it in the future because you are not doing anything to correct it. There has been no attempt and there is no suggestion in this budget whatsoever of any interest to find savings.

I am a businessperson. I ran many businesses successfully, and I know for sure that the only thing that you can control in businesses is your expenses when you have government interference. Sure, you can try to grow sales, but the truth is that the only thing you can really control is the expenses. That’s why when revenues are down – and the revenues in my businesses are down, and the revenues in all businesses in Alberta are significantly down – that is the time to

adjust your expenses, not to lay off people. I've heard that it's a joke. I was clear during the campaign; I've been clear since the campaign. I rely on front-line services. I will protect front-line workers, and I will stop this NDP government from firing and eliminating front-line positions.

Now, it does worry me. It doesn't seem to worry anybody on the other side, but I will tell you, more importantly, that whether it worries me or not is not really an issue. Worry in the capital markets is the issue. Five billion, 10 billion, 15 billion are just numbers, but they're numbers that nobody in Alberta can afford to invest in oil sands plants. If you want a plant, if you want a refinery, if you want an upgrader, you need to find someone, a business, a corporation with \$15 billion. Fifteen billion dollars: that's what it costs to set up an organization, a business like that. Who sets up those businesses? Shareholders. Albertans own shares in oil sands companies. They own shares in all of our companies, as all Canadians do. So when you penalize oil sands companies and oil and gas companies, you penalize Albertans because it's they that have their pensions invested. Teachers' pensions, nurses' pensions: they have them invested in our companies in Alberta. So when you penalize our companies, you hurt Albertans and you especially hurt the most vulnerable Albertans, retirees on fixed incomes.

I am worried about capital markets. I have talked to many people in the industry. No one is investing in Alberta right now. You can pull this and that and the occasional \$50 million or \$1 million of investments that may come into Alberta. I have talked to a lot of investors, and no one is bringing money into Alberta right now. The NDP government has put far too much unpredictability, uncertainty, and bad monetary policy into this budget, terrible monetary policy, especially during a time like this.

3:50

It should worry the government, but nobody on the other side is worried. I see smiles. I see smiles and smirks. That's not helpful. We're trying to be helpful. We have always tried to be helpful since we started here because we clearly saw the importance of working together.

Madam Speaker, let me point out that no one expected the government to balance the budget this year. Did you hear? No one expected the government to balance the budget this year or even next year. No one did because, frankly, in my opinion, it would be very hard to do and the cuts would be too draconian and would not be satisfactory. Wildrose wasn't going to balance the budget in these two years. We were not. In fact, during the campaign we said that we would not balance the budget for two years, but in the third year we would. The difference between the Wildrose and the NDP policies is that we were going to start. We were going to start to head down that path because when you start out on a journey, if you want to change the direction, you have to change the path. I would suggest that this government needs to seriously think about heading in the right direction and find fiscal prudence with some of the areas that are necessary.

All of us use Alberta's services, so we know when you enter into an office and when you have an opportunity to look at all of the assets this government owns, whether it be the 14,000 cellphones currently utilized by Alberta Health Services employees – the famous story I love is where one of the senior managers in Alberta Health Services wanted to go shopping at Christmas and had his staff go and save a parking spot at one of the malls in Calgary. And you're putting more money and more people into Alberta Health Services when we hear this kind of thing, when we have 5 employees for every 1 manager. Five employees for every 1 manager.

But let's not stop there. Let's talk about the Alberta government, that has 3.7 employees for every manager. Now, WestJet, who takes

my life in its hands every time we fly, has 12 for every manager. Twelve employees for every manager, and they fly in the sky. Don't you think we can do better? Why can we not find efficiencies in the Alberta government? Why can you not find efficiencies in Alberta Health Services, the third- or fourth-largest employer in Canada? Every other province has the same constitutional obligations that we do.

We did want to start in the right direction, and we knew that the right direction was savings because we had a government that had been in power for 44 years and was the most expensive government in Canada. That's right. The Progressive Conservative Party of Alberta, when they were in government, was the most expensive government in Canada's history. But good news. Good news. They don't have it anymore, folks. The NDP government of Alberta is the most expensive government in Canada's history. So congratulations. You even beat the PCs on that.

