



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Second Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, March 9, 2016

Day 2

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta
The 29th Legislature

Second Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (ND), Speaker
Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (ND), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (W)	Luff, Robyn, Calgary-East (ND)
Anderson, Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (ND)	MacIntyre, Donald, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (W)
Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)	Malkinson, Brian, Calgary-Currie (ND)
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (ND)	Mason, Hon. Brian, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (ND), Government House Leader
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)	McCuaig-Boyd, Hon. Margaret, Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley (ND)
Bilous, Hon. Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (ND), Deputy Government House Leader	McIver, Ric, Calgary-Hays (PC), Leader of the Progressive Conservative Opposition
Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (ND), Deputy Government House Leader	McKittrick, Annie, Sherwood Park (ND)
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (ND)	McLean, Hon. Stephanie V., Calgary-Varsity (ND)
Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (ND)	McPherson, Karen M., Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill (ND)
Clark, Greg, Calgary-Elbow (AP)	Miller, Barb, Red Deer-South (ND)
Connolly, Michael R.D., Calgary-Hawkwood (ND)	Miranda, Hon. Ricardo, Calgary-Cross (ND)
Coolahan, Craig, Calgary-Klein (ND)	Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (ND)
Cooper, Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (W), Official Opposition House Leader	Nixon, Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre (W), Official Opposition Whip
Cortes-Vargas, Estefania, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (ND), Government Whip	Notley, Hon. Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (ND), Premier
Cyr, Scott J., Bonnyville-Cold Lake (W), Official Opposition Deputy Whip	Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (W)
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (ND)	Panda, Prasad, Calgary-Foothills (W)
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (ND)	Payne, Hon. Brandy, Calgary-Acadia (ND)
Drever, Deborah, Calgary-Bow (ND)	Phillips, Hon. Shannon, Lethbridge-West (ND)
Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (PC), Progressive Conservative Opposition Whip	Piquette, Colin, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater (ND)
Eggen, Hon. David, Edmonton-Calder (ND)	Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie (W)
Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (PC)	Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (ND)
Feehan, Hon. Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (ND)	Rodney, Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC)
Fildebrandt, Derek Gerhard, Strathmore-Brooks (W)	Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (ND)
Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (ND)	Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (ND)
Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)	Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (ND)
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (ND)	Schneider, David A., Little Bow (W)
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (ND)	Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (ND)
Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (PC)	Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (ND)
Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (ND)	Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (ND)
Hanson, David B., Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (W), Official Opposition Deputy House Leader	Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (W)
Hinkley, Bruce, Wetaskiwin-Camrose (ND)	Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC), Progressive Conservative Opposition House Leader
Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (ND)	Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)
Horne, Trevor A.R., Spruce Grove-St. Albert (ND)	Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)
Hunter, Grant R., Cardston-Taber-Warner (W)	Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (ND)
Jansen, Sandra, Calgary-North West (PC)	Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)
Jean, Brian Michael, QC, Fort McMurray-Conklin (W), Leader of the Official Opposition	Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)
Kazim, Anam, Calgary-Glenmore (ND)	Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)
Kleinstauber, Jamie, Calgary-Northern Hills (ND)	van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)
Larivee, Hon. Danielle, Lesser Slave Lake (ND)	Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND), Deputy Government Whip
Littlewood, Jessica, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (ND)	Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)
Loewen, Todd, Grande Prairie-Smoky (W)	Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (ND)	Vacant, Calgary-Greenway

Party standings:

New Democrat: 54 Wildrose: 22 Progressive Conservative: 8 Alberta Liberal: 1 Alberta Party: 1 Vacant: 1

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Oneil Carlier	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
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Christina Gray	Minister of Labour, Minister Responsible for Democratic Renewal
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Stephanie V. McLean	Minister of Service Alberta, Minister of Status of Women
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Shannon Phillips	Minister of Environment and Parks, Minister Responsible for the Climate Change Office
Irfan Sabir	Minister of Human Services
Marlin Schmidt	Minister of Advanced Education
Lori Sigurdson	Minister of Seniors and Housing

STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

Chair: Ms Miller
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Schreiner

Cyr	McKitrick
Dang	Taylor
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Chair: Mr. Sucha
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schneider

Anderson, S.	Hunter
Carson	Jansen
Connolly	Panda
Coolahan	Piquette
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Fitzpatrick	Taylor
Gotfried	

Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee

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Anderson, W.	Nielsen
Clark	Nixon
Connolly	Renaud
Cortes-Vargas	Starke
Cyr	Sucha
Drever	Swann
Jansen	van Dijken
Loyola	

Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Chair: Ms Goehring
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Hinkley	Rodney
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Jansen	Swann
Luff	Westhead
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Cooper	McIver
Dang	Nixon
Fildebrandt	Piquette
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Luff	

Standing Committee on Private Bills

Chair: Ms McPherson
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Babcock	McKitrick
Drever	Rosendahl
Drysdale	Stier
Fraser	Strankman
Hinkley	Sucha
Kazim	

Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

Chair: Ms Fitzpatrick
Deputy Chair: Ms Babcock

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Coolahan	McPherson
Cooper	Nielsen
Ellis	Schneider
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Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	

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Hunter	

Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Chair: Loyola
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Aheer	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	MacIntyre
Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, March 9, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Please be seated.

Welcome. Normally there would be a prayer; as we move to the morning sessions, that has already taken place. One of the comments that I mentioned in the prayer, which we said together, our contemplations that we made this morning, was encouraging each and every one of us to show courage. To that theme, the morning's events that weren't as constructive as they might have been were based upon in part some learning that all of us made but most specifically myself, and I guess we become better and excellent by learning from our mistakes. So my respect to each of you for accepting those circumstances.

I would also, with the agreement of the House, because of some fairly significant guests and visitors and events that take place today, in anticipation that we may move past the 1:50 time period, ask in the event that we do for unanimous consent to move past 1:50 at this point if agreed.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. members, as is our custom, we pay tribute in this House to former members of the Assembly who have passed since we last met. Today we have the privilege of having the families of two of our former peers with us.

Dr. Ian Wilson Carlyle Reid
May 27, 1931, to January 18, 2016

The Speaker: Dr. Ian Reid served the Legislative Assembly of Alberta as the Member for Edson from 1979 until 1986 and then as the Member for West Yellowhead from 1986 until 1989. After graduating from the University of Aberdeen, Dr. Reid immigrated to Canada and began a long career in medicine. His community involvement led to his election in 1979. Dr. Reid served as Solicitor General from 1984 to 1986, Minister of Labour from 1986 to 1988, and minister of the environment from 1988 to 1989.

Hon. Donald Ross Getty, OC, AOE
August 30, 1933, to February 26, 2016

The Speaker: On May 23, 1967, the hon. Don Getty was first elected as a Member of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta. During his tenure as a member he represented the constituency of Strathcona-West from 1967 to 1971, Edmonton Whitemud from 1971 to 1979 and again from 1985 to 1989, and Stettler from 1989 to 1993.

The hon. Mr. Getty served as minister of federal and intergovernmental relations from 1971 to 1975 and minister of energy and natural resources from 1975 to '79. On November 1, 1985, he was sworn in as Alberta's 11th Premier, serving as such until December 14, 1992. Throughout his service he made an impact on this Legislative Assembly and indeed on this wonderful province of Alberta, demonstrated by his 1969 motion to amend the standing orders to allow for radio and television coverage of session and by the establishment of Family Day in 1990. These were only some of his many accomplishments.

In a moment of silent contemplation and prayer I ask you to remember former of our members, Dr. Reid and the hon. Mr. Getty,

as you may have known them. If we could have a moment of silence, please. Amen.

Introduction of Visitors

The Speaker: Hon. members, with our admiration and our respect there is gratitude that needs to be shown to members of families. Each of us, let none of us ever forget that. For it's our families, the families that we have with us today, who have shared the burdens of public life and public office. Today I would like to welcome members of the Getty and the Reid families who are present in our Speaker's gallery. Please rise as I call your names and remain standing until all have been introduced.

From the Getty family: Mrs. Margaret Getty, wife of the hon. Don Getty; Darin Getty, son of Mr. Getty; Tanya Getty, daughter-in-law of Mr. Getty; and Samantha Getty, granddaughter of Mr. Getty.

From the Reid family: Neil Reid, son of Ian Reid; Andrea Reid, daughter-in-law of Dr. Reid; Kjell Reid, grandson of Dr. Reid.

Please let's show some emotion and respect for these families.
[Standing ovation]

Ms McLean: Mr. Speaker, I rise to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly the 29 heads of mission, *chargés d'affaires*, and others who are participating in an economic diplomatic outreach mission. Among the delegation 26 distinct jurisdictions from five continents are represented. We are honoured by the presence of these representatives: ambassadors, High Commissioners, members of the diplomatic corps, and spouses. I would also like to acknowledge our federal partners from Global Affairs Canada, who were instrumental in arranging this mission.

1:40

Over the past few days our government has met with members of the international community and have told Alberta's story. We have also been able to exchange information like how Alberta has supported women entrepreneurship and how our best practices can be applied in the different regions represented here today. We also identified opportunities for international collaboration. As Alberta works towards greater economic diversification, we will need committed partners across the globe. Our province has always valued our relationship with our international partners, and as always we are equally dedicated to strengthening the links between us and to exploring new relationships as exciting opportunities present themselves.

