



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
First Session

Alberta Hansard

Thursday afternoon, November 26, 2015

Day 24

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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Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)	McKitrick, Annie, Sherwood Park (ND)
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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)	
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New Democrat: 53 Wildrose: 22 Progressive Conservative: 9 Alberta Liberal: 1 Alberta Party: 1 Independent: 1

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Kazim	

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, November 26, 2015

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Hon. members, are there any school groups for introduction today?

Hearing none, the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'm pleased to rise on your behalf and introduce Mr. Jim Black. Mr. Black is a constituent of Medicine Hat, a strong community advocate, and a personal friend to you. I would ask that Mr. Black, who is seated in your gallery, please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Hon. members, the introduction didn't indicate it, but he was sorry that Mr. Clark couldn't be here today. He actually ran against me as an Alberta Party member, and we're still friends.

The Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly some visitors from the Department of Environment and Parks. I'd ask them to rise as I call their names: Ms Melissa Killick, Mr. Duke Hunter, Ms Wendy Proudfoot, Mrs. Angela Turlione, Miss Leah Arnason, Kristine Cariaga, Amanda Buer, and Graham Brittain. I wish to thank them for all of their service to our province and ask the House to extend the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The Minister of Health and Seniors.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two introductions. First, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly two visitors from Friends of Medicare. For 36 years Friends of Medicare has been leading the fight to preserve a public, comprehensive health care system that's accessible to all Albertans. Sandra Azocar has been the executive director of Friends of Medicare since 2012. She is joined by communications and administrative staff member Trevor Zimmerman. I commend their efforts in support of protecting, promoting, and restoring the physical and mental well-being of all residents of Alberta. I now ask that Sandra and Trevor please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

I do have a second one, Mr. Speaker. My apologies. I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Paul Haskins. Paul is a physician assistant at the Alberta Health Services Sturgeon community hospital. Prior to his current role, he served as a physician assistant and med tech in the Canadian armed forces for more than 25 years. We are grateful. Tomorrow, November 27, is National Physician Assistant Day in Canada, which is an opportunity to acknowledge the positive impact that PAs across Canada, including Alberta, are making on Canadian health care: improving access to medical care and helping to reduce wait times. I'd ask that our honoured guest receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

Thank you.

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

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased today to rise and introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly Daniel and Delores Warawa. Daniel has 10 years as town councillor for the county of Lamont and also serves as deputy reeve. He is joined by his wife, Delores, who, along with their son Ryan operate a farm outside of Mundare, where I had the pleasure of joining him on his combine to take in the harvest of flax. I thank them for their warmth and generosity. They have truly shown me what it means to experience good, Ukrainian hospitality in Mundare. Please join me in extending the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Nielsen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm excited to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly the group from Schonsee park and playground. They're a group of very dedicated volunteers that are working towards developing a park and playground at 76th Street and Schonsee Drive. They were absolutely thrilled with the outcome of the western final as not only are the Edmonton Eskimos headed to the Grey Cup, but the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort has donated the hundred dollars to Schonsee park. Here today from Schonsee park and playground are Nicole, Mackenzie, Madison, and Chloe Nicholson; Alice, Mason, and Ty Funk; Deborah and Eric Clark. I ask that they please rise to receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Hon. member, I hope you advised them that the hon. Minister of Finance has some new income, so he's good for more than a hundred dollars.

Members' Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Peace River Constituency

Ms Jabbour: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In our national anthem we sing of the true north strong and free. I'd like to tell you a bit about my true north, my constituency of Peace River, using three words: diversity, resilience, and diligence.

Diversity. La Crête is home to a large Mennonite population, primarily of German and Dutch descent but also from Mexico and Brazil. We have three distinct First Nations: the Dene Thá in Meander, Bushe, and Chateh; the Little Red River Cree in Fox Lake, John D'Or, and Garden River; and Beaver First Nation in Boyer and Child Lake. We have a large Métis community in Paddle Prairie and across region 6 and francophones in Marie-Reine and St. Isidore. Fort Vermilion, Alberta's oldest community, represents a unique cultural diversity of language, religion, and ethnic background. Fort Vermilion also holds the record for the coldest temperature ever recorded in Alberta, a frosty minus 60.

That brings me to resilience. Peace River responded to the devastating floods in the '90s by creating PeaceFest, a celebration of art and music. The First Nations in the north are incredibly resilient, overcoming the residential school legacy to build strength and industry. Traditional language and way of life remain alive in these communities, and they create fabulous aboriginal art. Oil patch towns Zama City and Rainbow Lake adapt to industry cycles and population fluctuations that put pressure on the local economy, and the citizens band together to reduce isolation by creating community activities.

That brings me to diligence. In Peace River we have people who help others and enrich the community through projects like the Curtis Marshall memorial skate park or by sponsoring Syrian refugee families. We have long-established family farms in North Star, Dixonville, and Nampa and family businesses that are models of energy efficiency such as Manning Diversified and The Carbon Farmer. And in High Level we are working diligently to develop and diversify our economy through ventures such as our upcoming winter ice Frostival on December 5.

An ancient Beaver Indian legend says: drink the water of the Peace River, and you will return. I invite you to discover the truth of that. Come and visit Alberta's true north.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member, and please express my regrets to your community that I cannot be there. I would have liked that very much.

1:40

Government Policies

Mr. Barnes: I'd like to go beyond the front-page news and share the incredible impact of NDP policies on Alberta families. So far this year there have been 65,000 jobs lost in our province and counting. That's the same as the entire city of Medicine Hat receiving a pink slip. Behind each one of the 65,000 jobs lost is an individual, a neighbour, a family. If you want to see the human impact of the things we discuss here, come and see the people in my home riding.

Mr. Speaker, as you and I well know, the families and communities of southeastern Alberta are still recovering from the previous government's natural gas royalty review. Now it seems that the people of Cypress-Medicine Hat cannot go a single week without hearing of some new government policy that will only further compound their difficulties and reduce their opportunities.

In spring Cypress-Medicine Hatters were hit with a tax increase on their livelihoods and productivity, in the summer they faced ideological meddling in the labour market with the announcement of drastic minimum wage increases, and now they get saddled with a PST in disguise, massive increases to utility costs, and farming regulations rammed through with no consultation and no certainty of where it will leave them. All along the way the job losses mount, sometimes by the hundreds, as we saw recently with the closure of the Finning heavy equipment dealer in Medicine Hat, but far more often it's by the dozens. Sure, there are newspaper headlines, but you're not hearing about those trying to make their mortgage payments, being unable to enrol their son or daughter in spring sports, or missing out on a Christmas donation to the Salvation Army. It's the small businesses paying the price. It's the entrepreneur who has invested in any one of these many spinoffs from the oil and gas industry. It's the family farm getting buried by a host of costly new taxes and regulations.

My constituents and all Albertans need, more than ever, a government that allows them to be productive and to have opportunity.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Northern Hills.

Calgary to Cochrane Trail

Mr. Kleinsteuber: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. From my early days as a political candidate in municipal politics I've always been a strong supporter of bike paths and trail systems. That is why I'm pleased to rise today to congratulate the Glenbow Ranch Park Foundation and Alberta Parks on their initiatives to link the park's internal trail network to the city of Calgary and the town of Cochrane. This initiative is known as the Calgary to Cochrane, or C to C, trail. The C to C trail will provide access to some of the

most spectacular parkland and vistas the Bow River Valley has to offer through a system of walking, hiking, and biking trails.

In early spring 2015 the Glenbow Ranch Park Foundation began the C to C trail fundraising campaign, with a target of \$100,000 to complete phase 1 of the Bears paw Trail. This 2.2 kilometre trail stretches from Glenbow Ranch provincial park to Calgary's north-west corner, Haskayne park. By mid-July I attended the Parks Day celebration in Glenbow Ranch provincial park. There was a big announcement that day, and the Glenbow Ranch Park Foundation announced that around 740 individual donations exceeded the \$100,000 target set earlier that spring and had raised more than \$194,000 for the first phase of this project, proving its wild popularity.

As a donor I was pleased to receive an e-mail at the end of October confirming that the first phase of the trail is now complete. The Bears paw section of the trail now winds through the beautiful native grasslands on the north bank of the Bow River, connecting commuters, hikers, runners, and cyclists to the existing trail system. Someday soon the plentiful trail networks of Calgary-Northern Hills will have a seamless trail connection for residents all the way to the western corner of Glenbow park.

The foundation continues to lead fundraising efforts for the next two phases of the project, and when completed, the trail will be part of the Trans Canada Trail network.

I'd like to end by congratulating the Glenbow Ranch Park Foundation on a fundraising job well done.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Charitable Tax Credit

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As you are aware, Albertans are known for their incredible compassion and generosity. Whether it's contributions of time, talent, or finances, the generosity of Albertans is unsurpassed in Canada, and it is at times when the need is greatest that the spirit of this province shines brightest. It is through these contributions that charitable organizations are able to offer the vital programs and services that assist youth, families, seniors, and the most vulnerable both at home and around the world. As a social worker and having spent many years working with child and family services and in developing education programs, I've seen the impact first-hand. Indeed, without charitable contributions, many of these programs and services simply could not be possible.

For many the ability to provide that financial contribution has been impacted by the same economic conditions that make their donations and the programs those donations support that much more important. Alberta's charitable tax credit has been maintained in Budget 2015 and is intended to encourage those who are able to continue to support the charitable causes that matter to them. Albertans making a contribution to a CRA-registered charity are eligible to receive a 50 per cent tax credit for every dollar donated above the \$200 threshold.

The charitable tax credit is one of the most generous in Canada, and it helps to stretch that donation dollar a little bit further. The Minister of Culture and Tourism has encouraged all MLAs to assist the efforts of charitable organizations in their communities by helping to spread the word of the charitable tax credit. Mr. Speaker, full details of Alberta's charitable tax credit are available online at the Alberta Culture and Tourism website, culture.alberta.ca.

To all of those who give so generously in support of their fellow Albertans, thank you. To the charitable organizations and the incredible volunteers who are making a difference in their communities and in the lives of those in need, thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Friends of Medicare

Ms Gray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For over 36 years the Alberta Society of the Friends of Medicare has been championing our treasured public health care system and pushing governments to ensure that strong public medicare continues to be a defining part of life in our province. Many surveys have shown that public health care is something that Canadians identify with so deeply that it is now a key part of our national identity. Access to quality medical care when we need it most, regardless of personal financial situation, is one way we as Albertans demonstrate our concern for one another.

The Friends of Medicare has been a steady voice, holding government to account whenever health policy falls out of sync with the Albertan values of compassion and care. Friends of Medicare is not just the story of a group of volunteers who happened to believe in the merits of public health care; it is the story of citizen action and resistance to those corporate interests that would put profits ahead of people. Friends of Medicare has helped to educate Albertans about the benefits of our medicare system and to outline why certain policy directions endanger that system.

Public health care is sustainable, more equitable, and more efficient than private, for-profit medicine. Countries around the world look enviously at what Canada has achieved.

During these tough times Albertans need dependable health care services, now more than ever. As the baby boomer generation heads into retirement and old age, they need to know that the medical system they've spent their working lives to support is now ready to support them. Likewise, many new parents are in the process of raising Alberta's next generation, and these young families also need a public health care system that they can depend on.

I take comfort in knowing that no matter what may come, the Friends of Medicare will still be here, fighting for the quality health care that all Albertans deserve.

Thank you.

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

Simon House Recovery Centre

Ms Drever: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize the tireless work and dedication of an organization within my constituency. Simon House Recovery Centre is a recovery centre for men who have accepted that they have a problem with either drugs or alcohol and want to remedy it by changing their attitudes and behaviour.

Simon House operates through four phases. Phase 1 begins with a full-time classroom portion and lasts for 12 weeks, during which the 12 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous are completed. There they receive incentives, specific counselling, and learn life and relationship skills. They also learn to manage anger, anxiety, and depression. Through Simon House's partnership with Alberta employment, immigration, and industry they are taught cover letter and resumé writing and job search skills. Phases 2 and 3 begin semi-independent living and independent living, with added responsibilities and privileges. The final phase of the program is phase 4, the goal of all their clients, which is sober living while living independently in the community and being reunited with family and friends.

Mr. Speaker, I must share that Simon House is one of North America's leading recovery centres, where 50 per cent of their

clients achieve the benchmark of one year's sobriety. This far exceeds the industry average of 15 to 20 per cent.

On the last Wednesday of every month Simon House celebrates its graduation ceremony at our Bowness Seniors' Centre, where the graduates of the 12-week, phase 1 program are honoured as well as those celebrating their birthday month, the month they chose sobriety over addiction. Here friends and family honour milestones, and current and former graduates share their stories of recovery. Since July either myself or a member of my staff has attended these graduations, and I can personally attest to the sense of community and collective perseverance shared not only just from the graduates but from family and friends and members of our community.