Now, let me tell the most expensive government in Alberta's history that there is an opportunity to change that because you haven't spent the money yet. So I encourage you to do so. You have an opportunity to actually do things differently. I mentioned today in question period how you could do things differently and restore democracy here. Even Stephen Harper gave more democracy to the NDP than the NDP is giving to the opposition parties here in Alberta, even Stephen Harper, whom I hear fearmongerers all the time talk about how bad he was. I believe he was the greatest prime minister we've ever seen in Canada. [interjections] Those people on the other side have so much knowledge on the issue because, of course, you were there. No, you weren't. [interjections] I was there, and I was very proud to be there.

You know, the one thing I did see that Stephen Harper did was that he allowed us to actually have an opportunity at committees to study legislation. Now, I know you don't know that because you're backbenchers and all of you are new except a couple. All of you are. [interjections] I appreciate the banter. What I'd appreciate from you is the opportunity to talk about that because democracy is the most important thing that we can possibly have. Democracy means that we get better decisions because we all have input into those decisions, but we can't start unless we change the path and the direction that we go in.

Now, I did mention earlier that under my leadership Wildrose is always committed to protecting Albertans and protecting the jobs of front-line workers, who are important to all of us. These are workers such as teachers and nurses, that deal with all of us every day, that serve Albertans and are there to serve Albertans, but Albertans are not there to serve them. They are hired to serve Albertans, and every single one of our proposals in the last election – every single one of them – and since has had a clear commitment to not lay off any front-line workers. In fact, I have suggested several times in several interviews that the NDP should bring in a moratorium to protect those workers. You heard it here first. I believe that we should protect our front-line workers. You can start down the path to a balanced budget without impacting services and front-line workers who support Albertans. You can. It is possible. It has been done before, and it will be done again.

Wildrose has also expressed its support for this mandated freeze many times. That would be for all government managers and nonbargaining union employees. Now, I sometimes hear the House leader say: "We can't do that. They've bargained in good faith, and it's covered by union contract." No, no, no. They're not covered by union contract. They're not. We have about 6,000 government managers that are not unionized that just got a big raise. In fact, we were very concerned when the new NDP government removed the wage freeze for managers instituted by the previous Prentice government. We were very concerned because that would be the

wrong signal to send to our energy industry and, in fact, to all corporations and all businesses and Albertans as a whole.

We noted that when the Premier brought in a political staff from British Columbia to become a senior deputy minister, this B.C. politico, she actually immediately – immediately – used an order in council to increase wages, to reinstate the wage increase to the top levels of the civil service, to the managers. Immediately. Tens of thousands of lay-offs in Alberta, and what's the first thing someone from British Columbia comes in to do in Alberta? Charge Albertans more by reinstating a way to take away a wage freeze and to reinstate these high wages of already high-paid employees. I heard today that somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$77,000 was the average wage, which means that there are a lot of people that make a lot more than that.

Now, I'm not suggesting cuts. I don't want cuts. This is not the time to cut, just like it's not the time to give wage increases. This summer managers in the civil service got a big, big wage boost. This government, when they undid the freeze to management salaries that the Prentice government put in, propped them right up. Now, what kind of signal does that send to the unemployed in Alberta, the people who have been laid off? People say that 40,000 people have been laid off in Alberta. That's just Albertans. That's just Albertans that have been laid off in Alberta. That does not include the people from across Canada that worked in Alberta. That's just Albertans. Forty thousand people have been laid off, and immediately the 6,000 managers in the civil service get a wage boost, a wage increase.

Well, what are the private-sector unions doing? What are they doing? Well, we recently noted that the private-sector unions have been negotiating wage freezes. Yes, that's right, and some of you know that. They have been negotiating wage freezes out of respect and for the reality of the current economic conditions. Now, there are some members of the government who are actually building trades unionists. They know this, and they know that it makes sense.

4:00

It is an example, in my opinion and Wildrose's opinion, of a responsible trade union in their behaviour because they recognize that it's not all about them. It is an example. It is an example of what great things private unions can do. It is an example of free collective bargaining working well. Very important to our province and to our country. I represent more union members per capita, I think, than anybody in the country except for maybe the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo now.