Our honoured guests are seated in both the members' and public galleries. I would now like to ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: As is normally the case, we have some guests with us today. The Minister of Seniors and Housing.

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly 18 grade 6 students from Parkallen elementary school, which is in the beautiful riding of Edmonton-Riverview, which I represent. They are accompanied by their teacher Ms Jennifer Kolskog and parent volunteers for their visit today. They are seated in the members' gallery this afternoon, and I ask that they all rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Ms Woollard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am delighted to welcome today the awesome grade 6 students from Velma E. Baker school accompanied by their teachers Ms Lynn Peacock and Mr. Philip Singh and their educational assistant Rose Miranda and parents Ms Nazreen Ali-Hefford, Ms Zineta Kulovac, and Ms Rose Petruk. If you'd stand up, please, we'll offer you the warm welcome of this House wherever you may be.

The Speaker: The Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to rise today and introduce to you and through you 37 visitors from Lymburn elementary school from my Edmonton-McClung riding. They include teachers Ms Jeanne Commance and Mrs. Birgit Braid as well as parent helpers Mrs. Michelle Stead, Mrs. Kim Creighton, and Miss Debbie Diamond. I would ask that they now please rise and receive the warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

I meant to say in our earlier introductions to our international guests that having children in this Assembly, in this Chamber, is one of the special events that all of us share. That you would be here as we honour two former members and particularly a Premier: you are at an historic event that's happened here today.

I would now recognize the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly a friend and a mayor in my riding of Cardston-Taber-Warner, Mr. Henk De Vlieger. I'd like to have him rise and receive the warm welcome of this House.

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

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to introduce to you and through you Peter Tindall and his granddaughter Emma Taylor. Peter Tindall works in my constituency office, and he is Chestermere-Rocky View's eyes and ears and is a gift to me and the people of those communities. He is a geologist and worked in the oil patch, and it's a background that's obviously instrumental to my portfolio. If you can't guess, I'm extremely grateful to have him on my team and consider him a part of my family. His granddaughter Emma is a resident of Okotoks and is 14. She's volunteered in my office in Chestermere and is hoping to one day intern there. Look out for this young lady; she's a real go-getter. I now ask you to rise and receive the traditional welcome of this Assembly.

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

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to my friends in the Assembly a friend of mine, Robert Walker. Robert was a keen volunteer on my by-election campaign in the fall of 2014 and was so keen that he became my campaign manager in the general election this past May. I'm here in no small part because of Robert's efforts. It's also noteworthy that Mr. Walker was a law school classmate of the former Member for Calgary-Greenway and someone he considered a friend. I know we all did as well. Robert, if I could ask you to rise, please, and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud today to rise and introduce to you and through you several members of AUPE's

Legislative Committee. AUPE's Legislative Committee is made up of representatives from across the province who meet regularly to review the policies and procedures of the AUPE constitution as well as to routinely review legislation tabled in the House to provide their feedback from a labour point of view. Joining us today are Karl Clauss, Emille Currie, Derek Heslinga, Allan Lyons, and Bobby-Joe Borodey. I would ask that they please rise to receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to rise today and introduce to you and through you a friend of mine, Ryan Rollier. Ryan I've known for quite a few years. He actually served as best man at my wedding. Because of the recent election, Ryan has become more involved in politics and currently serves as the vice-president of the Calgary-Shaw EDA. Ryan also has a long history of working to help build the oil industry here in Alberta through his contributions to sustainable tailings pond development. I would ask that he please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Are there any other members who have guests to introduce today?

Ministerial Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Hon. Donald Ross Getty August 30, 1933, to February 26, 2016

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's with heavy heart that I rise to speak today about the passing of former Premier Don Getty. Alberta has lost a strong and compassionate leader, a man whose natural leadership abilities shone whether he was on the football field, in the boardroom, in this Chamber, or around his family's dinner table. Premier Getty was an incredible champion for this province, a dedicated public servant in the truest sense of the word, who gave nearly 20 years of his life to this Legislature. Who can forget the iconic photograph of the original six, Don Getty among them, arms linked and grinning from ear to ear, storming their way up the Legislature front steps full of energy and enthusiasm for their new job?

Mr. Speaker, one's contribution to history is always described and measured by those who follow. As time passes and our perspectives change and, I would suggest, as they become less driven by the events of the day and more reliant on a fulsome inventory of achievements in light of the historical context, on this basis I believe Premier Getty's record stands the test of time. He was a visionary whose contributions to Alberta and Canada made Canada and Alberta stronger, and they include laying the groundwork for the petrochemical industry that now thrives in our province; helping to grow forestry, technology, nonconventional oil projects in Alberta; working first with Premier Lougheed as Energy minister and intergovernmental affairs minister to establish Albertans' constitutional rights as owners of our province's natural resources and then continuing that leadership role at the federal level in the role of Premier of Alberta; creating the Alberta heritage savings trust fund; establishing the MacEwan University campus in downtown Edmonton; introducing the notion of a land base and self-government for the Métis people in Alberta; and helping our province take a leadership position in the country overall.

1:50

One of the greatest legacies, Mr. Speaker, was his support of families and the introduction of Family Day, a holiday where Alberta families can spend time together, strengthen bonds, and reconnect. Several other provinces have followed suit, and Family Day is now celebrated in Saskatchewan, Ontario, and British Columbia.

That legacy, of course, points to perhaps the greatest loss of all, that we've lost a dedicated family man, a loving husband to Margaret Getty for 60 years, a man who always made time to support his kids and contribute to their successes and be present throughout their lives, a compassionate and fair man, a man who was always, always a gentleman who treated others with respect and decency.

My father, Grant Notley, served as an MLA at the same time as Don Getty. They may have had opposing views on politics and policy, but they also had a mutual respect and understanding for one another. When my father passed away, Don and Margaret Getty reached out to us. The compassion they showed my family in that difficult time has always stayed with me. They knew that family and kindness should always transcend politics.

Mr. Speaker, for his decades of leadership in government, in business, and in sport Premier Getty has been honoured by Albertans and Canadians alike. He was an officer of the Order of Canada and a member of the Alberta Order of Excellence. He was an honorary chief, Kinnosayoo, of the Whitefish Lake Cree band and was awarded the order of the sash by the Métis Nation of Alberta for his work with indigenous communities. He's also remembered for his football career on the Edmonton Eskimos' wall of honour.

Mr. Speaker, we've lost a true Albertan, someone who helped shape our province's future, one that we are living today and will live for many years to come, and someone whose legacy will live on. His family is here with us today, as you have already mentioned, in the Speaker's gallery, and I'd like to ask the Assembly to wish them the warmest possible welcome yet again at this sad time.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

Mr. Jean: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's with great honour that I rise today to speak on the passing of our former Premier. We first came to know Donald Ross Getty as a football player. He was a star quarterback at the University of Western Ontario. Then, like so many others in Canada, he picked up his young family and moved to Alberta. He moved to Alberta to chase an opportunity, like so many people, in this case an opportunity which was, unlike many people that came to Alberta, an opportunity to chase a football.

We all know what happened next. In his remarkable 10-year career with the Edmonton Eskimos Don Getty passed for over 8,000 yards, threw 58 touchdowns, and won two Grey Cup championships. Don Getty's name hangs on the Edmonton Eskimos' wall of honour at Commonwealth Stadium. He will be remembered as one of the greatest leaders in Alberta and a trailblazer for Canadian quarterbacks in the CFL. Who will ever forget some of the great, perfect passes that he made? Any football fan will remember those for sure.

What you don't know is that while Don Getty was winning Grey Cups, he was working in the energy sector by night, helping to build the industry that would benefit and continues to benefit all Albertans for generations to come. Back then football players almost had to take a job because they couldn't afford not to. They had to do that in order to make ends meet, but just making ends meet wasn't enough for Don Getty. He became a lands and

contracts manager and eventually an assistant general manager. Sooner or later – in fact, very soon – he founded his own company.

Then, as if football wasn't enough, he began here in the brutal sport of politics. He served as an MLA and continued to build our oil and gas industry as the Minister of Energy from 1975 to 1979. I was in Fort McMurray then, and he had a true impact on our community. In 1985 he was elected Premier. I remember that year because before he was elected, I met him and his wife, Margaret, in Fort McMurray at the Peter Pond Hotel. They influenced my own decision to join politics. I did actually vote to ensure that he became Premier. Don Getty will be remembered as a Premier who deeply respected Alberta and all its people. He was fiercely proud of our province and very proud of our resources. He made every decision with the intention of helping Alberta and not helping himself.

Don Getty said that his football experience played a key role in his political success. I'm sure it was probably some of those major hits that he took in football, but I think everybody in this room can relate to those words. Politics often feels like a contact sport. There's no doubt that in the throes of elections Don Getty took some of the hardest hits that he ever faced, but no matter how many times he got knocked down, Don Getty got up again.