I thank them for all the hard work that they do for Alberta. Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, allow me, if you will, to echo the remarks of the Deputy Speaker yesterday. This has been a very difficult week and next several days for this House. I know I speak for all of the Assembly to the leader of the third party and our fellow members who are here: please express to the family again our sincerest support. It has been a difficult yet a learning experience for all of us about the importance of each other.

1:50

Oral Question Period

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

Carbon Tax

Mr. Jean: We know that at least 2,200 Albertans have lost their jobs this month. That's on top of the 65,000 Albertans who are already out of work. Those who still have jobs are seeing their wages plummet. In fact, a new report says that the average weekly earnings for Albertans are falling fast. What's the NDP's solution? To hit everyone and everything with a massive new carbon tax, that will make everyone poorer and damage our economy. Why is the Premier making Albertans, who are already hurting so, so badly, suffer even more?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As the member opposite knows, one of the critical pieces that we need to do to encourage our economy to recover and to ensure that we can get the best return on the resources that we own is to ensure that we can find markets for our product and, with any luck, get a pipeline to tidewater. One of the key parts of that is to show leadership on climate change, and that is what our plan does.

Mr. Jean: I would like to congratulate the Premier for bringing in the largest tax grab in Alberta history. It will make everything more expensive: driving, heating your home, turning the lights on. The final bill: almost a thousand dollars a year per household. For every Albertan seeing their wages go down – they have to heat their homes in the winter or drive to work – the Premier has one message: tough luck, too bad, so sad. One economist is calling this the equivalent of a 3 per cent sales tax. The Premier never campaigned on this carbon tax. How can the voters ever trust the Premier again?

The Speaker: Madam Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First of all, the member opposite seems to have some difficulty in terms of interpreting and reading the information that we've put out with respect to our climate change plan. We've been very clear that the

carbon price will be completely and fully recycled into the economy, including being dedicated to families and households and small businesses to make sure that they can make ends meet. This whole process is going to actually trigger economic diversification and a renewable economy and renewable jobs. Our experts say that it . . .

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Jean: The only recycling this does, frankly, is to recycle more funds into the government to slush wherever they want.

Municipalities are warning that this carbon tax will make life more difficult for everyone. For the city of Red Deer it will cost an extra \$4.2 million per year. We know what that means: higher property taxes, higher fees, higher prices for everything for everyone right across the province. For most middle-class Albertans any offset they would get would be a tiny fraction of what they pay directly and through increased prices. Premier, this is much worse than health care premiums. It's as bad as a sales tax. Why can't you just admit it to Albertans?

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, what I can admit to Albertans, which I think the member opposite would have some difficulty with, is that climate change is real and it is time for us to do something about it. We have had municipal leaders, business leaders, civil society leaders all tell us that this is a good plan. Just yesterday we had the federal Minister of Natural Resources say that this plan is going to help us get our resources to tidewater while we're doing the right thing on climate change, which these guys aren't even sure exists.

The Speaker: Second set of questions.

Mr. Jean: The Premier's claim that this massive carbon tax is revenue neutral is simply dishonest, and it's breaking the trust of Albertans. Everyone knows that this is a tax grab. A revenue-neutral tax would have the government not taking in any more money. A revenue-neutral tax would not raise the overall tax burden on Albertans. If the Premier lowered income taxes by \$3 billion, the carbon tax would be revenue neutral, as she's claimed. Will she do that?

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, what we are going to do is that we are going to put every single bit of that carbon price which is collected back into the economy to promote renewable energy growth so that we can get rid of coal by 2030, something which everybody knows is long overdue, so that we can promote energy efficiency, something that we haven't had ever in this province, unlike every other province in the country, so that we can make sure that families can make ends meet. All that money is going back in there, and what it's going to do is build the economy, not bring it down the way the guys opposite would like us to do.

The Speaker: Are we at your first supplemental?

Mr. Jean: Yes, sir.

The Speaker: Please proceed.

Mr. Jean: The economist Trevor Tombe: "The Alberta carbon tax plan is not revenue neutral . . . the government shouldn't try to mislead people." The economist Jack Mintz: "The new consumption levy is . . . directed at spending, not tax relief." The Calgary Chamber: "None of the . . . \$3 billion raised for these measures is directed toward reductions in personal or . . . income tax." Premier, are they wrong, or will you admit that this is just the largest tax grab in Alberta history, that's going to be on the backs of Albertans?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, in fact, I believe the Calgary Chamber of commerce endorsed our plan. Dr. Roger Gibbins, a senior fellow and former president of the Canada West Foundation, not actually known as a left-leaning think tank, said: the first word that comes to mind is balance; also, funds generated by the carbon tax will remain in Alberta, and given that Alberta had to act, the Premier has delivered a package that should sit well with Albertans.

Mr. Jean: Well, it doesn't.

Of course, the NDP won't cut taxes; they only raise taxes. They want to take more money out of the pockets of families and into their government coffers so they have slush funds. Wildrose thinks this is wrong. Alberta families do not deserve economic experiments. They don't deserve to be made to pay almost a thousand dollars more every year with no benefits. Premier, I'll ask again: why are you raising the price of everything for everyone without cutting any taxes?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, first of all, I do need to clarify. The numbers that the member opposite is using are completely wrong. That's the first point. The second point is that what we have talked about is recycling, and we may see some tax relief in some areas. So he doesn't actually know what he's talking about.

What I will say is that I'm going to offer up a different quote because I think this gets to the heart of it. Dr. Joe Vipond said that closing these plants will do more to save lives than he could ever hope to achieve as a physician working in an emergency room. That, Mr. Speaker, is why we are taking action.

The Speaker: Third set of questions.

Mr. Jean: Closing down 30 communities.

Farm and Ranch Worker Legislation Consultation

Mr. Jean: Mr. Speaker, last week I asked the Premier about her plan to saddle Alberta farms and ranches with poorly conceived regulations. The video clip of that exchange has become a bit of a viral sensation in rural Alberta. It has been downloaded actually hundreds of thousands of times and seen by half a million Albertans. What does the Premier have to say to the 45,000 Alberta family farms, that are deeply worried that this government, which has no farmers or ranchers in its caucus, is about to badly hurt their way of life?

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, what I would begin by saying is that Alberta is a province which is part of the country of Canada, which recognizes fundamental human rights. Some of those human rights are the right to refuse unsafe work and the right to be covered by basic employment standards legislation. Now, we have indicated all along that we understand that when it comes to family farms, ensuring that members of families who are working on the family farm are exempted or not covered by this is something that we need to consult with farmers about. That's what's going on right now across the province, and that's what will happen, but we will not back down on ensuring that . . .

2:00

Mr. Jean: They just don't get it, Mr. Speaker. This government consults on complicated matters, apparently. Democratic reform

changes are getting a committee and hearings. The Municipal Government Act: that bill will be tabled and then lots of hearings. But changes to hundreds of years of a way of life for 45,000 Alberta families who depend on farming and ranching: they get no hearings, no committee meetings, and no study by this government. This bill will be rammed through this place and enforced by January 1. Why is the Premier treating our ranchers and farmers like second-class citizens?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you. Well, first of all, Mr. Speaker, it has been the position of our caucus and now this government and certainly our party going forward through the provincial election that this is exactly what we would do. Moreover, when I got elected in 2008, the former government started reviewing it, and then they reviewed it again, and then they had a study, and then they had another review, and then they had more consultations. So the fact of the matter is that it's been reviewed extensively. The reason it keeps getting reviewed is because it is absolutely untenable that in this day and age in the province of Alberta we would deny basic, fundamental human rights to certain groups of workers in this province.

Mr. Jean: Well, if she won't consult farmers, she can consult the people behind her that are going to be very upset after this weekend, when they talk to farmers. This government claims that it is consulting and refers to some town hall meetings across the province, but some of those town halls are scheduled to happen after everything has passed in this Assembly. Also, those town halls are limited-seating meetings, and almost all of them are full, standing room only. Now we are hearing that these won't actually be consultation meetings as much as come-and-be-told meetings. Does the Premier think that this is how Alberta farmers and ranchers deserve to be treated?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, in fact, I was advised yesterday that in Grande Prairie, where there was a great deal of interest in attending the consultation, a second meeting has just been scheduled. So a full second meeting has been scheduled because it was fully subscribed in the course of organizing it.

But let me be clear, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps the members opposite are not quite aware. We passed this legislation, but the regulations are still being consulted on because the regulations can address a number of the concerns that have been raised around the family farm. [interjections] That is an appropriate way to go forward. It's standard governance procedure. I'm not quite sure what these guys have a problem with.

The Speaker: How quickly we forget.

The hon. leader of the third party.

Victorian Order of Nurses

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Victorian Order of Nurses, VON, just announced that they had closed their Alberta operations. Ten full-time and 95 part-time workers will lose their jobs. In addition, much needed programs such as elder-abuse intervention, adult day programs, and home support by the VON will cease to exist. They will close their programs in Alberta and five other provinces after 115 years. Rather than let this not-for-profit provider of much-needed services leave Alberta, will you commit to working with the VON and perhaps supporting them

with some percentage of their operations or some other help to keep them providing their services?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the member opposite has indicated, the nonprofit Victorian Order of Nurses is shutting down operations in six provinces, including Alberta, and will operate only in Ontario and Nova Scotia. We know that this will affect a number of staff. We also know that it will affect roughly 191 people. AHS is working diligently with those people and with the VON in order to ensure that those services are transitioned in a safe and effective way. We are certainly happy to keep members of this Legislature apprised of what those arrangements are looking like.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. McIver: Thank you. I'm glad to hear the Premier say that they're working with those people because the home-care services are deeply personal, and changes in caregiving personnel can be quite upsetting for those that need the services. Given that it's been long noted that home health care services actually save health care costs and that this is exactly the kind of services the VON has provided decades ahead of the curve, because it's considered very important right now, will you work with those people and keep them, the same people, the same caregivers, whether it's as part of the VON or some other part, with the same care receivers. It's very gut wrenching.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the sentiment communicated by the leader of the third party. You're quite right, particularly when it comes to home care, that continuity of treatment and continuity of caregivers are fundamentally important. Certainly, we want to begin by saying that we are very grateful to the VON for the work that they have done. I believe that AHS will be doing everything that they can to ensure that that continuity and that transition are as smooth as possible. There are part-time employees who are impacted by the VON's closing. There may be opportunities to keep those people in the system. I will ask my minister to work with AHS to ensure that continuity and stability.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Second supplemental.

Mr. McIver: Well, thank you. I appreciate the answer from the Premier, and I'm going to extend my question just a little bit further. Will you work with the other provinces to see if there's some joint solution? It may turn out that if we do that, it's more cost-effective for Alberta or will provide more choices on how to deliver the services needed in a more cost-effective way or just maybe a better way. Will you team up, communicate with the other provinces and see what can be gained?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and to the member for the question. The Victorian Order of Nurses is committed to ensuring that there are stable services offered by them until December 2, so given the urgency – and that's around the home-care piece – I'm really focused on making sure that we have alignments in place so that by December 3 there is a smooth transition to protect those patients. Right now that's my number one focus.

In terms of working collaboratively with other provinces, that's certainly something that I will have my department follow up on,

and in terms of day supports the Victorian order will provide those until December 9. We're really working on making sure that we have a smooth transition for every single one of those patients.

Thank you.

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

Opioid Use

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Fentanyl and other opiates of abuse continue to spread in our communities, and the consequences are deadly. Experts are indicating that we may be facing an unprecedented one death per day in Alberta by year's end. These deaths are preventable. It requires brave leadership from this government. Bluntly put, we need action, and we need it now. To the minister: what instructions has the ministry provided Alberta Health Services with regard to increasing access to naloxone and medication-assisted treatment for opioid-use disorder?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and to the member for his question as well as for his service on the mental health review. Of course, mental health and addictions go hand in hand, so this is an area that we have been working collaboratively on. There's a fourfold strategy. Increasing access to naloxone is a must. We know that it is one of those last-minute life-saving strategies, and we've been continuing to add more kits and making sure that it's available in communities throughout Alberta. That is certainly one of the pieces as well as the other prongs, that include addressing recovery and addiction beds, making sure that we're cutting off supply, and also education on the front lines because, of course, we want to cut off . . .

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we enter the unique stresses of the Christmas season and considering the one death per day, will the minister consider declaring a public health emergency to free up resources and allow her to free up access to naloxone for EMS workers, who still can't provide it, nurses, and even responsible family members to provide this life-saving drug?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We know that there is a community response needed on this. In terms of first responders paramedics are currently able to administer and prescribe the antidote, so that is certainly good news. We are working to change regulations for EMTs so that they can administer naloxone as well. That is very important. All paramedics and pharmacists can administer naloxone in an emergency.