Wildrose does think the government would do well to begin discussions with its public-sector unions. Yes, begin discussions now with the public-sector unions because now is the right time to start down that path and to talk to them about getting a temporary freeze on public-sector salaries. They are Albertans. They understand what's going on. I've worked with them for many years, and they are logical, smart people, and they get it. They want what's best for Alberta, just like Wildrose wants what's best for Alberta. We certainly are in this together, all Albertans, whether they work in the public sector or the private sector. All of us want Alberta to succeed. I honestly believe that a sincere effort on the part of this government might find some success. I truly, truly believe that. Take the time to pick up the phone. Have an informal conversation. I think you will be surprised at what you find, and I would encourage you to do this.

Wildrose has always been clear – during the election campaign, today, yesterday – and will always be clear about front-line workers. We would not lay off front-line workers like teachers or nurses or government employees, that provide absolutely essential services to Albertans. These services make us the best country in

the world and the best province within this country, but we do need to shrink the size of the civil service. We do. We can do that in a number of ways that don't include any firings, any layoffs.

There is a thing called attrition. People actually leave the civil service. I believe the leader of the third party or one of his members mentioned today that there were about 212,000 civil servants. Well, that means a lot of people decide to move around, move to different provinces, and – guess what? – people do retire. And there's the other option of early retirement. I know many people in the civil service would be happy to have that opportunity. They would. But the subject is not broached by this government. We have not talked about it. They are not interested in it. They, in fact, ignore it.

So let me take some time talking about how we got to this stage, a little history lesson. I love history because it has a way of repeating itself. But this history will set the context for why, in my mind and Wildrose's mind, this budget is so disappointing. First of all, how we got to this place and how we got here. I'm going to go way back in time in the distant past, that is starting to look like the near future. That's right. I'm going to go way back to a time in the distant past, that is starting to look like the near future. In the late '80s oil and gas prices were sluggish, and things were slow, and Alberta's government had not adjusted and was spending far more than most provinces. The heritage fund had stopped for years despite the fact that we were still getting royalty payments at that time that every province in the country envied, that every Premier in the country envied, that everybody in the country envied, and we were having problems with sluggish gas and oil prices.

Not only at that time were we not saving our resource wealth; we were taking on significant debt, just like today. But like today the relatively low oil prices were not the reason for our fiscal hole because nobody else really had that at that time. There weren't any more oil and gas revenues across the country except for in Alberta that were of any significance. Now, we've had some expansion since. We've seen Newfoundland and Labrador. We've seen Saskatchewan. We've seen northern British Columbia. They envied our position because they saw our position as being one they wanted to emulate, so they expanded their oil and gas sectors.

Like I said, like today the relatively low oil prices were not the reason for our fiscal hole. It was sloppy spending habits. Sloppy, sloppy, spending habits. Alberta's government was spending too much on just about everything, and they weren't getting the results. How do we know that? Because, as I mentioned earlier, we're under the same fiscal framework, under the same constitutional obligations, under the same demands as every other province in this country, and we were doing it without getting better results than anyone in the country.

Our politicians at that time had got in the business of being in business, much similar to some of the things I see in the NDP budget, and at that time they were doing that without recognizing that when the government picks winners and when the government picks losers by giving handouts, everyone loses – everyone loses – especially taxpayers. They tried to chase a government-sponsored diversification dream, and it was a dismal failure. Now we have the North West upgrader and other boondoggles that are going to cost our taxpayers, hard-working Albertans, billions and billions of dollars.

They tried to chase that sponsored diversification dream, and it was a failure. They tried to put off making any hard decisions, hoping an oil spike would come. Sound familiar? That government hoped an oil spike would come and that they wouldn't have to worry about looking for efficiencies. But all that did was make debt worse, squeezing out program spending with ballooning interest payments that bankrupted many, many Albertans. After the '80s I had a chance to be a lawyer, and I saw the foreclosures in Fort

McMurray. I saw people committing very sad actions as a result of their financial position.