Don Getty's life began in Alberta with just one single opportunity, and he took the ball and ran with it. He made the most of every opportunity he was ever given. He also fought for that extra yard every time. An officer of the Order of Canada, a member of the Alberta Order of Excellence, a winner of multiple Grey Cups, father, husband, and one of the greatest Premiers Alberta will ever have, Premier Don Getty lived his life as a champion. Let us all remember him as a champion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I seek unanimous consent of the House to permit the leader of the third party, the Member for Calgary-Mountain View, and the Member for Calgary-Elbow to respond to the ministerial statement if they wish to do so.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Speaker: The leader of the third party.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. Premier and the Leader of the Official Opposition for their kind and moving tributes. Much has rightly been said about former Premier Don Getty's prowess on the football field, leading the Edmonton Eskimos to two Grey Cup championships in 1955 and '56. Much has also rightly been said about his many accomplishments and contributions over his years in public life as an MLA, cabinet minister, businessperson, and Alberta's 11th Premier. I want to thank the Premier for mentioning that picture of the six MLAs with arms linked coming up. I would like the family to know that that hangs in the PC boardroom now and still serves as an inspiration to us every day.

We've heard how skilfully he raised Alberta's profile on the national stage, forged new and lasting relationships with indigenous people, celebrated the value of family through the creation of Family Day, and shepherded our province through some of the most difficult economic times this province has ever faced. But what stands out to me in all the tributes we've heard since Premier Getty's passing are his qualities as an ordinary man. Those who knew Premier Getty have spoken of his kindness, integrity, his steady yet understated leadership style. Premier Getty was a modest man. He didn't crave the limelight or overplay the drama and theatre that are so often inherent in politics. He was a man who

came to work each day and simply got the job done. He did what needed doing with humility and to the best of his ability, and in so doing, he accomplished so much for Alberta. Despite having left politics some 23 years ago, we continue to reap the benefits of Premier Getty's work today in every corner of our province.

On Saturday as his family, friends, and loved ones laid the former Premier to rest, we heard of how much respect Don Getty had from his colleagues in this Legislature and, interestingly enough, especially from those across the floor. Mr. Speaker, as each of us in this Chamber knows, we all too often in politics get caught up in the emotions of the business. It's easy to get caught up in our profound and real differences, but Premier Getty taught us never to lose sight of the fact that our most important similarity is our mutual love for Alberta. And it is through this common thread that despite our disagreements on matters of policy we respect each other as people and as servants of the public, an example that Don Getty set. In our own way we are here to make life better for Albertans.

As Progressive Conservatives my colleagues and I can't help but remember Premier Getty as one of the architects of our party. He was drafted into politics by former Premier Peter Lougheed, and together they were first elected to the Legislature in 1967. Along with four other maverick Progressive Conservative MLAs, Lougheed and Getty spent four years as the Official Opposition, laying the foundation for the party's sweeping electoral victory in 1971. Over the next four decades successive Progressive Conservative governments would help shape Alberta into the extraordinary province that it is today.

In spite of the difficulties we are experiencing today, the Alberta built by Lougheed and Getty is resilient and strong. I have no doubt that there will be brighter days ahead for our province. Mr. Speaker, my colleagues and I are incredibly proud of all that Premier Don Getty accomplished during his time in public life and equally proud to carry on his legacy. Again, we extend our deepest and most heartfelt sympathies to his wife, Margaret, and to the entire Getty family as together with them we all grieve this terrible loss.

2:00

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

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege to rise and speak to the legacy of former Premier Don Getty and to pay tribute to his family here gathered. Don Getty served Albertans with commitment and dedication for many years as an MLA, cabinet minister, and, of course, Premier.

Looking back at his leadership, it's almost eerie to see how many similarities there are to today. As one of the original Progressive Conservatives Don was part of a movement which changed the face of provincial politics. The PCs ended the reign of the Social Credit and ushered in an era of young, innovative, energetic MLAs. He assumed the premiership at a time when the oil industry was faltering, and government likewise had to make tough, not always popular choices.

I remember Don for his dedication to indigenous people. In 1990 Don was named a Cree chief of the Whitefish band, a deserved honour. Particularly in relation to the Lubicon, whom I visited afterwards, he was held in very high esteem along with the Métis. He fought for fair treatment and recognition of the rights of all First Nations.

Don was tasked with guiding the province of Alberta through very challenging times. I can only hope we will show the same courage and determination and constructive engagement in facing the adversity of today's economic climate.

On behalf of the Liberal caucus, our sincere gratitude to Don and his family.

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

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to honour former Premier Don Getty, and it is a particular privilege to do so in the presence of his family in the place where he dedicated so many years in service to the people of Alberta.

Premier Getty was the embodiment of service, serving Albertans as an MLA, cabinet minister, and, of course, as Premier during very challenging times in our province. He distinguished himself as a leader in all that he accomplished, not only in the political realm but also within business, sports, and human rights, where he advocated for the Métis people.

He also made a tremendous contribution to national unity with his support of the Meech Lake and Charlottetown accords. I've been told he took national unity so seriously that he responded personally, including handwritten notes, to every single letter sent to him by Canadians from across the country. His belief in a strong, united Canada will perhaps be his greatest legacy.

As I've come to learn since his passing, Don Getty was also a dedicated family man who along with his wife, Margaret, raised four boys to be great citizens and who, in turn, have raised seven of their own children to be the same. It's in this spirit that I'll remember Premier Getty fondly for the creation of Family Day, where Albertans spend time together to enjoy the tremendous recreational opportunities available in our great province, many of which were created under Premier Getty's leadership.

As some of you may know, I'm honoured to have the very desk that Don Getty sat at in the years 1967 to 1979. As I chart my own course in the Assembly in service of Albertans, I hope to live up to the example set by Premier Getty, an example I think we would all be wise to follow.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Again, please accept the respect offered to both families that are here today. Thank you for being with us, and thank you for your public service.

I recognize the Government House Leader. I understand you may have a comment that you'd like to make.

Member's Apology

Mr. Mason: Yes. Thank you very much. This morning there was considerable confusion about the election of the Deputy Chair of Committees, and I want to take full responsibility personally for that confusion and apologize to the House for the situation that developed. I want to also apologize to you, Mr. Speaker, to the Sergeant-at-Arms, and to the pages for when I came into the Chamber. When the doors were barred, it was my understanding, which was incorrect, that our members were not being allowed to vote on a key matter. I misunderstood the situation, and I wish to apologize to everyone in the Assembly for that behaviour and for the confusion that took place. This was something that was entirely my responsibility.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Statement by the Speaker

Rotation of Questions and Members' Statements

The Speaker: Hon. members, before we proceed with Oral Question Period, I'd like to outline the rotation that will apply for Oral Question Period and Members' Statements. As noted in my March 3, 2016, procedural memo to all members, the Speaker's

office received a document from the three House leaders confirming their agreement to the rotation of oral questions and members' statements. The projected rotation for Oral Question Period and a projected sitting days calendar, which outlines the Members' Statements rotation, were attached to that procedural memo.

With respect to Oral Question Period the new agreement stems from the House leaders' agreement agreed to in June 2015 and last used in the fall sitting. It continues to follow an eight-day rotation and provides for 20 questions each day. However, question 5 on days 4 and 8, which was assigned to the former independent member, is now allocated to a private member from the government caucus. Questions 7 through 20 from the rotation used in the fall have been moved up one spot, and question 20 is allocated to the Official Opposition. The current allocation of questions provides the Official Opposition a total of two more questions over the eight-day 20-question rotation. The remaining caucuses retain the same number of total questions.

I find the rotation on oral questions as proposed by the House leaders' agreement to be a fair allocation of questions amongst private members for this Assembly. With respect to the two one-member caucuses I am not of the view that continuing to have three questions over eight days is unjust or disproportionate. This averages out to 1.5 questions per week. In fact, when one looks at the previous Legislature, the pattern was to have one-member caucuses treated in the same way as independent members, with one question every four sitting days.

On the subject of asking and answering questions, I would ask, respectfully, that members keep their questions and responses concise and that they do not use preambles for supplementary questions after the first four sets of questions on days 4 and 8 and the first five sets of questions on all other days so that private members may ask as many questions as possible during the time allocated for Oral Question Period.

With respect to members' statements the House leaders' agreements continue to be based on a three-week rotation. According to Standing Order 7(4) each day up to six private members may make a statement of no more than two minutes in duration. The changes incorporated into the new Members' Statements rotation are as follows. The Official Opposition receives one more statement on Thursday for weeks 1 and 2 and on Wednesday in week 3. Private members from the government caucus are entitled to one additional statement on Thursday of week 3 of the rotation. The number and scheduling of members' statements for the third-party caucus, the Liberal member, and the Alberta Party member remain the same as during the first session of the 29th Legislature.

Thank you, hon. members. I will table a copy of the House leaders' agreement at the appropriate time in the daily Routine today.

2:10

I would take this final moment to say that I do not intend to give any lecturing to all of you. We have much to learn. I just would like to underline again to please respect each other, particularly with volume, and I speak to both sides of the House. On one side there seems to be a lot of desk thumping, which is very loud. On the other side there are often loud questions and voices. Please, I think I've been advised by all of you that you wish for this to be a part of the dynamic, so I urge you to practise respect for each other and listen.

Thank you.