In terms of the question around a provincial state of emergency I've been looking into this, and it's my understanding that that wouldn't actually change any of the federal requirements which are governing this area. I'd be happy to discuss that in more detail afterwards.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, that raises the question for the minister: how hard is she working on the federal government to change Bill C-2, which restricts access to harm-reduction services in this province? How hard are you working on the federal government to change that bill?

Ms Hoffman: I think I hear an offer from a member of the party that is now in federal government to support me in my lobbying efforts at the national level.

Certainly, harm reduction is seen nation-wide as being one of the best strategies to extend lives, and evidence is driving our government's decisions on how we address issues such as the one we're currently facing. I hope it will be the focus of the new federal government moving forward. Certainly, harm reduction and access to naloxone are fundamental in addressing the fentanyl crisis.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

2:10 Farm and Ranch Worker Legislation

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I represent a constituency with a strong community of hard-working farmers and ranchers. Many of these people agree that we need to protect the safety of these farm and ranch workers. However, they are deeply concerned that changes could hurt their family farm and affect their way of life. I would like to ask the hon. Minister of Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour about the way she is making sure that this government strikes an appropriate balance between farm safety and preserving the family farm.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. I know that he is a strong advocate for farmers and ranchers both inside and outside of his constituency. We know that these changes are long overdue, but we also want to get it right. We are aware of the concerns that family farms have raised about the need to protect their way of life, and we take those concerns very seriously. We will be looking to other jurisdictions on how they struck an appropriate balance between farm safety and preserving the family farm. We also want to hear the views of farmers and ranchers, which is why we're holding town halls, the first of which is being held tonight in Grande Prairie.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Speaker, given that I have heard that this government is moving forward too quickly and given that there is a lot of misinformation that is fuelling this opinion, can the minister tell the House about a timeline on how these rules will be rolled out?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The regulations, that are the true nuts and bolts of these proposals, will be rolled out in a sure-footed manner. Occupational Health and Safety Act exemptions will be lifted January 1, 2016. Occupational health and safety code technical requirements will be effective in 2017. Workers' compensation is effective January 1, 2016. Labour relations and the employment standards will be effective in the spring of 2016. The regulations of the safety codes will be developed while working with farmers. Consultation is so important to us in going forward.

An Hon. Member: Then do it.

Ms Sigurdson: We're doing it.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this issue is so important and given that town halls are filling up incredibly

quickly, how can farmers ensure that their views are being heard to help inform . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: I'm sorry, hon. member. I didn't get the last part of your question.

Mr. S. Anderson: I think you just like to hear my voice, sir, or the opposition does, too.

The Speaker: Hon. member, I'm still having difficulty hearing you.

Mr. S. Anderson: The last part of the question was: how can farmers ensure that their views are being heard and helping to inform these historic decisions?

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have added additional town halls to ensure that the views of farmers and ranchers are heard and that they receive appropriate information from our officials. There are also many other ways they can be involved. We do have an online survey so that they can have their views sent to us, and we encourage people to e-mail us or phone us if they have further concerns. And we're happy to add additional ones if that's needed. People have responded very positively to that. It's so important for us to hear from farmers and ranchers in the industry, to know how we can support them to create the right balance.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Tobacco Recovery Lawsuit

Mr. Nixon: The government's tobacco litigation project is in the news and not in a good way. The awarding of a contract to litigate health cost recoveries is under huge suspicion. It appears that this Assembly has been deceived and that past Ethics Commissioners have been deceived. Well-connected insiders were improperly awarded a contract that could be worth hundreds of millions of dollars while senior civil servants who should have blown the whistle looked the other way. Can the Premier inform the Assembly about what is being done about this matter?

The Speaker: The hon. Justice minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and to the member for the question. Well, of course, these very serious allegations have been raised, and we are taking them seriously. We have asked for more information and will be completing a review on this matter. Obviously, it raises complicated and conflicting legal issues, and we're committed to ensuring that we move forward in a way that ensures transparency and accountability on the part of government.

Thank you.

Mr. Nixon: This issue matters because two of the senior civil servants of this contract are still in this government. One is now the Deputy Minister of Energy. Given that this senior civil servant looked the other way when a former minister fixed a contract and given that the Deputy Minister of Energy will be responsible for billions in contracts under the new carbon tax and that we know that this deputy minister does not stand up to politicians, what is the Premier going to do about it?

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and to the member for the question. Well, of course, as I've mentioned, these allegations are deep and concerning to this government, and this caucus did raise similar concerns when they were in opposition. Certainly, we are reviewing it to make sure that we proceed in a transparent and open manner and that we have all the information we need to resolve

these competing and conflicting legal issues and that moving forward we're able to operate in a way that gives the public faith in our transparency. Certainly, my deputy minister, who has been assisting me in this, is new to government and has come in since our government has been in.

Mr. Nixon: Given that this is a serious issue that deals with the trustworthiness of this government and given that the government isn't dealing with this issue in an appropriate fashion, will the chair of the Public Accounts Committee tell us if this matter should be put on the schedule of that committee to be investigated and can he also tell us what steps that committee might undertake?

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very honoured to actually answer a question in question period, and I will actually give an answer.

The Public Accounts Committee, due to the unique circumstances in which we find ourselves, will be meeting briefly on Tuesday to discuss a series of meetings that we'll probably be having later in the winter. I will be asking members of the Public Accounts Committee to put on the agenda that we call the office of the Solicitor General and Department of Justice to get to the bottom of this. We're not interested in playing the blame game, but it is important that Albertans get answers so that we can find out what systems broke.

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

Legal Aid

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last year the former government provided the required one-year notice to review legal aid. Yesterday the Minister of Justice announced that the review would occur. Legal aid is an important service, but in the past year the former government provided it with an increase of \$5.5 million, and over the next three years the government is looking at increasing it by a further \$9 million. To the Justice minister: when this review is finished, will you release the cost of hiring lawyers versus contracting them, which is what is currently happening now, and share those details with Albertans?

The Speaker: The Minister of Justice.

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and to the member for the question. Of course, legal aid is an issue that is critical to all Albertans since it protects the most vulnerable in society. We are looking into this review going forward. Certainly, we will be making the outcome of this review public as we work with Legal Aid Alberta to ensure that we can move forward in the best method possible and to ensure that we have the best structure and delivery of legal aid. So we will be looking into those issues.

Thank you.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Minister, and thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, to the same minister: given that yesterday the Minister of Justice also announced that she was increasing Legal Aid lawyers' fees from \$84 per hour to \$92 per hour this year alone and given that this government is running a \$6 billion deficit, give or take, will the minister disclose to taxpayers where this additional money for lawyers' fees is coming from?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice.

2:20

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and to the member for the question. Well, of course, the interim measures that have been brought forward to our government were brought forward by Legal Aid. They had expressed a concern that they were having difficulty retaining counsel to protect vulnerable Albertans and to act in these matters, particularly in the cases of family law. As a result, we have addressed a series of interim measures to make sure that Albertans have access to those services in the interim. In terms of the actual cost, that's within the purview of Legal Aid, so I would suggest that the member direct his question to them.

Thank you.

Mr. Ellis: More money to victims. That's what I say.

To the same minister: given that some members of this House have been suggesting that the victims of crime fund surplus should be used to fund lawyers in Legal Aid and given that this fund was set aside specifically for victims of crime, will the minister commit today to ensuring that the money in the victims of crime fund is directed solely to victims of crime, as it was originally purposed?

Thank you.

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and to the member for the question. Yes, I will commit that the funds in the victims of crime fund will not be used to fund legal aid and that they will be directed to victims of crime.

Thank you.

Wainwright Health Care Facilities

Mr. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Wainwright hospital sewage system backed up, filling the basement with feces. It was reported that the whole hospital reeked of body excrement. In 2010 Alberta Health Services warned the government of this facility's sewage issues and the risk of being shut down. Minister, I sent a letter about this on August 28, to which you replied that while you appreciate the invite to meet, your schedule does not permit you to do so at this time. Are you going to just let this hospital close?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you for the question, Mr. Speaker. I was talking about a specific site visit to the facility. I'm certainly open to having opportunities. It's just that right now I'm really focused on making sure that we're in session, that we're connecting with stakeholders. I certainly feel for the situation that has been brought to light in this House and will be happy to follow up directly with the hon. member.

Mr. Taylor: Given that the Minister of Health has made a promise to meet with me during a previous question in the House and given that I have contacted her office to set up the appointment and given that your office would not provide me with an appointment date, I would like to ask: when will the minister meet with the mayor and myself to discuss where the patients of the Wainwright hospital are going to go to meet their health care needs?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and to the member for the question. Right now I am booked from at least 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. every day. I'm not booked on Sundays, though, so I'd be happy to take time to do a phone call on Sunday, a three-way call on Sunday with yourself and with the mayor.

Mr. Taylor: Well, thank you, Minister.

Now, given that this is a very serious health care issue for the people of Wainwright and given that the minister's own government has flagged this facility for upgrades, will the Minister of Infrastructure consult quickly with the Minister of Health and commit to a new facility for the town of Wainwright, which obviously desperately needs one?

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, we have many competing priorities, as the member knows, but obviously the health of patients throughout the province is a top priority, and we will act accordingly.

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

Ministers' Office Budgets

Mr. Hanson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday in Committee of Supply members of the Wildrose caucus introduced a proposal to make minor cuts to ministerial budgets in the wake of the province's slowing and struggling economy. Unfortunately, the NDP government unilaterally opposed this proposal. They opposed a \$50,000 decrease in the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry's budget, for example, a budget of \$1.3 billion. To the minister of agriculture: why won't this government put itself in the shoes of the people it serves and take a cut in the lavish perks that ministers currently receive?

Mr. Mason: Point of order.

The Speaker: I'll note that there was a point of order. I'll make note of that.

The question?

Mr. Ceci: I'm happy to answer the question. We have put forward a budget that is built on three priorities. Those priorities will be addressed through the course of this budget. The proposals put forward in Committee of Supply and in several estimates committees were not reasonable in our view, so we refused them.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Alberta's economy is struggling, it would appear to me that now is not the time to be spending lavish amounts of money on government officials. But while a record number of Albertans are losing work, it is clear that life in the bureaucracy has never been so good. Again to the Minister of Agriculture: why are this government and senior officials so opposed to cutting their budget, like a measly \$50,000 out of a \$1.3 billion budget, in order to better serve Albertans and to better allocate their hard-earned tax dollars?

Mr. Ceci: Mr. Speaker, there's been a hiring restraint kept on by this government. It was instituted by the previous government, and we have kept that on. We believe that's in the best interest of Albertans and government. When you look at the proportion per capita number of workers here in government compared to many years ago, we haven't grown substantially. So we'll keep this going the way we believe it needs to go.

Mr. Hanson: Well, given that I can't get an answer to my question, I'll try to be more direct.

Albertans are hurting, and many are losing their jobs, and the lucky few that are still employed are facing pay cuts and buckling their belts to face the brunt of this economic storm plaguing Alberta. But for this NDP government, however, times are a-boomin': six-

figure salaries, unreserved power to tax and spend, and lucrative, luxurious perks for the privileged few. Minister, why are you standing here today defending these perks and cashing in on the backs of hurting Albertans?

Mr. Ceci: You know, there was a former Finance critic of the Official Opposition who said: we will not balance the budget on the backs of front-line public service workers and services; we will not unilaterally terminate the legal rights of any Albertan. That is not the way to do business. That former official sat on that side before. I think we're doing what we need to do. We're keeping public-sector workers doing their jobs because throwing them out would put them on the unemployment lines. Obviously, that would help the situation, right?

Climate Change Strategy

Mr. Fraser: As a lifelong Albertan, son, husband, and father the environment has always been important to me and more so since I became a father. So I do want to applaud the government for executing the decision on your climate change strategy. I also appreciate that it generally follows the Progressive Conservative plan, outside the carbon tax on all individuals. To the Minister of Transportation. The broad-based personal carbon tax will apply to every Albertan. In order to help reduce individual carbon footprints, will you commit the revenue from that tax to build and support better public transportation like the southeast legs of the LRT for Calgary and Edmonton?

The Speaker: The Minister of Infrastructure.