For us in this place, we have a great job. We have a guaranteed job with a guaranteed income for four years, but Albertans don't have that. We have a great pension plan. Well, not anymore, but we have a great plan. I know that because I used health care the other day. We have a great plan. We get all these benefits. Albertans don't get those benefits. So when you manage their money, please, I would implore, through you, Madam Speaker, that you recognize that people spend a lot of hours away from their family, working hard to pay their taxes to allow this government to spend that money. All I would ask, through you, is that risky social experiments are not the way to go forward and to use tried and true methods that other jurisdictions have done and succeeded with.

But, as I said, all that did was make debt worse, squeezing out program spending with ballooning interest payments, and as a result all Albertans suffered. Then in 1993, as federal politics were shaken up by Bob Rae's NDP government because they were running the biggest provincial economy in Canada into the ditch, it finally became clear to both the Liberal and PC leaders in Alberta that we had reached a point where some tough medicine needed to be administered. That's what happens when you spend too much and you don't do it efficiently. People pay the price. And Albertans will have to pay the price of the NDP government's failure just like they paid the price with the NDP government's failure in Ontario.

Now, over that next four years the Klein government reduced bloated government spending by a whopping 20 per cent. We suggested 2 per cent. Our fiscal plan in the election was 2 per cent; Ralph Klein, 20 per cent. Now, that got Alberta to a balanced budget and was an ambitious plan to eliminate debt that was just a little bit above \$22 billion. In this case we're going to be looking at more than \$50 billion.

4:10

Now, nobody disputes that these initial years were tough for Albertans. Let me be clear. In the '90s they were tough, but they weren't nearly as tough as the '80s. I am not saying, nor have I ever said, that that kind of reduction in spending is what the Wildrose would pursue. In fact, 2 per cent is a lot different than 20 per cent. All our proposals in our election platform were about attrition, about early retirement if they wanted it, not forced draconian measures. It was about finding ways to move forward down a different path of efficiencies.

Now, NDP Premier Roy Romanow was balancing Saskatchewan's books by reducing program spending by 10 per cent. Ten per cent. I have to be truthful, as I always am. I was very interested and hopeful to see the opportunity where you brought in 10 chiefs of staff from every province in the country other than Alberta. I see that's your employment plan, to employ people from other provinces by hiring NDP personalities from every province but Alberta. So I was kind of hoping that, you know, we would see a Romanow government, an opportunity to see some efficiencies, some opportunities for savings because Albertans do pay that price, but no. We actually see more money being spent, more civil servants being hired.

What is often misunderstood is that by the end of the '90s, as our royalties went through the roof, the Klein government started spending recklessly again, such that by 2005 Alberta was a middle-of-the-road operational spender amongst provinces and above average in capital spending, infrastructure spending. Now, had Klein's successors been able to keep us in the position of average spending or from that point kept spending increases to the rate of inflation and population growth, which is very reasonable during good times, we would not have run any deficits and would even be

balanced by this year. Let me repeat that. Had Klein's successors been able to keep us in the position of average spending or from that point kept spending increases to the rate of inflation and population growth, we would not have run any deficits and would even be balanced this year. Does anybody care over here? Does anybody care over there? No, they don't.

But Klein's successors could not restrain spending increases. In particular, Premier Stelmach's government opened up the taps in his first few years both on operating and capital. As Mark Milke noted in the *Calgary Herald* earlier this year, in 2005 program spending in Alberta was \$8,965 per person in inflation-adjusted dollars. That actually matched the high in 1993, when Getty had retired, before Ralph Klein brought in changes. That's right. It actually matched it. Put another way: if Klein had come full circle. And the notion that there was still some inherent deficit in our spending levels is false.

The government oversaw major spending increases between Premier Klein's last budget and the 2009 recession. While there were a few years of relative restraint following that, after Premier Redford's first two budgets Milke noted that the provincial government spent \$10,967 per person on government programs. That was \$2,000 more per person than in 2004-2005. Two thousand dollars more than 2004-2005. That's 17 per cent more with the cost of inflation. It's ridiculous if you compare it to other provinces. Truly ridiculous.