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

Government Policies

Mr. Jean: Albertans are worried. They're frustrated. They're anxious. Since the NDP was elected, 80,000 jobs have been lost, including just in January alone 26,000 jobs. Small business confidence is at an all-time low, and after almost a year of waiting for the government's often promised jobs plan, all Albertans got yesterday was a flimsy bill that does nothing but give the minister a job description. When will the Premier provide hope to the thousands of Albertans that desperately need it and come up with a real plan to grow Alberta's economy and get Albertans back to work?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As we said yesterday in the throne speech, we're very much aware that as a result of an unprecedented price shock with the price of oil and the impact on families across Alberta that people are worried, and they're worried about their jobs. So our government is doing everything it can. We're going to support Albertans by ensuring stability and services to Albertans, we're going to work very hard to diversify our economy and to create new jobs alongside job creators, and we are going to continue the very hard work we're doing to diversify our access to markets because this is the beginning formula of getting us through these difficult times.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Jean: Here are the facts of life under the NDP with low oil. They raised business and personal taxes, they took aim at farms and our energy sector, and now they're bringing in a \$3 billion carbon tax that will hurt every single Albertan. And they're not done yet. When the economy is hurting, governments must do no harm. The NDP have ignored that principle on almost every front. The Wildrose has promised a single point tax cut for small businesses as a very first step to restoring business confidence. Why won't the Premier take even just that one small step and help businesses and all Albertans?

Ms Notley: Well, in fact, Mr. Speaker, up to this point we've been working very closely with business and with industry on efforts to promote diversification and to promote job creation. We've introduced programs that will increase access to capital. We've consulted with business on what that should look like. We also, through our climate leadership plan, are using it as a tool to diversify and to help open up new markets while at the same time promoting a cleaner, greener economy and environment for Albertans. So in difficult times we're actually moving forward together with businesses. I'm looking forward to reading the many endorsements of our plan from business leaders to the member opposite.

The Speaker: Thank you, Madam Premier.

Mr. Jean: I am also very much anticipating that opportunity.

Last month both the Premier and I found ourselves in Ontario. We were talking about Alberta's energy sector. The message delivered could not be more different, though. While Wildrose pitched national unity on pipelines, the Premier was headlining a \$10,000-a-plate dinner for her friend the leader of the Ontario NDP. The leader of the NDP in Ontario calls our energy products toxic, campaigned against line 9, and she also attacked Northern Gateway. She is no friend of Energy East. We know that clearly. Why is the Premier secretly fundraising for opponents of Alberta?

The Speaker: Just one moment, please.

Speaker's Ruling Matters Referred to Ethics Commissioner

The Speaker: Members of the gallery, I've been advised that the matter which was addressed in the question is with respect to a matter that is currently being reviewed by the Ethics Commissioner. It is suggested that discussions of that matter would be inappropriate in the House when the matter is under review. So I would ask that we avoid that topic today.

Government Policies (continued)

The Speaker: Hon. Premier, any comment? If you'd like to, you've got 35 seconds.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to talk about things that have been done in and around Ontario and different comparisons of the same. Unfortunately, I think the hon. member over there has a slightly different version of history, because what I know is that while he was out there having taxpayer-funded meetings about navel-gazing amongst conservatives, I was actually out there talking to people about the value of Energy East, not only to energy industry people but to environmentalists, and making progress such that instead of exchanging childish tweets with people, I was able in Vancouver to get all Premiers and the Prime Minister . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Pipeline Construction

Mr. Jean: Last month the Premier claimed that Alberta has a partner in Ottawa in Prime Minister Trudeau. Colour me surprised, Mr. Speaker. One of the Prime Minister's first moves after his election was banning tankers on the west coast, obviously limiting Alberta's ability to get energy products to market. Our partner in Ottawa won't commit to approving Energy East even if it successfully follows his own new regulatory process, one that this Premier says she supports. Why won't the Premier admit that her pipeline approach is not working, won't work, and start advocating for Alberta's best interests?

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, what I know is that the 10 years of what preceded what's going on right now hasn't worked. It hasn't worked at the federal level, and it hasn't worked at the provincial level. We're doing our homework on the environment. The federal government needs to establish a process that Canadians can trust, and then they will exercise their discretion. In the meantime I am making our case at every possible opportunity such that, as I said before, 13 Premiers and the Prime Minister signed onto a declaration agreeing about the urgency of getting our product to tidewater and getting a timely and predictable process in place, and that is progress.

Mr. Jean: When Ottawa announced further delays and regulations to our world-class pipeline review process, Alberta's environment minister said that she welcomed these new rules. Canadian producers lose up to \$50 million a day without a new pipeline. Approving the three major pipeline projects would mean an immediate private-sector investment of \$30 billion into the national economy. The next time the Premier goes to Ontario to stump for her friends, will she commit to telling this story, the truth, instead of allowing opponents of Alberta to tell our story for us?

Ms Notley: Well, I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that the member opposite ought to do better research because, in fact, that is exactly the story that has been told. And guess what? People are listening. They're listening because we have a credible record to show them and we have a credible plan to talk about with them. Those who are concerned about the environment have a right to be concerned about the environment, and now Alberta is doing its part so that those who are concerned about the environment can embrace the fact that Canada is a progressive producer of nonrenewable energy that deserves to have its product accepted in all markets.

Mr. Jean: The National Energy Board has already approved the Northern Gateway pipeline. This Premier opposes it. This pipeline would grow Canada's GDP by over \$300 billion over the next 30 years, all of Canada. But instead of acting in the national interest, the federal government has announced a tanker ban on the B.C. coast, and the Prime Minister has said that he won't approve the pipeline. The Premier also campaigned against this project in the spring election. Does she stand by that position now, or will she advocate for Alberta's energy sector to her friends in Ottawa?

Ms Notley: The position that I've been taking over and over and over, not only in Ottawa but also in Toronto, also in Montreal, also in Vancouver, also in Winnipeg, is that for our country's economy to grow, not only in Alberta but across the whole country, we have to have a mature, comprehensive, sophisticated, integrated energy infrastructure so that we can get our product to the best market at the best time at the best price. That is the case that I've been making all across the board, and the way to get there is for us to be grown-up participants in a national conversation where we . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Government Spending

Mr. Jean: Almost every time we ask a question of this government about finances or, frankly, just about any other topic, they stand up in this place and make unfounded and baseless accusations about the opposition. It would be helpful for the government to take the state of our provincial finances seriously. We would appreciate it. Wildrose wants to protect the long-term viability of front-line services. Without responsible action now, the NDP puts everything at risk. Why won't the Premier commit to finding significant budget savings now so that front-line services that matter to Albertans will be protected over the long term?

2:20

Ms Notley: You know, it's really quite entertaining listening to this government – sorry. [interjections] It's very entertaining listening to this government. There's even something you have to do, which is listen to the opposition talk about restraint. They come to us and demand new hospitals, new school improvements, new roads, more flood protection, all in their own ridings. It seems that the only kind of restraint that they can demonstrate is in their tipping practices.

Mr. Jean: Mr. Speaker, I was pretty sure the government would revert to their usual nonsense about draconian cuts from the opposition, and they did. But here's a tip and the truth: while this government fearmongers about fantasy cuts from the opposition, it's actually putting the stability of front-line services at risk. Without action, Albertans risk losing police positions, nursing positions, seniors' beds, and much more. Why won't she look at cutting out the waste – duplication and bloated ranks of management – instead of putting front-line services at risk, that Albertans want and need?

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that the deficit is an issue that we have to keep a very careful eye on, and we need to be prudent. Now, the folks over there would like us to start by blowing an extra \$1.5 billion hole in that deficit by giving tax breaks to profitable corporations and the wealthiest of Albertans. That does not make sense when you're trying to make prudent decisions. So that's the first place they need to look at in their deficit management strategy, because it's not going to work.

Mr. Jean: Here's another tip: no Alberta corporations are making profits, so it's not a problem.

Mr. Speaker, this government acts as if our suggestions to make targeted cuts to the bloat in our government are extreme. No economist would support them, the Premier said, but economists have looked at our ideas and think that finding 2 per cent savings in the waste inside government is possible; it's even reasonable and moderate. Not every dollar the government spends serves front-line Albertans. Surely, this Premier can find two pennies of savings in every dollar that Canada's most expensive government spends without laying off nurses or closing long-term health beds.

Ms Notley: Well, first of all, Mr. Speaker, going back to the previous comment, it's a darn good thing that the Official Opposition leader is not selling Alberta as an investment place to people outside of Alberta because he needs to learn a little bit about promoting our province.

When it comes to reducing spending, we are taking a very careful look to ensure that we can reduce spending. But we need to understand that up until now the health care budget, for instance, which is 40 per cent of our budget, was increasing at 6 per cent a year. Simply by dropping that to zero, which is from these folks over there, or to 1 per cent would cause huge chaos if we did that in one year.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

The hon. leader of the third party.

Support for Municipalities

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This morning at the AUMA breakfast we had a chance to hear the Minister of Municipal Affairs answer questions, and to be honest, I'm troubled. We heard from municipalities that they're concerned that the government may delay the requisition for education tax, which would delay municipalities' ability to collect tax, administer a proper appeal process, and manage cash flow, and the minister didn't have any answers. Would the Premier like to clarify the government's intent, please?