Mr. Mason: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We're going to be looking as a government at a broad range of applications for revenue, all of which are focused on improving the situation relative to climate change. I would think that transit might fall into that category, but no decisions have been made, so I'm unable to supply an answer to the member at this time.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Environment: Minister, given the fact that you've announced a goal of 30 per cent renewable green electricity generation by 2020 and given the fact that renewable energy investors will only invest in Alberta if there is a power purchase agreement in place with the government and given the fact that you've already shown the government's hand in terms of your broader goals, how can you ensure that Albertans will now get a fair power purchase agreement with these companies?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. It was our intention, as reported in the climate change panel recommendations that we accepted, to phase out coal emissions by 2030 and replace that electricity generation with renewable power and natural gas. Our plan will create a diversified renewable electricity sector. It will do so using market mechanisms. The Alberta Electric System Operator and AUC will play key roles in maintaining stability.

Mr. Fraser: To the same minister: given the fact that I've said that our environment is one of the most important legacies that we will leave our future generations and given the fact that what you say and do as a government has a definite impact on every Albertan, can you exactly articulate what you will be saying to the world at

the climate change summit about Alberta, our industry leaders, and our already world-leading track record on environmental regulations?

2:30

The Speaker: The hon. minister of environment.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity to practise my talking points before I get to the UN summit. We are going to be talking about how Albertans are not followers; it is time for Alberta to lead on climate change and energy development. We will do so by introducing a large number of renewables into our electricity system. We will do so by pricing carbon appropriately. We will do so by diversifying the economy and building on the back of our energy sector so that this province may have a conversation with our trading partners about energy infrastructure on its own merits.

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

Mr. Coolahan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past weekend our government announced a climate change strategy that has received support from both industry and environmental groups. My constituents know that in these tough economic times we need to stimulate economic growth and diversification to support job creation. They hope our climate strategy will build support for new markets for Alberta's oil. To the minister of environment: how will our new climate strategy support jobs and diversification?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For starters, of course, our climate change plan has a very strong focus on jobs, which is why we heard from so many industry leaders on the weekend about exactly that matter. For example: Alberta wins in today's announcement. Murray Edwards from CNRL said that it "is a significant step forward for Alberta [and for the industry] . . . In this way, we will do our part to address climate change while protecting jobs and industry competitiveness in Alberta."

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Coolahan: Thank you, Minister. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that constituencies like mine already have experience and capacity in the energy industry, to the same minister: how will the transition to a greener economy create stable jobs?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, Sunday was about articulating our larger vision for leadership on climate. Now a number of things will follow such as our ambitious renewables phase-in. Our methane policy has sort of been a quieter little sister to the other pieces, but our methane goal of a 45 per cent reduction by 2025 will lead to increased energy jobs as companies are investing in leak detection and pneumatic devices in addition to the energy efficiency investments that we will making and the policy frameworks around small-scale renewables, efficiency retrofits, geothermal, you name it.

The Speaker: I'm pleased that the first supplemental allowed you to speak about your little sister.

Second supplemental.

Mr. Coolahan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that revenue from the proposed price on carbon will stay in Alberta, again to the same

minister: can you provide details on how this revenue will support families and communities in my constituency?

Ms Phillips: Thank you to the hon. member for the question. Of course, the carbon price will be directed to two places, Mr. Speaker, investment in the economy and adjustment. The adjustment will help families make ends meet. It will support small businesses, First Nations, and people working in the coal industry through the transition. All revenue collected will be put to work right here in Alberta, building our economy, creating jobs, reducing pollution, and promoting greater energy efficiency.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Farm and Ranch Worker Legislation Consultation (continued)

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Bill 6 is threatening family farms across the province, and it's being imposed with little to no consultation with the people it will hit the hardest. Now, to be sure, the minister would never negotiate union contracts without proper input from union members. Farmers should be treated with the same respect. This legislation should not be rammed through this House without proper consultation. My office is being flooded with calls from people who feel ignored. To the minister: will you give farmers the dignity they deserve by providing proper consultation on this bill before it is passed?

The Speaker: The Minister of Advanced Education and of labour.

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Family farms are essential to the culture of Alberta, and it's very important to us as a government to make sure that we hear from farms and ranches and industry leaders to make sure that we get it right. That's why we're having extensive consultations. We've added additional ones because they were so well subscribed to. We're very pleased people are stepping up, and we absolutely want to hear what they have to say. We'll work with them to make sure that we understand the specific nuances of the industry.

Thank you.

Mr. Hunter: Given that the first offence for breaking an OH and S rule can be a \$500,000 fine and six months in jail, farmers are rightfully afraid that this legislation could ruin their farms and their lives. That's why in every consultation in the past – every one, Mr. Speaker – they have asked for education, not legislation. Can the minister guarantee that farmers will not face hefty fines or jail time just for doing what they've done proudly and safely for generations?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This bill is about safety. What we're doing as of January 1 is that WCB is mandatory as well as the exemption from the Occupational Health and Safety Act is lifted. That just gives us access to the farm and ranch sector so that if there is a fatality, we can go on and help prevent it. We absolutely know that education is essential to make sure that we can prevent these kinds of serious injuries and fatalities in the future, so we'll be working in an educational way.

Thank you.

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, I was asked the following question by a farmer, so I will ask the minister. Given that the NDP's big argument is that Albertans have been waiting 98 years for this

legislation, why is Bill 6 not applying to the rest of the four and a half pages of industries that are exempt from WCB? Four and a half pages of exemptions. If Albertans are in such need, then why so many exemptions still?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's really important for us to strike a balance between the safety of workers on farms and also protecting farmers. We know that there have been previous fatalities where the worker's family has no recourse but to sue that farmer, and then that farmer often will lose their farm. WCB will provide safety for both the farm owner and the workers. We know that this is a really important way to go forward, and it helps both parties.

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

Climate Change Strategy (continued)

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Some – and I emphasize some – elements of the new climate change action plan adopted by this government should be largely applauded. Indeed, the government has acted upon a number of initiatives that our caucus believes are very important such as continuing with the important work to reduce methane gases from venting and flaring and fugitive emissions. However, there are serious concerns with the overall plan which need to be addressed. To the minister of environment: what will be the costs to taxpayers of transitioning from the previous climate change compliance framework, the specified gas emitters regulation, to the tax on carbon?

The Speaker: The minister of environment.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. Of course, we have quite a lead time for this because when we updated SGER, the specified gas emitters regulation, we did so for 2017, so there will be a phase-in of the performance standards model in oil sands and other energy-intensive, trade-exposed industries beginning in 2018. We have a bit of a long runway here so that we can ensure that we get those performance standards right, that we've had those appropriate conversations with all of the sectors that are energy intensive and trade exposed.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you to the minister. We still didn't get the costs on that.

The government first said they wanted to stop funding carbon capture and storage and then discovered it wasn't such a bad idea after all, and we now find that CCS is absent from this plan. The government committed to continuing our CCS project, which has worked successfully in Germany, Australia, and Saskatchewan. Why is there a gap here? Why did this government continue with CCS if it was not to be part of this climate change plan?

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you to the hon. member for the question. You know, Alberta has made its fair share of investments in CCS, some would say more than our fair share. We were committed to working with existing projects that had signed contracts with the government, to see them through. Going forward, we intend to evaluate all of our options. There will be investments that we make in technology and innovation, Mr. Speaker. What this Alberta government is committed to is science. So if there are science-based reasons for those investments, if they reveal themselves over time,

then we will consider those at that time, but we will not be following any more bright, shiny objects and looking for silver bullets.

2:40

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think there's a song about that as well: *Blinded by Science*.

Again to the same minister: given that we are seeing very different approaches to reducing carbon emissions from coal versus carbon emissions from other sources, why is this government letting the market dictate and drive improved efficiency with other carbon emission sources, including noncoal energy generation – personal vehicles, for example – while not affording the coal industry the same chance to innovate?

The Speaker: The minister of environment.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, if the panel report was read closely, it is a phase-out of coal-fired emissions by 2030. The fact of the matter is that the panel recommended to us a number of ways that we could find to reduce the easiest emissions. That's why we took the position that we did on methane, that's why we are looking at energy efficiency, that's why we are engaging a coal-fired phase-out, and that's why we have implemented performance standards in energy-intensive, trade-exposed industries, to drive our emissions down. That's exactly what we will do. We will bend that curve and lead the country.

The Speaker: Hon. members, we are fifteen seconds away from time, so I'd suggest that we move on.

Notices of Motions

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

Mr. Mason: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am standing to provide notice of written questions and motions for returns to be dealt with on Monday. They are written questions 1 to 6 and motions for returns 1 and 2.

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education and Minister of Culture and Tourism.

Bill 8

Public Education Collective Bargaining Act

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce a bill being Bill 8, the Public Education Collective Bargaining Act.

I've been here since 2004, and this is the first bill I've introduced.

[Motion carried; Bill 8 read a first time]

Bill 206

Recall Act

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

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today and request leave of the House to introduce Bill 206, the Recall Act.

[Motion carried; Bill 206 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The Minister of Advanced Education and Minister of Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour.

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present to the House the Budget 2015 Advanced Education questions and answers that weren't provided in estimates, so I offer them to the House now.

Mr. Mason: I'm probably not on your list, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: At least not on this list.

Mr. Mason: I'm just throwing you a curve here.

On behalf of the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry I would like to table the requisite number of copies of the written responses to questions the minister received on estimates at the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future.

Mr. Smith: I'm not on your list, either, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Actually, you are.

Mr. Smith: I would like to table the requisite number of copies of the correspondence that I referred to this morning.

Thank you.

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

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings. One is on naloxone availability and the take-home kits, reported in a recent newspaper article.

The second is a memorial tribute to the late Weslyn Mather, printed by a local media outlet.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The Minister of Education and Minister of Culture and Tourism.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table the requisite number of copies of my written responses in regard to the November 3 review of Alberta Culture and Tourism.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table the previous questions that have been raised in this House regarding the Wainwright hospital and also the facility infrastructure capital submission from Alberta Health Services in 2011. I do have the five required copies here.

The Speaker: Hon. members, pursuant to Section 46(1) of the Conflicts of Interest Act I would like to table with the Assembly the requisite number of copies of the annual report of the Ethics Commissioner of Alberta for the period April 1, 2014, to March 31, 2015.

Hon. Member for Airdrie, do you have a tabling?

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you. Another tabling, yes. I'd like to table the requisite number of copies of the Calgary YWCA's media release announcing the Great Gulf group of companies' no-fee lease extension of two years. I congratulate the leadership in both organizations for ensuring the YWCA continues to offer services for women fleeing violence and seeking social services.

Tablings to the Clerk

The Clerk: I wish to advise the House that the following document was deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of the hon. Ms Phillips, Minister of Environment and Parks and Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, pursuant to the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act the Environmental Protection and Security Fund Annual report, April 1, 2014, to March 31, 2015.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I would make an observation for the information of the House. There was a practice that I was not familiar with. There is a lot that I have not been familiar with. There was no point of order raised, but there was a question to the chair of a committee. I intend to re-examine that process and make myself better informed of it.

We also have the Government House Leader, who has raised a point of order, I believe. The Government House Leader.

Point of Order

Items Previously Decided

Mr. Mason: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My apologies for not noting which member of the Official Opposition – thank you very much, hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills – was asking a question which reflected upon a decision of the House that had been previously made. The rule is that “a question, once put and carried in the affirmative or negative, cannot be questioned again.” This is from O’Brien and Bosc, *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*. “Such reflections are not in order because the Member is bound by a vote agreed to by a majority.”

So then this exception is a notice that the motion would be rescinded. I just wanted to make that point of order, that questions should not be about previous decisions of the House, and this question was.

2:50

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. Government House Leader. I have to dispute the point of order. I will take it under advisement for the future and have a better look at things.

My question wasn’t actually to have the government rescind a decision that had already been made. I was just pointing out to the House and to Albertans that we missed a great opportunity yesterday to pull back a little bit and just show a little bit of leadership from the House. That was my only point. I wasn’t asking anyone to rescind a decision that’s already been made in the House.

You know, further, I feel that I will stand up in the House and defend the interests of Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills and all Albertans at every opportunity when it comes to lavish spending by ministries.

The Speaker: Hon. member, you stand by the point you made. Is that correct? Are you standing by the point?

Mr. Hanson: Mr. Speaker, I will stand by the fact that I didn’t ask anyone to rescind a decision made by the House.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I just received some background and notes on this matter. I recognize that the House would prefer that I make a ruling immediately. I intend to just study the matter. I will address it, if the House is agreeable, next week.

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders

Second Reading

Bill 5

Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act

[Adjourned debate November 25: Ms Ganley]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Mr. Loyola: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to stand in the House today and speak to Bill 5, Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act. Under Bill 5 the Alberta government is significantly expanding public-sector compensation disclosure with the proposed public-sector compensation disclosure act.