This problem was actually recognized by Premier Jim Prentice, whose budget had a section showing that the extra \$2,000 per person, beyond inflation, is exactly how much more we spend than our neighbours in British Columbia on government programs. Two thousand dollars per person. In fact, I spent some time right across the country with infrastructure and transportation issues in 20 Crown corporations, so I had a chance to travel the country and to see how different provinces spent money. Well, \$2,000 per Albertan translates into \$8 billion extra that gets spent in Alberta on government, \$8 billion more than British Columbia. Adjusted for population, that's \$8 billion more here than they spend in British Columbia. Somehow British Columbia manages to deliver its services without that extra \$2,000 per person.

Now, I call these extra dollars because I have yet to hear one defender of the status quo explain how we are getting 20 per cent better services than British Columbians are. How? We aren't. It's certainly not in health care, where we have in Alberta among the worst wait times in the country. Saskatchewan, next door, puts us to shame on wait times: three months for just about anything.

Here in Alberta we have the third- or fourth-largest employer in the country, Alberta Health Services, and we have one of the worst wait times. It's unbelievable the social cost let alone the economic cost of these people waiting for those operations. They impact on their families and their friends and their jobs. It doesn't cost any more to get an operation for a knee today than it does in eight months. Why are we having Albertans wait eight months for a knee operation? Why can every province in Canada do it better than we can with less money?

Now, I can't explain it, and I've not heard anybody be able to explain it, not in any rational terms. In fact, everybody on the other side seems to ignore that, seems to ignore the very issue. Nor can it be explained away by a cost-of-living argument. Now, sure, Alberta has seen some inflationary pressures. I would say that my community of Fort McMurray, where I've lived for 50 years, has had some interesting inflationary things happen to it, but it cannot be explained with inflationary pressures, certainly not in the last decade.

British Columbia has always been expensive relative to the rest of the country, but I dare the government to prove that it costs more

to build something in Alberta than it does in Vancouver. I dare the government to say that or to prove it, because it's not provable. I know from my time in Ottawa working on infrastructure files that paving or twinning roads costs significantly more in mountainous British Columbia than it does in Alberta.

The difference I see between Alberta and B.C. is that Alberta has had a 44-year dynasty holding the purse strings through a series of massive royalty booms. After the late '90s instances of fiscal irresponsibility became far more common than any interest in restraint. The result is that, like in the '80s, a relatively low period of oil prices puts us into a situation where we turn to massive borrowing.

I saw earlier our coalition between the PCs and the NDP. You seem to have the same mantra in government, the same spending habits, the same lack of interest to find any efficiencies, the same interest to put this burden onto Albertans unfairly during times of being laid off. Maybe that's going to be the situation in the future. That would be, of course, up to the third party. But just as then, Premiers and Finance ministers act as though it is simply a revenue problem.

Now, a revenue problem means increased taxes, and if we are not going to address it with a massive tax hike, then we will have to do massive borrowing. I see this government doing both. But it is dishonest and unfair to look at our deficit and simply say that it's the fault of low oil revenues or low revenues.

4:20

Now, I will prove my point. For one, I wonder how many of my colleagues in this House could guess where this year's supposedly horrific revenues rank in our 110-year history? Well, you'd probably be shocked given all the dire talk about revenues, revenues, revenues. But you should find out and know that this year it's going to be \$44 billion according to your own numbers. That's the third-highest revenues this province has ever seen. That's right. The third-highest revenues. If I was in business, this would be a banner year of revenues. This would be a great year of revenues. So in 110 years 107 of those years or 108 of those years have seen worse revenues than this year for Albertans and for the government. [interjection] That's right. The third-highest revenues ever.

So that is not a good argument, that revenues are down, because they are not down; they're up. They're up. The last two years of \$100 oil have put revenues through the roof. It has gotten close to \$50 billion when you include the SUCH sector, but that's no measuring stick, in reality.

What's more illustrative is that even at \$100 a barrel, this government was still taking out billions of dollars in debt. That government, by the way, not this government. That government. But why? Because Alberta's government is too expensive: \$8 billion more than our neighbours in British Columbia. Again, to repeat, just because we are spending \$8 billion more than what we need to does not mean it is an easy matter to stop doing it, and we in the Wildrose understand that. Wildrose recognizes this, and that's why, despite all the fearmongering about drastic cuts and all of that, which is balderdash, we have never claimed we would eliminate that 20 per cent and get spending in line with British Columbia. We have a great quality of life, and we have a gift with our oil and gas sector and our natural resources. We should live better, but we should live within our means and make sure that Albertans don't lose their jobs because of this government's failure to manage properly.