The Speaker: The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to take this question. Certainly, this morning it was a bit of a challenge, in fact, because there was some misinformation and lack of clarity on behalf of the person asking the question. Given the fact that the person asking the question was a little unclear on that, it became very unclear to answer that. I'd be happy to tell you that we will be proceeding exactly as to normal procedure in terms of providing the education requisition information to the municipalities. We will continue as expected, and the municipalities can expect them at the regular time.

Thank you.

Mr. McIver: I'm glad that the minister acknowledged that there was some misinformation and a lack of clarification because the minister was the source of it.

While she was doing that, the other thing she didn't provide information on was when a member of a municipality asked: is the government going to honour their commitment to MSI, including

the additional \$400 million from last year? Once again the minister did not know her files, did not know the answer. I'm giving her a mulligan here, Mr. Speaker. Can the minister now tell the House what's going on?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I made it very clear that we continue to recognize the importance of MSI to communities across Alberta. Our government remains committed to providing municipalities with the tools and resources they need to serve Albertans. But Albertans do expect us to be responsible fiscal managers, and we are taking that responsibility seriously. We are working incredibly hard to work within the budget, that is not yet finalized, to provide the support and meet the needs of municipalities across this province.

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure if that was the Charleston or the twist, but it was similar to the dance the minister did this morning.

I'm going to give the minister a third chance to answer questions that the minister was unable to answer about her own files this morning. A member of a municipality asked about the rural physician action plan and about their concern that if the government cuts it back, it will make it harder for rural Alberta to attract and retain doctors. This is very important, and the minister could not assure municipalities this morning that that was going to continue. A second mulligan. We failed in the first one. I now want the minister to have a chance to clarify, please.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Certainly, attracting and maintaining physicians as well as other health professionals throughout Alberta is a priority for this government. That's one of the reasons why instead of moving forward with a billion-dollar health care cut, which was proposed by the party opposite asking the very question, we invested \$800 million immediately as soon as we were elected. We're continuing to work with RPAP and with Alberta Health Services to make sure we get the right professionals in the right communities.

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

Small-business Assistance

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are for the Finance minister. Streamlining and reducing costs of government are more important now than ever. That applies even more to new businesses and start-ups trying to survive in this economic climate. Small businesses in Alberta constitute 95 per cent of the businesses, and they need a break. The Edmonton Chamber of Commerce identified serious increases in 2016 alone, including property tax increases; business licence fees; construction fees for gas, plumbing, heating, electrical, and development permits; and waste management fee increases. To the Finance minister: how about giving them a sustained stimulus and reducing small-business tax?

Mr. Ceci: Thank you to the member opposite. I just want to take you back to Budget 2015. Our government gave small businesses a hand up there through the \$2 billion in capital available through ATB, AIMCo, and the Alberta Enterprise Corporation. We're currently working on Budget 2016, as you know, and you'll see

more information there. This summer we also instituted something the previous government had shut down, and that's STEP. That'll be available to small and medium-sized businesses throughout Alberta so they can hire young people to help them out in the summer.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Dr. Swann: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Well, given that this government is offering small businesses the chance to go into greater debt, with the impending minimum wage increases, why not offset these impacts by a reduction in small-business tax? They only have so much money.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you. As people in this House know, the small-business tax is kept at 3 per cent. That's in line with provinces all across this country. We are in the middle of all that. You know, we'll be bringing forward some initiatives in Budget 2016 which will assist small businesses, in fact all businesses in Alberta. The opportunity to go into debt, to get capital so that they can expand their businesses, is something we heard from businesses that they want to do.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Dr. Swann: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Well, given that there's still significant red tape for small businesses, what are you doing to reduce red tape for small businesses?

The Speaker: The minister of economic development.

Mr. Bilous: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm quite honoured to respond to this question. Our government has been working quite closely with not only chambers of commerce but small businesses and entrepreneurs across this province, looking at ways that we can help. Part of the reason that my ministry was created was, quite frankly, so that businesses have a one-stop shop. They have one place to go to access government. Whether it's an entrepreneur who's come up with a great new idea related to the agriculture sector, the forestry sector, a new clean-tech idea, they have a one-stop shop through my ministry.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

2:30

Job Creation and Retention

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The dramatic collapse of the global price of oil is having a serious negative impact on many of the constituents of Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill and, of course, people across Alberta. Will the Minister of Economic Development and Trade tell the House what he's doing to encourage job creation and economic growth?

The Speaker: The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Mr. Bilous: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I'd like to thank the hon. member for her question. I know that this is top of mind for all Albertans everywhere, in all corners of our province. First of all, I just want to acknowledge that we understand the impact that the global price of oil is having on not just our oil and gas sector but, quite frankly, on all sectors and the ripple effect that that's having. That's why yesterday we heard in our Speech from

the Throne, which is our government's vision for how we're moving forward, how our government is going to partner with the job creators, the private sector, to ensure that the right conditions are in place so Alberta remains the best . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

First supplemental.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this protracted downturn is expected to continue and with the layoffs mounting, again to the same minister: I'd like to know what steps are being taken by the government to put people back to work, especially in the construction industry, which has been hit very hard in Calgary.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for the question. Absolutely we recognize that the construction industry is one of the sectors that is hurting because of the global price of oil, but I can tell you that our government is taking action. We have a plan to address job losses, to encourage economic growth and diversification, and we're acting on it. Yesterday I introduced Bill 1, which gives concrete steps on how our government is working with the private sector to ensure that Albertans are working. I must say that the Infrastructure minister has announced \$34 billion over five years . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Ms McPherson: Mr. Speaker, back to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade: given the state of the economy why isn't the government looking at making further cuts to spending, especially in high-cost areas like health care and education?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for the question. Quite frankly, we're not going to make a bad situation worse. Now, I recognize that the opposition would love to and believe that firing nurses, doctors, teachers, front-line staff is the way to help the economy rebound, but quite frankly it's clear that Albertans want an economy that's resilient to energy price swings, which is why we're focusing on building on our strengths in the agriculture and forestry sectors, in clean tech, partnering with tourism, and leveraging what we're already doing well. That is how we're going to help Albertans . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Chief Adviser on Labour Negotiations

Mr. Fildebrandt: I've got a big tip for the government. One of the top issues that the government will face in the next few years is bargaining with our government-sector unions, so I noted with interest that yesterday the Premier hired a new chief adviser on labour negotiations. He will advise the government on labour negotiations with government unions like AUPE. The problem is that as of this morning he is still listed on the AUPE's website as one of their chief negotiators. Please tell us, Madam Premier, that you didn't actually hire the fox to guard the henhouse.

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. The member says that he's got a big tip. That's exciting,

and I'm sure that the service industry will be very happy to hear that the next time he enters into a restaurant.

In terms of the question that's being raised, I think it makes good sense. When past governments struck deals that obviously weren't necessarily demonstrating restraint, I think it makes sense to look at who the best negotiators are in the province and make sure that they're on your side.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Admitting that their own AUPE friends are overpaid. Interesting.

Labour negotiations are governed by complicated laws and precedents. Hiring away one side's negotiator would be bargaining in bad faith unless, of course, the union agreed to it, in which case it would verge on insider trading. To the Deputy Premier: which is it? Did the government make the mother of all labour code violations, or are the government's negotiations with AUPE a sham?

Ms Gray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm excited to provide some answers on this question. Our government was very pleased to be able to hire one of the best negotiators available. This is someone who has experience on both sides, working for management as well as working for labour unions. He is known throughout the community as someone who is tough but fair, and we look forward to working with him through labour negotiations in the coming years.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Playing both sides against taxpayers is an interesting definition of good value.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans won't put up with sham bargaining given that the Premier's chief adviser on labour negotiations appears to be in a gross conflict of interest. Fewer issues are more important to the sound financial management of this province than having proper and effective negotiations with our government-sector unions. Will the Premier admit that this hiring was a serious mistake and dismiss Mr. Davediuk?

The Speaker: The Minister of Labour.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The chief negotiator who has been hired has over three decades of experience on the management side as well as the labour union side. He will be able to be tough but fair and make sure that our labour negotiations are properly done. My role as Minister of Labour, as a regulator is to make sure that that stays the case. We know that during these challenging times this labour negotiator will be able to work soundly with all parties.

Thank you.

Government Policies

(continued)

Ms Jansen: Mr. Speaker, during the last provincial election the New Democrats ran a very successful campaign around the theme that our government was trying to scare Albertans by raising concerns about the effects of the declining price of oil. In spite of what the government said, our members are well aware that the government doesn't control the price of oil. However, they do decide the response and set the tone to inspire confidence in Alberta, and frankly that tone has been lacking. To the Premier: will you acknowledge that the platform your government ran on in the previous election isn't positioned to address the problems right now facing Alberta's economy?