Albertans deserve to know where their money is being spent. I think we can all agree on this. I’ll remind members present that this government is keeping its promise to increase transparency in the public sector and expand the sunshine list of publicly disclosed salaries. The bill would require disclosure from agencies, boards, commissions, postsecondary institutions, offices of the Legislature, physicians and other medical practitioners as well as health services entities, and other public-sector bodies. The bill would result in a salary disclosure primarily for those earning more than \$125,000 per year, putting the focus on higher income earners and managers.

The disclosure will include employees of public-sector bodies governed by the Alberta Public Agencies Governance Act. There are currently 157 of these entities, including public postsecondary institutions and Alberta Health Services. The legislation also extends salary disclosure to the offices of the Legislature. Finally, disclosure will also apply to employees of Covenant Health, and the legislation can be expanded by regulation to include other entities that receive significant public funds. The bodies will have to disclose the names and compensation of all employees who earn more than \$125,000 in total compensation, including overtime, severances, and bonuses.

When it comes to board members, the vast majority of them do not receive a salary, as we well know. Instead, they often receive a per diem and rates for meetings. These positions have often been criticized as patronage appointments, so this government, in addition to reviewing the agencies, boards, commissions, and appointments, will ensure that the compensation for these positions is publicly available.

Now, specifically when it comes to physicians and other health service providers, Mr. Speaker, the act will also enable regulations to require the disclosure of fee-for-service payments as well as other payments made with public funds to physicians and other health services providers. Because physicians and other medical professionals are compensated through a variety of funding mechanisms, unique rules will need to be applied, and the details will be developed after consultation with physicians and will be laid out in the regulations.

Delivering honesty and ethics in government was a key priority in the Alberta NDP election campaign platform. Mr. Speaker, commitment 2.5 of the election platform states, “We will extend the sunshine list to include our province’s agencies, boards and commissions.” I’m proud to speak to the fact that we’re following through with our platform promises.

I’d also like to speak to the fact that the Justice minister has been very open on this. On November 6 in the *Edmonton Journal* the Justice minister stated, “The bill follows through on our promise to improve transparency in our public sectors.” This government is

serious about increasing transparency, and this bill will show Albertans how their tax dollars are being spent.

It is with great honour that I speak to this bill, and I encourage all of the members of the House to support it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I've been advised that the Government House Leader may have a request of the House with respect to a procedural matter that was overlooked.

The Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, I would request that we revert to Notices of Motions.

The Speaker: And you're asking for unanimous consent to do so. Is that correct?

Mr. Mason: Yes.

Mr. Fildebrandt: We don't know why.

Mr. Mason: Well, I did it wrong. Okay?

Mr. Speaker, I did not state the complete motion. It has to do with the written questions and motions for returns that the government has accepted.

The Speaker: As I understand his motion – I think this is the very first mistake that the member has made in the House – it was just simply a correlation between his words and what was on the record.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Notices of Motions

(reversion)

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(3) I am rising to advise the House that on Monday, November 30, written questions 1 and 6 will be accepted and written questions 2, 3, 4, and 5 will be dealt with.

Also on Monday, November 30, Motion for a Return 2 will be accepted and Motion for a Return 1 will be dealt with.

Government Bills and Orders

Second Reading

Bill 5

Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act

(continued)

The Speaker: We're back to the bill. The Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie has finished.

The next speaker is Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This bill has a special place in my heart. I'd like to say that I grew this bill from my heart outwards. There might be a copyright on that. In all seriousness, I am very pleased to see this bill come forward, and I thank the last member for his constructive comments. I am pleased to see that the sunshine list, that, I might say, I think I had some hand in getting started several years ago, is now going further.

When I served with the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, there was little to no public information available on the salaries or severances or contracts of government employers and contractors.

3:00

The fight for a sunshine list in the province got started with a fight over the disclosure of information for government staff. I

wanted to know how much the chief of staff for the Premier of the day in 2012 was making. Normally the government allows anyone and everyone to access that kind of information using the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, or FOIP. I filed a FOIP for the Premier's chief of staff at that time to find their contract in order to find out what severance that member of her staff was making. It seemed like the kind of fact that I believed taxpayers had a right to know. If a large severance package was being paid out to top government officials with taxpayers' money, then the taxpayers paying for that bill had a right to know how much was being spent, which, I might add, was just the transparent thing to do.

Telling taxpayers how their money is being spent is an integral part of transparent and open government. When I FOIPed the Premier's chief of staff for the severance and contract, I was, surprisingly, denied. They gave me the runaround and kept making excuses as to why they could not or would not give me the information. That's when I knew that the information would probably be really interesting. This kind of information used to be public. In fact, previous chiefs of staff to the Premier had had their contracts and severance FOIPed, and it had been released, but for reasons that I still do not understand, I was denied the information.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

We took this fight public and told Albertans that they were being denied information about how their money was being spent, that they had a right to know. To say the least, many Albertans were upset, so we launched a campaign to go further than this, not just to give us this one-off contract and make us fight for every single government employee's contract but, instead, for a full sunshine list to disclose the salaries, severances, and pension entitlements of senior government employees making \$100,000 or more.

Instead of just releasing this one piece of information, the government did the right thing and created its first sunshine list. The government created a sunshine list to detail the salaries and severances of its senior employees. The sunshine list of that day was the seed for the bill that we are expanding upon today. That sunshine list was brought into place through regulation and orders in council. This will entrench it in law and expand upon it. Alberta was one of the few provinces without any sunshine list for its government employees. We have a relatively small sunshine list at the moment, but this bill is a good and strong step forward to a more fulsome sunshine list.

Alberta spends a lot on government employees, their salaries and benefits. In fact, half of Alberta's budget is spent on salaries and benefits. I'd like to say that 50 per cent of every tax dollar is being spent on salaries, but in fact it has grown to become quite more than that. The government is spending more than it is bringing in, and we are now on track to see the portion of our government spending focused on government salaries increase beyond 50 per cent. I'd like to say that it's beyond the point, but that is the point. The point is that if we are spending too much on salaries, Albertans have a right to know about it whenever government is spending their money.

This bill is a major step forward. We would like to see this bill include all 147 of the ABCs under the Alberta Public Agencies Governance Act and all 52 agencies reporting directly to the government of Alberta. I would read every single one into the record, but one of my colleagues, I believe, will be doing that soon. I'm kidding. Not funny to the Government House Leader, I know. I'm not kidding also that this bill should include, though, every aspect of the government, all of the ABCs. Why would Albertans want to know only part of the government's large salaries?

Albertans want a full and comprehensive sunshine list. Albertans deserve to see a sunshine list that is comprehensive and includes the entire government.

Don't get me wrong. This bill is a major step forward and has the full support of the Wildrose Official Opposition, but we can make it better. This builds on what we have, and it accomplishes a lot of what we have been asking for. Our amendments will be constructive and helpful. Quite possibly, I think that the government may be welcoming some of the amendments that come, amendments that would expand the scope of the sunshine list but also ensure that certain areas that the sunshine list has been expanded to or has been proposed to be expanded to are done reasonably and not release the salaries of employees whom no one is asking to see the salaries of. The Member for Drayton Valley-Devon will be speaking on that in a bit. Either way, this is an improvement on a good piece of legislation, that needs to be implemented in this House fully and completely.

I don't mean to dwell on the past, but the past is a large part of the reason why we have a sunshine list in this province. Previous governments, not just in this province but across the country, have been accused of using patronage appointments to fill high-paying jobs with their friends. I'm sure that this government and any future government would not want to be accused of doing that, and I know that no government would want to be found guilty of giving patronage appointments. Jobs should go to those who are skilled and most qualified for the job, not because they are friends of the government or ran in an election for them at some point. Could you imagine a government that was voted out of office because they were constantly accused of doing this kind of thing, only to find out that the new government does it? That would be horrible, and I'm sure that citizens of that jurisdiction would not be happy about it.

An expanded sunshine list would ensure that governments cannot give patronage appointments without those who pay for their government salaries knowing about the appointment. Just as the ability to file a freedom of information request is a tool for the people to keep governments accountable, so too is an expanded sunshine list. Albertans should not have to file a freedom of information request for every single contract, for every single person in the government to discover who was being paid or overpaid for their position. When sunshine lists were created in other provinces, we discovered parking attendants being paid more than \$100,000.

Mr. Mason: Where?

Mr. Fildebrandt: The Government House Leader has asked: where? The Toronto Transit Commission had toll booth attendants, I believe, who had salaries exceeding \$100,000. As much as we value the work, it might be a bit overpriced. Without a sunshine list the odds of someone deciding to file a freedom of information request for that person's contract would be slim to none, but the public needs to know if there are positions that are not being reasonably paid.

The sunshine list helps to keep governments in check. It reminds us that if we are going to give friends in high places high-paying jobs, the public will know, and they'll have a right to respond however they so choose. There will be no way to hide this kind of government entitlement. Without every aspect of the government being covered by a sunshine list, there is always that one hidden place where this kind of entitlement could be hidden. That is why we need a full and comprehensive sunshine list. We need to ensure that no government is ever tempted to give their friends jobs that they're not qualified for.

I am in full support of this bill. My colleagues will be offering constructive and helpful amendments. Before we come to those amendments, I encourage all members of this House to vote for this bill in second reading.

The Deputy Speaker: Do we have anybody who wants to make a comment or a question under 29(2)(a)?

If not, then we will go on to the next speaker, the hon. Member for St. Albert.

3:10

Ms Renaud: Thank you. Well, I suppose the real skill of a politician is reworking things, so you not only plant the seed, but you also have amendments to something that isn't really your idea. I'm always stunned at how the members across the way take credit for everything. [interjections] That's okay. It's all right. You're just here to help, and I appreciate that.

This bill is one of the commitments our government made. Many of the constituents I've met with and chatted with have also expressed to me their satisfaction at the fact that we are taking this seriously and we're moving forward right away. They've expressed that Albertans should know where their tax dollars are being used for public services. Transparency is essential to being accountable to Albertans. Public-sector entities are financed through tax dollars. We all know that transparency is essential.

Municipalities and school boards are governed by elected officials within that entity. They will be given the choice to publicly disclose their compensation. These two groups are accountable to their electorates and will be able to decide for themselves what best fits the public interest of those communities. The act enables but does not require disclosure of the names of and compensation paid to employees. They will be able to create their own rules around threshold amounts and other details around disclosure.

It should be noted, Madam Speaker, that school boards are already required by the School Act to disclose the compensation paid to board members, superintendents, and secretary treasurers. Municipalities are also already required to disclose the salaries of councillors, the chief administrative officer, and the designated officer of the municipality through the Municipal Government Act. In addition, these bodies will be required to disclose all remuneration for all members of their boards or other governing bodies.

Government of Alberta employees: this bill moves compensation disclosure for government of Alberta employees, currently a Treasury Board directive, into legislation. For government of Alberta employees the threshold remains the same, \$104,754, excluding overtime. Including bonuses and other forms of remuneration will ensure that compensation cannot be withheld from disclosure. They will be able to create their own rules around threshold amounts and other details around disclosure.

If passed, the act would come into force upon royal assent, and the first disclosure under the act would be on June 30, 2016. Ministries will be consulting with entities on how best to implement some aspects of the act through regulations.

That is about it. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Does anyone have a question for the hon. Member for St. Albert or a comment under 29(2)(a)?

If not, then go ahead, hon. Member for Highwood.

Mr. W. Anderson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's an honour to rise on a bill that aims to bring greater transparency to our government. I know the previous government attempted this, and it never came to fruition. I only hope that this current government

doesn't show the same bad habits like potentially giving patronage appointments to failed candidates. But that being said, this bill is a step in the right direction. Publishing public-sector compensation lists, a.k.a. sunshine lists, is a simple and important tool in the maintenance of accountability and transparency in democracy. That's why the Wildrose has always supported this.

There are over 52 agencies reporting directly to the government on top of 142 agencies, boards, and commissions. However, the \$17 billion that funds Alberta Health Services has been shrouded in secrecy. I think I speak for all Albertans in expressing my interest in what's going on behind the curtain.

This is not an attack on the public sector or any of their agencies, boards, or commissions. In fact, it's quite the opposite. We appreciate the tremendous work they perform, and we understand that they are instrumental in the delivery of many vital services. But like many companies around this province right now, it's important, now more than ever, that we analyze how the organization is functioning. Sunshine lists will also be important moving forward. They will serve as a benchmark for government spending and make sure that we can understand how much the bureaucracy is bloating.

There are a lot of layoffs happening across the province right now. On this side of the aisle we hear about it from our constituents daily. Thousands of Albertans are struggling to make ends meet right now, and these people have a right to know exactly what their hard-earned tax dollars are going towards. Those same Albertans are the ones that are facing tax hikes on almost everything they buy, thanks to the carbon tax grab. They are the same Albertans that are facing a decrease in hours at work because the increase in minimum wage is making it harder for them and their employers to run their businesses.