Instead, we have proposed a very modest \$1 billion per year reduction in spending for three or four years to get us to a place where, thanks to our strong revenue streams, we can plausibly say that we have eliminated the structural deficit and then be in a place,

a responsible place, where we can keep taxes low even in leaner times but save for the future when royalties are down. Save for the future when royalties are down for my grandchildren, for your grandchildren, for Alberta's future, for the competitive advantage so that we don't have to pay \$1.3 billion in interest payments and forgo all of those wonderful things we expect in front-line services and capital spending and infrastructure. This is my vision of responsible government, the kind of government Albertans do deserve, a kind of government that I think Albertans truly want. That to me is the real Alberta way.

Now, that vision is nowhere to be seen in this budget. Nowhere. This budget takes our already bloated spending and inflates it further, 2.8 per cent per year, far beyond inflation and far beyond population growth, 2.8 per cent per year without any justification based on the actual numbers of population or inflation. Why? There is no logical explanation. Zero. This budget takes our already bloated spending and inflates it to a place where it's going to be even more difficult to recover. This budget puts off those tough decisions indefinitely, saying that we never have to worry about paying it back because there's no plan to pay it back: zero, zip, nada, not even a single plan to pay off the money.

Simply put, this government is banking on a boom to balance the budget and racking up an absolutely reckless \$47 billion in debt in the meantime, \$47 billion of debt that we have to pay back sometime in the future, which will affect our ability to borrow, that will hurt our quality of life because when you pay for debt and interest payments, something else has to go.

Now, I'm going to put an asterisk beside that \$47 billion because that's the optimistic number, and we're going to owe a lot more than that under the NDP government's rule. A lot more. That number is counting on oil prices getting to an average of \$50 for this year – fantasy – but rising to \$61 next year and \$68 the year after that. Two more years of fantasy. Don't believe me; look at the experts. Even Moody's has suggested those numbers are off \$20 a barrel. Off \$20 a barrel. That's 33 per cent. I'm concerned. I wish there was more concern over there, but there seem to be smirks and laughter and, you know, some comments. Those things are not helpful.

We have tried to be helpful, and we will continue to be helpful because that's what Albertans elected us to be, and that's why we want to have the opportunity – the opportunity – to get democracy right, to have the opportunity to participate in those choices so that the voices that elected us are heard. Right now they have to be silent because you're not allowing us to participate in committees, where we decide on legislative issues, where we have an opportunity for input.

These projections are far higher than what groups like Moody's or the American government are forecasting. These groups do this for a living. The Americans are usually right about this stuff for a reason.

On page 4 of the budget we see, without knowing what kind of assumptions they are, that this government is banking on huge revenue growth in years 4 and 5 to get us to a so-called balanced budget. You're not even going to be in power then. Overall this government is projecting 26 per cent growth in revenues over those five years. That's laughable.

Recall that this year isn't some trough that we can expect a massive rebound from. This year is our third-highest revenue year ever – third highest – yet you think it's going to grow by 26 per cent over the next five years? Let me repeat that. This year isn't some weird, low-level revenue year. It's not. Don't believe your own press releases. This is not something that we can expect a massive rebound from. This year is our third-highest revenue year ever – ever – but somehow the government thinks 2020 will be way better.

With few prospects for pipelines because the NDP, including the Manitoba NDP and the federal NDP, are against all pipelines . . .

Some Hon. Members: That's not true.

Mr. Jean: It's true. With little prospect of pipelines getting us to tidewater any time soon and with no reputable agency projecting that oil gets anywhere above \$80 anywhere in the near or foreseeable

future, keeping our debt to only \$47 billion relies on a lot of fantasy, wishful thinking.

Now, I'd never say that anything is impossible in Alberta because this is the greatest place in the world. No question.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, pursuant to Standing Order 4(2) this Assembly stands adjourned until Monday at 1:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 4:30 p.m. to Monday at 1:30 p.m.]