The Speaker: The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the hon. member for her question. Quite frankly, we have addressed and acknowledged the current economic climate within the province, within Canada, and quite frankly world-wide, with the low price of oil and the effects that it's having on the international economy. Our government has a plan. We've taken action through Bill 1, which was tabled yesterday, looking at opportunities to partner with the private sector and the job creators to ensure that the government is acting in a supportive way, that we are laying the right foundations to encourage economic growth.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I recently spent a day at the doors in Calgary-North West and heard the fears and concerns and worries of Albertans. Now the NDP admits that their long-touted job-creation incentive program has not created a single job and needs to be reviewed after only five months since the budget was introduced. To the Premier: now that your job-creation program has sputtered, what have you learned from this failure?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll remind the member that in Budget 2015 alone our government made more than \$2 billion in capital available to entrepreneurs and small businesses through ATB, through AIMCo, and through the Alberta Enterprise Corporation, which funds a fund which then invests directly in Alberta companies. We're providing small businesses help in hiring talented young people through the STEP program, that we're excited to roll out. We have our 34 billion of new dollars that will be invested in infrastructure, which is going to help the economy as well as . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Second supplemental.

Ms Jansen: Yes. Mr. Speaker, let's talk about small business. The PCs called on the government to reduce small-business taxes as a step towards encouraging growth, something your government wasn't prepared to do. To the Premier once more: are you prepared to include a small-business tax cut in the upcoming budget?

The Speaker: The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

2:40

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I do find it a tad rich that less than a year ago the member and her party were in power and did nothing of the kind when they were government, yet now in opposition they'll call on us.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that there are a number of initiatives and ways that our government is going to be helping entrepreneurs, small businesses within our province. Again, Bill 1 is the first way for us to enact some of our initiatives. The Finance minister will be tabling his budget early next month. I encourage members to look thoroughly at it, as there are . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Emergency Medical Dispatch Services in Calgary

Mr. Barnes: Last fall I asked the Health minister in this Assembly why the government is charging ahead with bringing Calgary's EMS dispatch services under the grip of AHS centralization. The government has dumped millions into a project that the city doesn't want, AHS doesn't need, and the taxpayers are on the hook for it.

To the Health minister: why don't you stop ignoring the people of Calgary and keep their EMS services under their control?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. He does acknowledge that there have been some reviews of the situation, including the Auditor General, who recommended a consolidation, including the Health Quality Council of Alberta, who recommended a consolidation. This is something that is being looked at globally, not just for one community or another, and it's something that we want to make sure we get right. So I'm not going to commit to making a wrong decision; I want to make the right one and take the time to do so.

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, seeing as the minister promised to this Assembly that she would work with local leadership and given that the mayor of Calgary is once again imploring the government to kill this ill-begotten experiment, I have to ask yet again: will the minister listen to the mayor himself, respect the ability of Calgary to make its own decisions, and stop AHS from trapping the city in an inefficient and costly system?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The provision of health care is actually the provincial government's responsibility, not an individual municipality's responsibility. So I'm going to do my job, which is to review data and make sure that I'm working with our partners to provide stability and that the citizens of Calgary, Edmonton, Medicine Hat, and every other part of Alberta get the very best service for their EMS.

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, the city of Calgary deserves a real answer from this government. Given that local decision-makers don't want AHS to take over their EMS dispatch and given that quickly this is turning into a \$10 million boondoggle and given the fact that 46 Calgary dispatchers could soon find themselves out of work, will the minister at least tell Calgarians why she refuses to commit right now to protecting them from an inefficient, wasteful Alberta Health Services hijacking?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member says a lot of things in his preamble that don't necessarily relate to the situation.

My number one driver is to make sure that the people of Alberta get the right health care service at the right time, and we also need to make sure that that's at the right investment. So I need to review the data, and I've done so with the mayor. We've had two opportunities to meet about this so far, and we're going to continue to until I make sure that I feel confident in the decision that I want to make for the citizens of Alberta. That's responsible governance.

Seniors' Care

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, every day in our province an average of 60 Albertans turn 65 years old, entering their senior years. There's a grey elephant in the room; in just 15 years there will be almost a million seniors in our province, meaning that roughly a quarter of Albertans will be over 65. Seniors helped our province to get where we are today, and we should be encouraging the development of senior supports which would allow them to live in dignity and to access the services that they require. Does the minister have a plan outside the highly controversial and centralized approach from AHS to deal with this growing segment of our population?

The Speaker: The Minister of Seniors and Housing.

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. I can assure you that we do have a plan here in Alberta. We are very concerned about seniors. As the member said, we care very much about them and their contributions to our province. As we've said before, we're creating 2,000 long-term care spaces. We just announced the transportation tool kit to support them to age in their communities and to have access to many services.

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, the minister is full of words about the importance of long-term care but not action that our seniors can see. Given that in many rural communities long-term care beds allow seniors to live in close proximity to family, friends, and communities that they helped build and given that the alternatives to long-term care beds in our communities are divorce by nursing home or sky-high costs due to placing seniors in acute-care beds when proper spaces are not available, will the minister explain why our caucus has received reports from across the province that long-term beds are now being closed?

The Speaker: Madam Minister.

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you again to the member for the question. I can assure the member and all Albertans, seniors especially, that our government is committed to investing in long-term care beds and making sure that seniors are aging in their communities surrounded by their family and friends and that we as a government are moving forward on that. I just commend to the member to see the budget when it comes out and see the investment that we're putting in.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Yao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The fact of the matter is that our seniors deserve better than the flippant behavior the NDP government has given to date for our seniors. Given the fact that our population is aging and we need a plan in place before it's too late and given the fact that this government seems to excel at vague promises rather than real results, if not for me but for the seniors who built this province will the minister commit to developing a results-based system that will ensure that the long-term care beds desperately needed across this province are not cut to save a quick buck by the NDP government?

The Speaker: Madam Minister.

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you again to the member for the question. This government is protecting the front-line health services that Alberta seniors rely on, not cancelling surgeries or throwing our hospitals into chaos, which is what the opposition would do with the cuts that they're proposing. They often think that the way through tough times is to deny seniors the care that they need. Our government is absolutely standing up to support seniors.

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

Fentanyl Use Prevention in Indigenous Communities

Mr. Rodney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Fentanyl killed 272 Albertans last year, and the crisis was so shocking for the Blood reserve that they declared a state of emergency. Recently the chief stated: if someone dies from drugs that you have sold them, we will do everything in our power to hold you legally responsible for your

actions. An Albertan who allegedly provided fentanyl to two parents who died, leaving their children orphaned, has been officially charged with manslaughter. To the Justice minister: what specific steps are you taking to work with the federal Crown to ensure that these types of offences are prosecuted as homicides?

The Speaker: The Minister of Justice.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and to the member for the question. Well, of course, our government is deeply concerned about the fentanyl crisis. We are working in concert with our partners in Health to ensure the supports that are necessary to help the vulnerable individuals who can fall into drug addiction and to ensure that we're making strides on the enforcement piece as well.

In terms of the specific case the member mentioned, obviously the federal Crown prosecutors exercise their own discretion, and I'm not able to intervene in that case. But we are absolutely committed as a province to doing our part in making sure we get these drugs off our streets.

Mr. Rodney: Albertans deserve really good answers to these questions, and I will now ask the Minister of Health. Given that the crisis underlines a serious opioid dependency issue, which the mental health review highlighted in its report, and given that you have identified that an opiate addictions plan for indigenous peoples is an immediate priority and given that you've had the mental health review for three months and that any delay in implementing this plan is literally a life-and-death issue, can you please tell us: what concrete steps have you taken in the last 100 days to fulfill this recommendation, which is guaranteed to save lives?

The Speaker: Madam Minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. As was mentioned, the situation with fentanyl is tragic, and it's not just something that's happening in Alberta. This is something that many provinces are dealing with right now. One of the things I'm very proud of is that we've shown leadership in making sure that we get naloxone kits, the anecdote to this opioid, into the hands of communities and individuals as well as paramedics, EMTs, nurses, psychiatric nurses. We're increasing access so that a life-saving initiative can be taken here.

In terms of the indigenous advisory committee that's certainly a very high priority for us. My deputy minister has that on the top of his list, and I'll be happy to provide some further follow-up with the member opposite about success that we're having there.

2:50

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Rodney: Thank you, Minister.

Finally, to the new Minister of Indigenous Relations: given that your government failed to mention anything in the throne speech about effectively dealing with the fentanyl crisis and how it affects indigenous Albertans and given that your government has chopped \$13 million from addictions treatment and given that a number of reserves such as the Blood tribe have established successful frameworks for dealing with the fentanyl crisis, what real-life strategies are you adopting, adapting, and delivering for the safety of indigenous individuals and communities on and off reserves?

The Speaker: The minister of indigenous affairs.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. We have been working very closely with the members of the Blood tribe and, of course, with indigenous communities across this province to work on significant issues with regard to addictions and, in this case, fentanyl. We have increased public awareness through a variety of programs. We have increased the availability of naloxone for treating people who have taken an overdose, and of course we are ensuring treatment is available and doing all of that in consultation with the indigenous community through our Fentanyl Response Team.

Thank you.

Women's Equality

Ms Fitzpatrick: Mr. Speaker, yesterday was International Women's Day. I have been part of the struggle for equal rights for women for over 40 years, whether that was fighting for nontraditional jobs or advocating for pay equity in 1984, when I signed the complaint against the federal government demanding equal pay for work of equal value. To the Minister of Status of Women: what are you doing to address and settle the issue of pay equity for women in Alberta?

The Speaker: Madam Minister.