So while the government is lining their coffers with new taxes on essentially everyone and everything, it is at least nice to know that they'll be showing who is making \$104,000 and up for government employees and \$125,000 per year for public-sector bodies. Truth be told, Madam Speaker, any number selected as a threshold limit is a fairly arbitrary number, but I can understand that bringing Albertans closer in line with other provinces in Confederation is a logical starting place. Now, if only the NDP would apply some of the same logic to the farm safety bill, there might be some real progress.

I've heard some speculation that introducing a sunshine list will cause a wage increase among employees near the threshold, that government employees will be trying to negotiate higher wages once they find out what their counterparts are making. That is a possibility. But what I believe to be just as likely is a compression of wages near the upper end of the pay scale. There are several examples of these.

Now, I'm sure everyone in the House well knows there is no pressure like public pressure. Sunshine lists themselves are a check and balance from runaway government salaries. However, if there are any agency departments that experience a peak in pay, I believe that public sentiment would push those wages downward, and I would hope that rather than the government raising other service providers up a level, they would correct the inflation. Madam Speaker, I cannot speak too confidently on that matter, though. After all, we do have a government that is starting to build a \$3 billion slush fund.

I'm wondering why certain agencies, like the Environmental Monitoring Management Board and the Environmental Monitoring Working Group, seem to be exempt from this legislation. Is there a particular reason why these agencies should be held to a different standard than other groups receiving government funding? Again, not to detract from the work that these groups are performing, it only seems logical that other ABCs receiving government funding

will be subject to the same set of standards. This will not only build trust from the public but will prevent the sentiment of favouritism.

Overall, I am pleased to see a step in the direction of transparency and accountability, a step that's been long overdue in this province. Madam Speaker, I'd like to express my support for this bill and the much-awaited sunshine list for the government and agencies, boards, and commissions and employees. Just as a friendly reminder to the Minister of Infrastructure: we're still waiting for your sunshine list.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)? Seeing none, I'll recognize Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to thank the government for bringing forward this piece of legislation. It is a good piece of legislation, and with some amendments I think that it could be a great piece of legislation. Every province in Canada excluding Quebec has a sunshine list of some form or another. We were one of the last, if not the last province, to enact a sunshine list.

During Redford's reign the government of Alberta sunshine list was created, which listed those making over \$104,000. This allowed taxpayers to know who was being appointed to high-paying positions directly within the government's main decision-making centre. But this sunshine list was only for government of Alberta workers and excluded employees of the public-sector bodies. It excluded agencies, boards, and commissions governed by the Alberta Public Agencies Governance Act. This bill extends the sunshine list to include those boards, agencies, and commissions. It's a great step forward towards comprehensive transparency.

3:20

The Wildrose has long championed and campaigned on extending the sunshine list to include the 142 agencies, boards, and commissions, or the ABCs. What I am confused about is why this government would choose to include most boards but exclude others. When the Redford government created this legislation, it was because Albertans were accusing them of giving patronage appointments and high severances. The sunshine list was created so that the government would be transparent with how much they are paying people in all high positions in the government.

Now, this bill sets to ensure that all high-paying positions that use taxpayers' money will be fully disclosed. At least, that is what I had hoped. But the speed of this session has not left us with much time to spend on these bills. It doesn't appear that all of the province's agencies, boards, and commissions are covered by this new sunshine list. I'm wondering why some things are excluded, and it's tough to come up with an answer. If the members opposite have more information about this, I would really, truly like to hear more details.

I have had the great pleasure of raising five children with my beautiful wife; several of them are grown up and have moved on in life. But before they grew up, they were just kids, and kids sometimes try and get away with things. They tell you a story about what really happened and how Jimmy down the street was the real culprit and how they were innocent little angels. Sometimes kids use tactics to try to get away with some things, and one of the tactics they try and use is to tell you 90 per cent of the story with hopes that you don't see the other 10 per cent.

Now, what I learned is that that 10 per cent is the key, that 10 per cent has the rest of the story in it, and how illuminating that 10 per cent truly turns out to be. The other 90 per cent sounds really good, and my kids really were little angels most of the time, but at this point you have to look for what they are not telling you, not what they are telling you but what they are not telling you. They give you

so much information, hoping that you overlook that little bit of information left out. That's what I call the 10 per cent rule, which is: always look into the 10 per cent. True transparency and accountability demand more than 90 per cent; they require the last 10 per cent as well.

Transparency and accountability are extremely important, especially when it comes to spending other people's money. Since 50 per cent of taxpayers' money goes towards paying for salaries, accountability and transparency for salaries needs to be beyond reproach. I hope to hear more about who is included and not included and some of the reasons for that.

The last government was accused over and over again of not being accountable and transparent. They lost an election for it. I don't think that this government would like to be similarly labelled. We all want government to be accountable to Albertans. I congratulate this government on bringing in this bill and for taking this major step to make sure that the highest taxpayer-funded salaries are out in the open. I look forward to hearing more debate and to going through Committee of the Whole and hearing what my colleagues have to say.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you. I was just wondering if you could expand on some of things with regard to Bill 5 that could be expanded on. You had alluded to some of the things that you thought could be changed or expanded on. Would you mind expanding on those things?

Thank you.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you to the member. I guess the question is: do we have an extensive list of the ABCs that are being added to this sunshine list? From some of the research that I've done, it shows that we do not have an extensive list. So the question remains: if there are some ABCs that are not added to this list, is there a way for the government to appoint patronage positions to these agencies, boards, or commissions? That's my concern. We want to make sure that this bill is right and that Albertans are right with how this bill goes forward.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other comments under 29(2)(a)?

If not, then I will recognize the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Madam Speaker. You know, it's regrettable that we even have to have a conversation about having a sunshine list in order to keep governments honest and responsible when compensating employees or people that have been appointed to agencies, boards, and commissions. It's not something that, you know, in the world that we live in . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Excuse me for a moment, hon. member.

Just a reminder to members that we're not in committee anymore, and you cannot walk around, visit with people from desk to desk. Please use the pages if you need to talk, or pass a note. Thank you. Go ahead.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

You know, I guess that when you come into the world of politics and you've lived most of your life outside of it, it's just something that you wonder. How does this happen, and what's the need for a sunshine list?

You know, it's regrettable that we all can probably point to past examples of governments from around the world and across Canada and perhaps even in Alberta that have lived up to the maxim or the idea that it's okay for governments to use political patronage and to belly up to the public trough in order to reward your political friends. I'm sure that for those of us that went to university and studied any kind of political science, we've all read stories of this kind of unacceptable practice.

So I am very happy that we have the opportunity today to speak to the Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act, that we will have the opportunity as a provincial government to make our government better and to make the spending of our hard-earned tax dollars from our citizens more efficient and have more merit in the spending of that money. It's sad to realize that sometimes governments care more about rewarding political allies than ensuring that the hard-earned tax dollars of our citizens are being spent wisely and prudently. As I've said, it may be regrettable and it may be sad that this occurs, and it appears that a sunshine list is necessary, so I'm glad that we're looking at that today.

Bill 5, as I understand it, extends the public-sector salary disclosure to include employees of public-sector bodies, including agencies, boards, and commissions. This bill will require the disclosure of a salary over \$104,000 for government of Alberta employees and taking it from regulations and into formal law. Board members of agencies will have to disclose all compensation that they receive. It adds physicians, independent offices of the Legislature, public postsecondary institutions, Alberta Health Services, teachers, and other organizations to this sunshine list.

We've heard other members say it from this side of the House. The Wildrose Party has long supported the addition to the sunshine list of agencies and boards and commissions. We campaigned on expanding the sunshine list to include the 142 agencies, boards, and commissions under APAGA and the 52 agencies reporting directly to the government of Alberta.

I guess this is one of those times when we can have common cause with our compatriots across the aisle. Indeed, I would note that the NDP also campaigned in the recent election, stating that they would extend the sunshine list to include our province's agencies, boards, and commissions. So when we may have had to disagree in some areas in the House today, it's nice to be able to agree today at this point in time.

You know, when you take a look at appointments to the agencies, boards, and commissions that serve this government, I think we would all agree that these appointments should be based on merit, that it should not be on whom you know but on what you can do and what you bring to the table. The compensation of those people from these agencies, boards, and commissions should be reflective of the duties that are entailed. The compensation should reflect the level of the job and the duties, and the things that they are expected to accomplish should be reflected in that compensation. But the compensation, Madam Speaker, should be also reflective of the need for good stewardship of the tax dollars that are collected by the government of Alberta from the taxpaying citizens of Alberta. That compensation should not be excessive. That compensation should be reasonable. The taxpayers have not only a right to know where their tax dollars are being spent but also that they are receiving good value for those tax dollars.

3:30

I believe that this bill will move us forward and take us closer to ensuring that not only do we have good stewardship of our resources but indeed that the people that are performing these services on behalf of Albertans are doing a good job. It's important

for all Albertans to know and to have confidence that the remuneration provided to those who serve on government-funded agencies, boards, and commissions is fair compensation and that we are indeed being fair to the taxpaying citizens of this province.

While a sunshine list, I do believe, is not designed to ferret out the salary or stipend paid by the Alberta government to its public employees, not on every salary that is paid for by the government, it's designed, I believe, to shed light on spending that may be deemed as being excessive. I don't believe it's designed to threaten the privacy of your average, ordinary wage earner who is actively working in the public service. Rather, a sunshine list is designed to protect the taxpaying citizens and to ensure the good stewardship of public finances.

That is why I can support the threshold of disclosure in this bill. It's been set at \$125,000, and that will be adjusted annually for inflation. I believe that it's a reasonable limit, a reasonable threshold. Other provinces have set thresholds. British Columbia, for instance, has set a threshold of around \$100,000; Manitoba is at \$50,000; Saskatchewan, \$50,000; Ontario, around \$100,000; Nova Scotia, \$100,000; Newfoundland and Labrador is at \$100,000 starting in April 2016. I think we can see that there are various thresholds that have been set across this country. While I suppose we could argue about whether the number in this bill is too high or too low, I believe, personally, that it sets a reasonable monetary threshold. This threshold will allow the people of Alberta to review those who receive significant compensation from public coffers while allowing for the privacy of average salaried employees of the government of Alberta and those people who serve on agencies, boards, and commissions overseen by APAGA.

There's a balancing act that we have to find here, one that allows for your average citizen, your average person serving on a board or a commission, to have the privacy that they deserve when it comes to their salary and their remuneration while at the same time ensuring that the financial remuneration is not excessive and that it is for the good of the people of Alberta.

There is at least one group of people that I believe is unfairly targeted in this bill, and that is teachers. Why teachers were singled out I guess only the government and the people that drafted this bill can answer. But this MLA and, I believe, this party that I represent believe that Bill 5 should be amended, that it should be amended to correct what I can only refer to as a puzzling aberration in Bill 5. I think that it is simply a matter of fairness and the reasonable desire for privacy by those people who are not receiving excessive compensation from the government of Alberta.

So while I take a great deal of pride in being able to say that I support Bill 5 and the creation of a sunshine list, I will be tabling an amendment to ensure that teachers are provided with the same threshold limit of \$125,000 as the rest of the public employees in Alberta.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments? No questions or comments for the hon. member?

Any other hon. member who wishes to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Mr. Yao: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to speak to second reading of Bill 5, the Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act. I'd like to congratulate this government on taking the first big steps to making more transparency from within the Alberta government. Wildrose has long been an advocate for this type of reform in order to help address Albertans' demand for greater transparency and accountability across government.

Currently the sunshine list only exposes six-figure salaries and contract disclosure exposes vendors over \$10,000 but only in government departments, meaning that 142 agencies, boards, and commissions have avoided this level of scrutiny. Most notably, a \$17 billion agency known as Alberta Health Services avoids all this. Every individual in this province has a right to know for what and how their money is being spent. I believe that this measure along with a few amendments will help to provide the taxpayers with this level of oversight. It is incumbent upon us as legislators to set these standards in the spirit of good governance and transparency. These measures should help to ensure that public-sector workers' salaries are based on merit and experience.

Going forward, there are a few obvious gaps that we will have to address in order to ensure that the privacy of our public-sector workers is respected. As my learned colleagues have already noted, while this legislation does empower school boards and municipalities to self-report, it does not set a definitive marker for the minimum thresholds that must be met in order to quantify a need for disclosure. The threshold should be universally applied across all the ABCs, and it should not be allowed to vary among different groups. If \$125,000 is a standard for departmental employees, then there should be no reason not to extend that to all agencies, boards, and commissions.

Madam Speaker, while we support the passage of Bill 5, I believe that we need more time to fully examine the legislation to ensure that it strikes the right balance between transparency and protecting the rights of individuals. We have to remember that this is not a fire hall. We don't have to go very quickly on these things. This is a House of legislation. We need time to evaluate and read these things and to understand it and debate it.