Bill Status Report for the 29th Legislature - 1st Session (2015)

Activity to October 29, 2015

The Bill sponsor's name is in brackets following the Bill title. If it is a money Bill, (\$) will appear between the title and the sponsor's name. Numbers following each Reading refer to Hansard pages where the text of debates is found; dates for each Reading are in brackets following the page numbers. Bills numbered 1 to 200 are Government Bills. Bills numbered 201 or higher are Private Members' Public Bills. Bills numbered with a "Pr" prefix are Private Bills.

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

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

1* An Act to Renew Democracy in Alberta (Ganley)

First Reading -- 9-10 (Jun. 15, 2015 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 30-38 (Jun. 16, 2015 aft., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 85-94 (Jun. 17, 2015 eve.), 152-157 (Jun. 22, 2015 eve., passed with amendments)

Third Reading -- 157-159 (Jun. 22, 2015 eve., passed on division)

Royal Assent -- (Jun. 29, 2015 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force June 15, 2015; SA 2015 c15]

2 An Act to Restore Fairness to Public Revenue (Ceci)

First Reading -- 104 (Jun. 18, 2015 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 161-162 (Jun. 22, 2015 eve.), 183-193 (Jun. 23, 2015 aft.), 201-213 (Jun. 23, 2015 eve.), 213-227 (Jun. 23, 2015 eve., passed on division)

Committee of the Whole -- 242-257 (Jun. 24, 2015 aft.), 259 (Jun. 24, 2015 eve., passed)

Third Reading -- 259-271 (Jun. 24, 2015 eve., passed on division)

Royal Assent -- (Jun. 29, 2015 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force January 1, 2015, with exceptions; SA 2015 c16]

3 Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2015 (No. 2) (\$) (Ceci)

First Reading -- 77 (Jun. 17, 2015 eve., passed)

Second Reading -- 107-114 (Jun. 18, 2015 aft., passed on division)

Committee of the Whole -- 145-152 (Jun. 22, 2015 eve.), 159-161 (Jun. 22, 2015 eve., passed on division)

Third Reading -- 182-183 (Jun. 23, 2015 aft.), 213 (Jun. 23, 2015 eve., passed on division)

Royal Assent -- (Jun. 29, 2015 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force June 29, 2015; SA 2015 c14]

4 An Act to Implement Various Tax Measures and to Enact the Fiscal Planning and Transparency Act (\$) (Ceci)

First Reading -- 331-32 (Oct. 27, 2015 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 379-81 (Oct. 29, 2015 aft., adjourned)

201 Assuring Alberta's Fiscal Future Act (Fraser)

First Reading -- 104-105 (Jun. 18, 2015 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 128-139 (Jun. 22, 2015 aft.), 302 (Oct. 26, 2015 aft., defeated on division)

202 Alberta Local Food Act (Cortes-Vargas)

First Reading -- 105 (Jun. 18, 2015 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 303-313 (Oct. 26, 2015 aft., adjourned)

203 Election (Restrictions on Government Advertising) Amendment Act, 2015 (Strankman)

First Reading -- (Oct. 28, 2015 aft., passed)

Pr1 The King's University College Amendment Act, 2015 (Schmidt)

First Reading -- 377 (Oct. 29, 2015 aft., passed)

Pr2 Bethesda Bible College Amendment Act, 2015 (Nielsen)

First Reading -- 377 (Oct. 29, 2015 aft., passed)

Pr3 Rosary Hall, Edmonton Repeal Act (Shepherd)

First Reading -- 377 (Oct. 29, 2015 aft., passed)

Pr4 Canadian University College Amendment Act, 2015 (Orr)

First Reading -- 377 (Oct. 29, 2015 aft., passed)

Pr5 Concordia University College of Alberta Amendment Act, 2015 (McLean)

First Reading -- 377 (Oct. 29, 2015 aft., passed)

Pr6 Covenant Bible College Amendment Act, 2015 (Fildebrandt)

First Reading -- 377 (Oct. 29, 2015 aft., passed)

Pr7 Living Faith Bible College Amendment Act, 2015 (Nixon)

First Reading -- 377 (Oct. 29, 2015 aft., passed)

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