Ms McLean: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for my first question in the House. The member is right, and this is very simple. Women deserve to earn equal pay for work of equal value. We are committed to fair wages for women, and we're looking at different ways to close the wage gap. That is one of the reasons that we're phasing in the minimum wage increases. With the majority of minimum wage earners in Alberta being women – that's 62 per cent – our plan will make a real difference for them and their families. I'm so proud to be part of a government that has a real plan.

The Speaker: Thank you, Madam Minister.

Ms Fitzpatrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that women in Alberta are still underrepresented in leadership roles in both our public and private sectors, to the same minister: what are you doing to support and encourage more women in leadership positions throughout this province?

Ms McLean: The strong women of Alberta have a place in corporate boardrooms, postsecondary administration, on public boards, and in elected office. We are reviewing agencies, boards, and commissions to ensure that new appointments reflect the diversity of Alberta. We're going to work with partners like AUMA's new status of women committee to get more women involved in politics and leadership. It's not enough to just talk about gender equality in 2016. That's why our government is walking the walk. We are leading by example, starting with the first gender-balanced government in Canadian history.

Ms Fitzpatrick: Thank you.

Given that women have traditionally held the role for the daily care of their children, again to the same minister: what is your ministry doing to promote the sharing of this role and help increase women's participation in the workforce?

Ms McLean: Well, it's no secret that we have taken steps to make this Legislature more family friendly. But it's not about us in this House; it's about working to ensure that women across Alberta have the same opportunity. Our government will also help families

by addressing the cost of child care in a fiscally responsible way. We're giving immediate support to families by expanding tax credits to parents. A single mom with two kids who qualifies will receive \$3,000 more in her jeans each year. These are real, practical steps to help women in Alberta.

The Speaker: Thank you, Madam Minister.
The Member for Little Bow.

Infrastructure Project Prioritization

Mr. Schneider: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, Wildrose has been calling for a transparent and prioritized infrastructure list for years. A new session, and still it's missing. This doesn't sit right because nearly a year ago now the NDP promised Albertans they would implement a sunshine list to end the backroom politics in infrastructure. Minister, last year your department lapsed a billion dollars in capital spending. Is this going to be another case of one thing said in opposition and another in government, or will you release the list?

The Speaker: The Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I can assure the hon. member that the list will be released, and I'd ask him to wait for the budget and the capital plan that goes with that.

Mr. Schneider: Mr. Speaker, the minister's actions and his words don't add up. Given that the NDP slammed the former government for putting, quote, political interests at the top of the infrastructure list, now he's doing the very same thing that he once condemned. Given that the government killed Bill 203, which would have limited government announcements during election campaigns, Minister, will you do the right thing and unless there's a nonpolitical emergency commit to making no more transportation or infrastructure announcements with taxpayer dollars in the middle of the Calgary by-election?

Mr. Mason: I think I can undertake to do that, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Schneider: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's much appreciated. Given that without an infrastructure priority list smaller communities are going to have to make some very hard planning decisions this year and given that Albertans are worried about aging and missing infrastructure in their communities and that they can't afford to pay a thousand dollars a head to talk to this government, Minister, if you aren't going to release a fully transparent sunshine list, will you at least commit to full transparency around what projects are being approved and what projects are being rejected under the small communities component of the building Canada fund?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I know that the Minister of Municipal Affairs will want to have some more comments on that particular program, which is administered from her department. I just want to point out that I've got the five-year plan of the Wildrose. In the absence of a budget the Wildrose wants to spend about \$24.6 billion on infrastructure, which is a \$9.4 billion cut over what this government wants. They can't have it both ways. They can't have roads and bridges in their . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

Energy Policies

Dr. Starke: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The precipitous and prolonged drop in the price of oil has certainly had a profound effect on the economies of all oil-producing jurisdictions, but while this government continually blames lower prices alone for every lost job and every lost dollar of investment, neighbouring jurisdictions seem to be weathering this storm more successfully. To the Minister of Energy. You recently spent four days in Houston conferring with your counterparts on how to cope with the current economic challenges. Minister, Albertans, who paid for your trip, want to know: what lessons did you learn, and how will you apply them?

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you for the question. Indeed, we had a great opportunity in Houston to meet with two presidents, 12 ministers – not my kind of minister but country ministers – 300 president/CEOs, and over 3,000 participants from 53 countries. In addition to sessions from 7 in the morning until 9:30 at night, we had ministry side meetings. We met with the minister from Norway, the minister from Mexico, our federal minister, the assistant to the U.S. MIT.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

3:00

Dr. Starke: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm certainly interested in the guest list and the schedule, but it's not the answer to the question. I guess only time will tell if our \$22,000 that the trip cost was well spent.

Now, given that Husky energy has just announced three SAGD projects in the heavy oil fields near Edam, east of Lloydminster – I'll point out that if you go east of Lloydminster, you're in Saskatchewan – and given that these projects will employ over 500 workers during construction and create 90 permanent jobs and given that the price of oil in Saskatchewan is the same as in Alberta, to the minister: what are they doing that we aren't?

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: We're certainly working with our companies in a few ways. We're working on, as the Premier had mentioned, you know, pipeline projects to get our products to market. We're also working with the economic development minister. He and I announced a project recently, the petrochemical industry, that'll get people with similar skills to build those projects while we're waiting for the price to go up, to build other SAGD and in situ projects.

Dr. Starke: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that this minister has already told Alberta oil patch workers to leave the province to find work, perhaps they'll go to Saskatchewan. That's where Lex management recently announced that 80 per cent of their \$142 million oil and gas investments will go, to the province of Saskatchewan. Minister, if low oil prices are the only reason that things are so slow here in Alberta, how do you explain Saskatchewan's ability to track investment? When will you pick up the phone and ask them for some neighbourly advice?

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you for the question. Well, certainly, we have different geology than Saskatchewan, so our projects are different. We have the SAGD, in situ, which are longer term projects, so to do the investment for that, we've got to wait for the prices to come up. But we are looking at through the royalty review the petrochemical diversification. We are also harmonizing the royalties going forward in 2017 so all liquids will be considered the

same, and that'll make it a lot easier for investment decisions to be made going forward.

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I was a little confused about your request at the beginning of the session about this, so I apologize to the House. I would ask unanimous consent to revert to the Routine and to extend it past 3 o'clock.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Members' Statements

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

Government Policies

Mr. MacIntyre: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just in time for Christmas Albertans were left with a special gift from this government: hurt farms, tax increases, and more flawed economics. Three months later it looks like we are going to get more of the same. In January Alberta lost 26,000 jobs in the private sector. We now have the highest business taxes in western Canada, a \$3 billion carbon tax, repeated serious miscalculations on resource revenue, and miscalculations on almost every cost projection possible. This is the NDP record.

As a result of this government's flawed agenda communities like Hanna are now literally hanging on the edge of a cliff. Over 250 coal and plant workers, who pay taxes, provide for their families, support local stores and businesses, are now under serious stress as companies cancel power contracts directly due to the punishing effects of the carbon tax. Good, hard-working men and women are literally seeing their futures, their hopes and dreams for their children destroyed before their very eyes.

And while the Premier was busy letting other provinces disparage our energy sector, when the sewage-dumping mayor of Montreal attacked Energy East, all our Premier could muster in response was to attack the hon. Leader of the Opposition for speaking the facts on pipelines. But the Premier did find some free time in her schedule to fly off to Toronto and collect \$10,000 cheques for an anti-Alberta, anti oil sands NDP leader that called our oil toxic. But somehow importing 600,000 barrels a day from despot regimes is not.

Albertans want leaders who defend Albertans, Mr. Speaker. Wildrose will provide that leadership by standing by and standing up for vulnerable Albertans suffering from NDP mismanagement, and we will stand up for all job-creating sectors of our economy.

Thank you.

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

International Women's Day

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for allowing me to rise today in recognition of International Women's Day. Worldwide, women continue to contribute to social, economic, cultural, and political accomplishments. We have much reason to celebrate in Alberta today.

Our government is committed to ensuring better equality and equity for all Alberta women. Our first step to address this was creating Alberta's first-ever Ministry of Status of Women, and I am proud to say that this is Canada's only stand-alone ministry for the status of women. Our province is home to many strong and capable

women, from the indigenous and the pioneers through to the Famous Five and right up to the present day.

In my community of Edmonton-Manning many of my constituents are working women: accomplished health professionals, teachers, veterans, and entrepreneurs. As an Alberta woman I am proud of my sisters who continue to stand up for their rights in workplaces and communities. However, the barriers continue. We have huge gender gaps, which force us to work longer hours and take up multiple jobs to provide for basic needs, and many of our sisters, as we witnessed in this House itself, continue to face domestic violence.

It is time for change, Mr. Speaker. It is time that all women feel that they have a safe place to call home for themselves and their children. It is time we encourage women to run for office, to believe that they, too, have the power to be executives and become leaders in their private and public lives. This will bring change for all of us.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The leader of the third party.

Provincial Fiscal Policies

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's great to be back in the Legislature with my Progressive Conservative colleagues, working to find solutions to the issues that matter most to Albertans. One of those issues, no doubt, is the state of Alberta's finances. The low oil prices have done a number on the provincial treasury, and the Finance minister has only hinted that the deficit would be over \$10 billion. He wouldn't say it out loud, but the Municipal Affairs minister did this morning, interestingly enough.