Given the ATA announcement it is clear to us that stakeholders have not been properly consulted. This legislation affects thousands of Alberta public servants, and we should be honouring their hard work by giving this subject the due attention that it deserves. A few hours debating a bill does not allow for a fulsome debate, and it clearly has left some stakeholders out of the conversation, but that seems to be consistent with a lot of the NDP consultations.

Overall, the Wildrose supports Bill 5, and we will make amendments to further strengthen this legislation. Albertans have a right to know where their tax dollars are being spent, and transparency is essential to good governance for only with transparency can citizens fully understand their government's operations. I hope to see more common-sense pieces of legislation in the name of transparency and accountability from this government, and I urge them to listen to my learned caucus colleagues and to their suggestions to help strengthen this bill.

3:40

This government should know that the Wildrose, despite what the Member for St. Albert said, did campaign on several specific issues. We campaigned with an emphasis on health care and education. We campaigned on a fiscally responsible government that was transparent and accountable. That was a key point of our platform. The NDP platform: you got by on the good looks and charm of your leader. [interjections] Madam Speaker, we've got to get these guys to settle down. They've been drinking a lot of the Orange Crush, which is a really pretty drink – it's sparkling, and it's sugary sweet – but ultimately it has no nutritional value. We have to recognize that what they serve in the hospitals is ginger ale.

I'm glad to see this government taking all sorts of good suggestions from us. Certainly, I noticed that the Health minister was bragging during estimates about the \$5 million in savings from cellphone plans. That was a Wildrose platform that the NDP

candidate up in Fort McMurray laughed at, but I'm glad to see that this group, once they were in government, recognized the value of the Wildrose's suggestions. I really want to appreciate that, and I hope you continue to listen to us because we have work experience. Not only are we good looking and charming over here, but we are smart. We have business experience. We have life experience.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments for the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, I'll recognize the hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Bill 5, the Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act, brings forward a level of transparency that we haven't seen in Alberta. People drawing a public salary are given a public trust to perform, and public officials work on behalf of the public, not for themselves. By allowing the salaries of the highest paid people to be made public, the public at large has a means of ensuring that they are held accountable when they are earning a salary that most of us would consider high.

Salary disclosures for agencies, boards, and commissions are the norm in other provinces. In fact, Ontario prints an incredible all-inclusive list annually. I remember when the former government brought out the first salary sunshine list. A few of the political staffers were pretty freaked out because their names were now in print and showing up, but in a government where there were problems with staffers, there was some accountability brought to bear.

Agencies, boards, and commissions are a convenient way to hide public expenditures, and Alberta Health Services, being the largest of these, will be given great exposure. This will be a significant start in the effort to figure out what is happening at AHS. Albertans will have the ability to see where a significant amount of their wealth is being spent and where it's going.

The Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission has an enormous regulatory role, so large, actually, that at one point they were their own department, so there will be some light shone in this agency's dark corners for their salaries earned as well.

When the former government brought out its initial salary disclosure list, some MLAs trumpeted it as being the gold standard, but the Wildrose knew better. There are 142 agencies, boards, and commissions under the Alberta Public Agencies Governance Act and another 52 agencies reporting directly to the government. I welcome the change that Bill 5 represents to allow the sunshine in on the agencies, boards, and commissions.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments for the hon. member under 29(2)(a)?

If not, I'll recognize the hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

Mr. MacIntyre: Thank you, Madam Speaker. We, the Members of this Legislative Assembly, are part of a very long and, I think, a beautiful system of parliamentary procedures. Democracy is defined as being government of the people, by the people, and for the people. As such, every one of us in this room is a servant to those people: the people who pay the taxes, the people who work very hard in this province. A portion of their hard-earned money goes to provide governance, goes to provide public services to them.

I think that throughout the history of democracy in this province we have a wonderful heritage of people being elected to office, not just being elected to office but those who are elected to office and in government as well, then, having taken liberty over the years to appoint people, to create boards and agencies and appoint people,

and also to determine what their salaries are going to be. In that moment of creating an agency and appointing people to run those agencies, all of a sudden the public has now been excluded, and these agencies are operating often at arm's length. Some of these agencies that we have with us today are even quasi-judicial, operating at arm's length, where there is not the degree of public scrutiny that all of us in this House are subject to.

I believe that in order for us to continue to be truly a democracy of the people and by the people and for the people, it only makes sense to me that those people who are living off the taxes collected from our people ought to be all right with letting those very same people know how their money is being spent. While I support this bill and applaud the government for bringing it forward, I as well as other members have voiced a concern over the exclusion of certain ABCs from the sunshine list. Frankly, given the number of ABCs that we have in this province, which is hundreds, with all of the people being paid on these ABCs, sometimes very high salaries, I think it is only fair to our people, the good people of Alberta, that those ABCs also be subject to the same scrutiny that every one of us in this room is subject to.

I've spoken with many MLAs before the election, during the election, after the election. I have yet to meet a member of this House, regardless of party, who has a problem with the good people of Alberta knowing what we make or what we spend in our expenses. I don't think anyone in here has a problem with that. The scrutiny comes with the job. We knew about it before we got here. We expect it. I don't think anyone in here would believe that that is somehow a negative, that the good people of Alberta know what we earn and the expenses that we incur in serving them.

By that same token, then, when it comes to these ABCs that are existing and the wages that are there, I know that in my riding during the election I had people coming up to me voicing great discontent because they had heard that certain senior people within some of the ABCs in our province were making \$400,000, \$500,000. The rumours were crazy. The problem with it is that we don't know for sure. We just don't have that information. It's not readily available. I think that in fairness to our people, the good people of Alberta, that pay their taxes and whose money is used to pay the salaries of people in government and government agencies, it is only fair and right and I'll say even a righteous thing that we expose to the public the reality of what people are being paid with their tax dollars.

So I support this bill. I believe it is an excellent first step, but I do hope that members opposite will see this as just a first step, that they will give serious consideration to amendments that are going to be coming forward regarding this good first step and that you will give serious consideration to whom this bill is serving. It is serving our people, our families, our neighbours, our friends, the people in our communities that are paying the taxes that support this great big machine called the government of Alberta. So I hope that in fairness to those dear people every one of us will consider very seriously any exemptions that this bill may offer and take very seriously the need of our people to know where their money is going, as they should in a free and open democratic process.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

3:50

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

If not, any other speakers to the bill? Okay. The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. The intent of the sunshine list is to provide information to Albertans about how their tax dollars are being spent. This information is intended to

ensure that government spending is transparent at all levels. Through Bill 5 people who work for the public sector, who are paid by Alberta's tax dollars, and who earn more than \$125,000 will have their names and compensations disclosed publicly. The current disclosure list for Alberta government employees is set at \$104,000. This increase is probably an important one given that the wages in Alberta typically have been quite high. This bill is not about seeing who is making what but is about ensuring that government is using our tax dollars wisely.

Secondly, Bill 5 extends the public-sector salary disclosure sunshine list to include employees of public-sector bodies, including agencies, boards, and commissions governed by the Alberta Public Agencies Governance Act, APAGA. Bill 5 adds physician fee-for-service disclosure, the independent offices of the Legislature, public postsecondary institutions, Alberta Health Services, and other large organizations.

Bill 5 does two things. It increases the number of people who will have their names and incomes reported while increasing the base income level that will be reported on. Wildrose has been in favour of reviewing and expanding the sunshine list to include the ABCs in Alberta for quite some time, and we all campaigned on it. By increasing the scope of the people who will have their income reported, Albertans will get a more complete picture of the use of their tax dollars. Payments to public-sector workers comprise a huge, huge amount of the 47-some billion dollar budget, and I'm thinking that it's somewhere in the area of \$25 billion. I could be wrong there, but that's what I've heard. This level of transparency is a very positive step. Prior to this bill there were large pieces of the public-sector that were exempt from being on the sunshine list. Bill 5 provides a more robust approach, and we commend the members opposite for that.

However, there are some shortcomings to this particular bill. Specifically, not all of the ABCs are included. Now, it's one thing to – we would like to see a more comprehensive list of exactly which ones aren't included, and there may be a very good reason for those to be excluded. What we would like to see is the agency and the reason why it would be excluded. Again, there may be a very good reason for it; we'd just like to know what it is. You know, some of the ones that we see that are excluded are in Environment and Parks: Environmental Monitoring Management Board, Environmental Monitoring Working Group, and the Provincial Environmental Monitoring Panel. It would be really nice to know why those particular ones have been excluded, and there are others. Again, just for clarity and transparency I think that Albertans deserve to know why some of these boards were excluded and some were not.

As well as the admission of these ABCs, there is some confusion about how school boards and, in particular, how teachers will be affected by this legislation. Wildrose is very committed to making sure that the sunshine list is used for the purpose for which it was intended, allowing all Albertans to have a more complete understanding of how their tax dollars are being used to pay public-sector employees. To that end, we will and I will support this bill. We will be tabling an amendment to ensure that teachers are treated the same as any other public-sector employee, and if they earn over the \$125,000 threshold, their names will be published as part of the sunshine list but not below that threshold. I think that they should be treated the same as every other employee in Alberta.

Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments for the hon. member?

Seeing none, are there any other speakers to the bill? The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to speak to Bill 5. This is quite interesting. I remember that this was part of the Wildrose campaign platform, I believe, in 2012, so this is actually really interesting, to see this come to light here in the House and to be a part of this. I mean, for all of us that's really great that we're doing this. You know, taxpayers do have a right to know where their dollars are being spent. Our salaries are public knowledge, which is really great, and this is an excellent extension into the transparency of this government. It helps to create a little bit of trust as well, which is something that I think that we're really, really struggling with. This is a really great step.

I am curious as to why the threshold in this bill is \$125,000. In other jurisdictions it's about \$100,000 or \$50,000. I think that \$50,000 is probably too low. Some justification for this would be great. Perhaps, you know, there's some protection in that area, but that would be good to know.

I think that there's a bit of a loophole, and I'd like for the members opposite to be open to amendments on this bill, just to make sure that the legislation that we pass through this House is actually really solid – right? – something we can all be proud of in the long term and that nobody will be embarrassed by. I'm really hoping that we can work together on that moving forward.

You know, there are a couple of risks with this bill. One of them is that this can lead to higher public-sector wages as individuals know what their counterparts are making, hopefully, of course, only over and above or when you make the sunshine list at \$125,000.

Disclosing fee for service is unlikely to be popular amongst physicians. I know that's been addressed, so I certainly hope there will be more conversations surrounding that particular area.

Municipalities and school boards are exempt. I think school boards – certainly, in my office I've had a number of concerns with the specifics around that particular piece, so that's something that needs to be discussed as well. I think that's one of those loopholes that exist.

The sunshine lists do not highlight value for money or publish reasons behind compensation for the said individuals listed. For example, overtime: our health care system certainly has many workers that are taking advantage of overtime because it's absolutely necessary and that's what we need. But will this discourage said workers from participating in overtime activities, where we need this but they may not be so inclined to take on these extra hours for fear of having their information disclosed publicly? Certainly, that's something that we need to consider in the debate of this bill.

In 2010 the Nova Scotia NDP government introduced public salary disclosure legislation which set the threshold at \$100,000. Again, why is Alberta different? I mean, Alberta is certainly a much different province than Nova Scotia. Our salaries are generally much higher.

I very much look forward to the member across speaking to this bill for Albertans and his constituents because you certainly have some things to say. I am definitely interested in debating this with you, so, please, I encourage you to speak to this as well.

You know, I'd just like to point out that Bill 5 was really, truly a Wildrose idea. I heard earlier that maybe it wasn't. I don't really know if it matters or not.

That is, I think, mostly touching on what I'd like to say. Let's discuss this. I encourage these members opposite to be open to amendments and to really make this a solid piece of legislation that we can be proud of moving forward. I commend you for bringing up this bill in the first place, but let's make it great.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

4:00

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments for the member? If not, then the next speaker to the bill, Livingstone-Macleod.

Mr. Stier: Well, good afternoon, everyone. A pleasure to get up this afternoon to speak to Bill 5. Recognizing that the time is late and everyone's probably tired, I'm sure the attention will be, as usual at this time of day, probably minimal, but I'll try to get through some of the points that I do have. I've got some stuff here, hon. Minister of Education, that actually you might be interested in this afternoon. [interjection] Well, a pleasure to work with you again today.

Anyway, we've seen a lot of things come through in the past few weeks from the government. But certainly with this one here – I hate to say it – I really do want to say that I can support this one. This one seems to be something that we needed to see for some time. We've seen in recent years that it's one thing to talk the talk on transparency but another thing to walk the walk. One of the best things about Bill 5, in my estimation, is that it does not seek to reinvent the wheel. Too often when it comes to instituting reform to ensure greater transparency and accountability, we seek to implement transformational change in short periods of time. Too often these initiatives are victims of their own ambitions, though, and shelved indefinitely sometimes. Bill 5, on the other hand, takes a system that is working and improves upon it.

The Alberta sunshine list, requiring the disclosure of government employee salaries, has been in place for several years, actually. I understand that in the beginning this reporting made some quite uncomfortable. Since then I think we've seen the benefits of transparency outweigh such concerns. Thanks to the sunshine list, Albertans have been able to have fully informed and, I dare say, frank conversations about the former government's severance packages.

I can tell you as a guy that has been around here for three and a half to four years that it has been a topic that has raised the ire of a lot of people over many, many days. For instance, with the update made public in July of this year, we learned that the severance payments to four senior government managers ranged in size from \$104,000 to \$143,000. This information helps inform the ongoing public debate regarding the expenditure of tax dollars and helps us as MLAs to fulfill our mandate and act as faithful stewards of taxpayer dollars, and that's pretty important.

One of the glaring shortcomings, though, of the sunshine list to date is the fact that it only requires the disclosure of salaries for a single stream of government employees, usually. Expanding the requirement of all agencies, boards, and commissions will vastly improve this system, it sounds like, making it fairer for both the employees and the public at large.

The bottom line for me, though, is that transparency in all forms of business is essential, including government. Only with transparency can a citizen be fully informed about the operations of government. Without transparency there can be no accountability. This is a core Wildrose principle, of course, and expanding the scope of the sunshine list was a policy on which I was proud to campaign earlier this spring. We definitely were going around from house to house and town to town throughout my large riding to talk about this on frequent occasions, and it certainly did get a lot of good response when it was brought up.

Setting a threshold for disclosure of salaries is fair, providing that we ensure that the same threshold applies to all employees. I've received concerns from several constituents recently regarding the specific wording of this legislation, however, which may allow

those employees with compensation far below the \$125,000 threshold to be included on the list. I think this concerns all of us. It's been raised I think here in the House this afternoon from several speakers, and it certainly has a lot to do with the education world and some of these other people, municipalities, et cetera. At the core of the process, though, is a commitment to balance the need for transparency with the privacy rights in a just and fair manner. If we allow thresholds to be applied inequitably, it calls this commitment into question.

At the same time we must recognize that while government transparency is more about knowing how much everyone gets paid, true transparency requires that we conduct the business of the House in such a manner as to ensure that citizens outside this House have the opportunity to better understand the issues with which we grapple. In the case of Bill 5 I know some doctors, as an example, who've raised concerns that the data released by the sunshine list is oversimplified, that citizens reading the list, for example, may not be able to recognize the difference between a medical practitioner's revenue and a physician's personal income.

This is probably a valid concern and points to the fact that transparency requires more than just information. It also requires time to understand this information more thoroughly. This is probably something we can give them. By taking more time to discuss government bills and policies, we can give citizens a better opportunity to get informed and understand the issues.

The key is more time. In 2014 Alberta MLAs sat for only 42 days, the second fewest in Canada. By comparison, the Legislatures in Ontario and British Columbia sat for 77 and 71 days, respectively. Meanwhile Members of Parliament were allotted 127 days in the House of Commons. This isn't improving under this new government, by the way. I think we're currently on pace to sit for 42 days again this year. We can debate how many days are needed, but I can tell you this: true transparency requires more than 42 days.

I will be supporting Bill 5 because I support the initiative to make the government more transparent. It's a step in the right direction, but let's not congratulate ourselves too much. There's a lot more we can do to ensure that Albertans have an opportunity to discuss their government's operations. As faithful stewards of taxpayer dollars it is incumbent on us to continue fighting to make this institution more transparent and more accountable.

Thank you for your time this afternoon. I hope that contribution makes us think a little bit more thoroughly about what we're about to discuss here in the next few days on Bill 5.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. My fellow colleague mentioned transformational change. He delved into it a little bit. I'm hoping he could give some examples of some legislation that was maybe not well thought out, that was put through too quickly, and some of the unintended consequences of that action.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Stier: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Well, thank you for the question, hon. member. Having not actually delved into this one too deeply, I may not have a lot of answers to your question, but I can say this. Over the past few years we've seen an awful lot of this topic come up, whether it's been in some of the contractual things that the previous government of the day had entered into and some of the other kinds of different professions that came up under scrutiny at some of our Public Accounts meetings and so on and so forth.

This has been something that the public has been extremely well aware of. The press has followed it from day to day, from week to week, from month to month, from year to year. Having this kind of transparency is going to definitely – definitely – improve the situation in that regard. Certainly, there has been a lot of controversy, and some of the professions, including the doctors, some of our educators, municipalities, have always been against this sort of thing, so it will definitely be interesting to see how this unfolds as we process this bill.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

If not, I'll recognize the hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler on the bill.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I, too, rise to echo support for Bill 5. I believe that there is potentiality for some changes and some amendments to come forward. The Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act at long last talks about government agencies, boards, and commissions, some much larger than others, which will have to report salaries over \$125,000, much like what's happened in the government of Alberta employee realm. Madam Speaker, the Wildrose campaigned throughout the election on expanding the sunshine list to include 142 agencies, boards, and commissions under the Alberta Public Agencies Governance Act as well as 52 agencies that report directly to the government of Alberta.

4:10

Now, some out there may say that this legislation replaces the former Member for Fort McMurray-Conklin's gold standard in disclosure, but I would be very careful in calling this a platinum standard in disclosure. There still appears to be some impurities in the molten metal that need to be removed. For instance, there is discussion about the Environmental Monitoring Management Board. I'd like to know: if they are making a six-figure salary, would this be included in that list, Madam Speaker? Then there is the Banff Centre board of governors. The facility for artists in spectacular Banff is an incredible asset to operate. Most people do not realize that this is a public asset, not a private or Parks Canada operation.

With that, Madam Speaker, I'd like to indulge the Government House Leader and the Minister of Advanced Education and also the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster. He and others in the Chamber may remember a day when the Member for Drumheller-Stettler rose in the House and spoke in regard to the public disclosure of a member for Tourism Alberta. There was a discussion in regard to the dispensation of an expense account regarding a tuxedo. There was a considerable amount of discussion about that. It was only discovered through the freedom of information act, but it was a form of transparency of government spending, and it was sorely needed.

When that employee expensed his tuxedo, a lot of people thought that it was simply as a result of a highbrow attitude of elitists. Therefore, we need to know some of what those elitists' salaries are. Bill 5 will provide some change. It's something that's important when you're dealing with taxpayers' dollars. I ran in the election on open accountability of taxpayers' dollars.

Other academically inclined organizations like the public universities will fall under this legislation and also open themselves up to scrutiny. I've been hearing for some time complaints from professors at the university for being nickelled and dimed on approval of the use of their per diems for attending conferences to

present their research while administrators make big salaries. Opening up the salaries to scrutiny will enable these agencies' boards of governors to see the full picture and maybe roll back the compensation and redirect that money elsewhere, maybe to professors' salaries or applied research, maybe even to grants and, ultimately, bursaries to students. I know my colleague for Calgary-Foothills highlighted excess salaries at the Alberta Innovates corporations. Without having to dig through annual reports, those top salaries will be available in one easy-to-find list.

Albertans and, indeed, Albertan taxpayers have a right to know where their tax dollars are being spent. Transparency in government, Madam Speaker, is essential. Only with transparency can citizens fully understand their government's operations. The Member for Strathmore-Brooks talked about his involvement in the Canadian Taxpayers Federation and their believing that we can have open accountability and have legislation, freedom of information for the taxpayers of Alberta.

Madam Speaker, I think Albertans would appreciate the upgrade in transparency and accountability that Bill 5 provides in spite of some of its flaws. There may be some amendments going forward. I'd just like to reiterate again that I present support for Bill 5.

The Deputy Speaker: You have a question under 29(2)(a), hon. member?

Mr. Stier: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Yes, I do. The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler and I have spent some time here. We've experienced an awful lot of this, as I said earlier, and he alluded to a couple of the items before. I wondered if he might have a moment to help us recall when one of the former ministers – was it the minister of transparency and accountability? – had a certain standard that he always demonstrated in the House? Would he like to, you know, enlighten us on that one?

Mr. Strankman: Well, Madam Speaker, it doesn't come as immediately to mind as the event regarding the minister of tourism at the time. But it was brought forward as a – you know, I remember the recantations of the minister, talking about gold standards. There was a good deal of humour on this side of the Chamber of the understanding of exactly what that was.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any other questions or comments?

Seeing none, another speaker to the bill?

Seeing none, we will call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion for second reading carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:16 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Hanson	Rosendahl
Anderson, S.	Horne	Sabir
Babcock	Hunter	Schmidt
Carson	Littlewood	Schreiner
Connolly	Loyola	Shepherd
Coolahan	MacIntyre	Sigurdson
Cortes-Vargas	Mason	Smith
Cyr	McKittrick	Stier
Dach	McPherson	Strankman
Dang	Miller	Sucha
Drever	Miranda	Sweet

Eggen	Nielsen	Turner
Feehan	Payne	Westhead
Goehring	Piquette	Woollard
Gotfried	Pitt	Yao
Gray	Renaud	
Totals:	For – 47	Against – 0

[Motion carried unanimously; Bill 5 read a second time]

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, the House stands adjourned until 1:30 on Monday.

[The Assembly adjourned at 4:32 p.m. to Monday at 1:30 p.m.]

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

Activity to November 26, 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.), 501-522 (Nov. 17, 2015 aft., passed)

5 Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act (Ganley)

First Reading -- 448 (Nov. 5, 2015 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 619 (Nov. 25, 2015 aft.), 650-60 (Nov. 26, 2015 aft., passed on division)

6 Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act (Sigurdson)

First Reading -- 501 (Nov. 17, 2015 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 619-20 (Nov. 25, 2015 aft., adjourned)

7 Alberta Human Rights Amendment Act, 2015 (Ganley)

First Reading -- 548 (Nov. 19, 2015 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 618-19 (Nov. 25, 2015 aft., adjourned)

8 Public Education Collective Bargaining Act (Eggen)

First Reading -- 649 (Nov. 26, 2015 aft., passed)

- 9 Appropriation Act, 2015 (\$) (Ceci)**
First Reading -- 612 (Nov. 25, 2015 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 613-18 (Nov. 25, 2015 aft., passed on division)
Committee of the Whole -- 621-31 (Nov. 26, 2015 morn., passed)
Third Reading -- 631-38 (Nov. 26, 2015 morn., passed on division)
- 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.), 401-404 (Nov. 2, 2015 aft., passed on division)
Committee of the Whole -- 573-83 (Nov. 23, 2015 aft, passed with amendments)
- 203 Election (Restrictions on Government Advertising) Amendment Act, 2015 (Strankman)**
First Reading -- 349 (Oct. 28, 2015 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 404-10 (Nov. 2, 2015 aft., adjourned), 474-77 (Nov. 16, 2015 aft., passed), 477 (Nov. 16, 2015 aft., referred to Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee)
- 204 Residential Tenancies (Safer Spaces for Victims of Domestic Violence) Amendment Act, 2015 (Drever)**
First Reading -- 448 (Nov. 5, 2015 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 477-84 (Nov. 16, 2015 aft., passed)
- 205 Persons with Developmental Disabilities Services (Public Consultation) Amendment Act, 2015 (Renaud)**
First Reading -- (Nov. 18, 2015 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 583-84 (Nov. 23, 2015 aft., adjourned)
- 206 Recall Act (Aheer)**
First Reading -- 649 (Nov. 26, 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)

Table of Contents

Introduction of Guests	639
Members' Statements	
Peace River Constituency	639
Government Policies	640
Calgary to Cochrane Trail	640
Charitable Tax Credit	640
Friends of Medicare.....	641
Simon House Recovery Centre.....	641
Oral Question Period	
Carbon Tax.....	641
Farm and Ranch Worker Legislation Consultation.....	642, 648
Victorian Order of Nurses	643
Opioid Use.....	644
Farm and Ranch Worker Legislation.....	644
Tobacco Recovery Lawsuit	645
Legal Aid.....	645
Wainwright Health Care Facilities	646
Ministers' Office Budgets	646
Climate Change Strategy.....	647, 648
Notices of Motions	649, 651
Introduction of Bills	
Bill 8 Public Education Collective Bargaining Act	649
Bill 206 Recall Act.....	649
Tabling Returns and Reports	649
Tablings to the Clerk	650
Orders of the Day	650
Government Bills and Orders	
Second Reading	
Bill 5 Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act	650, 651
Division	659

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