I've said it before, and I'll say it again: the NDP government is not to blame for the price of oil. They are, however, completely to blame for their own failed policies. These policies include an increase in personal and corporate taxes, royalty uncertainty, a \$3 billion carbon tax, a \$15 minimum wage, and absolutely no spending restraint. On top of that, they are racking up massive debt, with no plan to ever pay it back. These policies kill jobs, drive out investment, and lower our credit rating. NDP policies, Mr. Speaker, are making a bad situation much worse. Government needs to correct their course now to protect Alberta. Every day the NDP delays in reducing spending means bigger and more severe cuts later. We only need to remember Bob Rae's NDP government in Ontario to know that lesson.

Our Progressive Conservative caucus will bring forth pragmatic, common-sense solutions, something sorely lacking from both the government and the Official Opposition. Unlike parties to our left and to our right, PCs are focused on Albertans rather than on political ideology. Our PC caucus will promote job and economic growth with smart, fiscally conservative policies while having the courage to compassionately tackle complex social issues. The PC Party is Alberta's conservative party that believes all Albertans, no matter who they are, are equal. That, Mr. Speaker, is why this government would do well to take the PC caucus's advice.

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

Turning Point Overdose Prevention Initiative

Ms Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I want to talk about something that is too often overlooked in central Alberta. I'm talking about overdose prevention. As many of us have heard, Alberta is being ravaged by a wave of fentanyl and opioid overdoses. The overdoses and deaths that have occurred in Alberta represent a public health crisis requiring innovative, strategically

planned responses. We must continue to expand our overdose prevention education and naloxone distribution programs.

Many community organizations are already doing tremendous work in central Alberta to address this issue. One such organization in my constituency of Red Deer-South is Turning Point. Turning Point serves as a hub for a variety of street outreach programs as well as health promotion and prevention programs focused on sexually transmitted and blood-borne infections. Turning Point also provides a nonjudgmental, open, helpful atmosphere where community members know that they will be respected by staff whom they can trust.

3:10

Through effective harm reduction initiatives Turning Point is a leader in overdose prevention in central Alberta. I'm pleased to share that, to date, Turning Point has distributed 266 naloxone kits and recorded 70 lives saved. Because of the high level of trust they share with community members, Turning Point is able to gain first-hand knowledge of lethal street drug trends in central Alberta while promoting life-saving overdose prevention options.

Mr. Speaker, organizations such as Turning Point provide an example to us all. I commend them for the invaluable contribution to health promotion and overdose prevention in central Alberta communities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

St. Mary's University Humanities 101 Program

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to ask my colleagues in the Assembly to see themselves in someone else's shoes. Imagine if you were marginalized and had little hope of attending postsecondary education. Imagine you're recovering from substance abuse or experiencing homelessness. How would you get back on your feet? How could you go back to school without support?

During the election I learned about the humanities 101 program at St. Mary's University, in my constituency. Offered to marginalized and low-income individuals, this program offers students free tuition, hot meals, assistance with child care, individual tutoring, and also cultural experiences. Many of the funds raised for this program are done through the hard work of the faculty and students at St. Mary's.

St. Mary's University's humanities 101 program has become a benchmark for many colleges and universities in Canada. The program is designed to empower marginalized Albertans and help address barriers getting in the way of their capacities and skills. Humanities 101 enables students to develop their talents and unlock knowledge that leads to successful futures. I have heard numerous stories from students coming from terrible circumstances and health, often as a result of living in extreme poverty. After graduating from humanities 101, some of these individuals are thriving and contributing positively to society and to their communities.

Mr. Speaker, last December I had an opportunity to attend the humanities 101 graduation at St. Mary's University. It was one of the most moving experiences I've had since taking office, to see these graduates filled with hopes of making a difference in other people's lives.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud of the hard work of St. Mary's University, and I encourage all members to look at their example of how we can help lift people out of poverty in Alberta.

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

Pipeline Construction

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to bring to light the stunning hypocrisy of this NDP government when it comes to the record on pipelines. I cannot help but laugh and shake my head when I hear the Premier spouting lines about the NDP government's support of access to tidewater since day one. We clearly have a very different interpretation of what support looks like. To date we have seen the Premier offering support for Keystone only after it was already rejected by the Obama administration. We saw the Premier offer the same strong support for the Trans Mountain expansion project by writing the National Energy Board only after the B.C. government said that they opposed the project.

But wait; there are more examples of this support. The Premier seems to think that strong support for Energy East includes flying to Ontario on a secret trip and selling access to herself for \$10,000 a plate. Where does the money go? Into the coffers of the Premier's BFFs in the Ontario NDP, a party that has been shown to be against pipelines, pipelines that are crucial for the success of our energy industry.

Mr. Speaker, if it sounds like I'm frustrated, it's because I can't help but think of the serious damage that is being done to our province and, more importantly, to everyday Albertans because of this significant lack of leadership from this government on pipelines.

Wildrose has shown real leadership on this file, and our leader knows what real support looks like. In this caucus we know that pipelines continue to be the safest, most effective, and environmentally responsible way of transporting oil over long distances. We will continue to proudly voice that support and stand up for Alberta, not the beg-for-forgiveness approach after projects have been denied. The NDP government must show strong support through their actions on Energy East; otherwise, the rest of the country will continue to walk all over us. Albertans deserve much better.

Thank you.

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: I recognize the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

Dr. Starke: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give oral notice – and I present the original; I believe the Clerk already has the requisite number of copies – that at an appropriate time I will be rising on a point of privilege concerning the fact that I believe that by providing a copy of Her Honour's Speech from the Throne to the members of the media without providing the same information to members of the opposition beforehand, the government has breached the rights of the members of the House, obstructed the performance of our duties, and thereby committed a contempt.

Thank you.

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: Hon. members, I have three tablings today. I would like to table five copies of the House leaders' agreement, signed on March 4, 2016, respecting Oral Question Period rotation and Members' Statements, which I referred to in my statement earlier this afternoon.

In my capacity as chair and pursuant to section 39(3) of the Legislative Assembly Act I would like to table with the Assembly five copies of the following orders, three of which were approved at the February 9, 2016, meeting of the Special Standing Committee

on Members' Services and one at the March 1, 2016, meeting: the Executive Council salaries amendment order 12, being order 01/16; the members' allowances amendment order 31, being order 02/16; the members' allowances amendment order 13, being order 03/16; the members' allowances amendment order 32, being order 04/16.

Lastly, I'm tabling five copies of a report produced by the Chief Electoral Officer re failure to eliminate a campaign deficit for the 2015 provincial general election, listing those candidates who failed to eliminate a campaign deficit pursuant to section 43.1 of the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act.

The point of privilege that was raised: I think this would be an appropriate time to hear the discussion on that matter.

Privilege

Obstructing a Member in Performance of Duty

Dr. Starke: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to Standing Order 15(2) yesterday afternoon I provided written notice to the Speaker of my intention to raise a point of privilege here today. In fact, the breach of privilege that I'm raising feels a little bit like reverse déjà vu: the issue of media receiving technical briefings ahead of opposition members and staff.

Yesterday, March 8, at about 9 a.m. an exclusive technical briefing for the media on Her Honour's Speech from the Throne began. Now, in point of fact, one hour previous to that members of the media were provided with an embargoed copy of the speech. At 1 p.m. opposition members and staff attended a technical briefing on the Speech from the Throne at the federal building, at which time we similarly expected to be presented with an embargoed copy of the speech. But at the 1 p.m. technical briefing in the federal building opposition members and staff did not in fact receive a copy of the Speech from the Throne but instead were given an incomplete summary of the legislation that would be referred to in the speech. Members of the opposition parties first saw the text of the Speech from the Throne at approximately 3:15 p.m., when Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor began reading the speech, some seven hours after it had been shared with members of the media.

Now, this is the first opportunity to raise this matter as per section 115 in *Beauchesne*. We were aware of the media briefing that was occurring at 9 a.m. and assumed, incorrectly as it turns out, that the same information would be shared with members of the opposition at the 1 p.m. briefing. It is clear that members of the media were provided with the full text of the speech and therefore a greater opportunity to study and examine the speech well before the opposition did. We would therefore submit that our privileges as members of this Assembly and indeed the privileges of the Assembly as a whole were in fact breached.

3:20

Mr. Speaker, the concept of privilege as it applies to members of parliaments throughout the Commonwealth is one of the fundamental tenets of parliamentary democracy. Section 24 of *Beauchesne's* sixth edition on page 11 states:

Parliamentary privilege is the sum of the peculiar rights enjoyed by each House collectively as a constituent part of the High Court of Parliament, and by Members of each House individually, without which they could not discharge their functions and which exceed those possessed by other bodies or individuals.

Section 24 goes on to quote Sir Erskine May, stating:

The privileges of Parliament are rights which are "absolutely necessary for the due execution of its powers". They are enjoyed by individual Members, because the House cannot perform its functions without unimpeded use of the services of its Members; and by each House for the protection of its members and the vindication of its own authority and dignity.

I cite these references to drive home the critical nature of the concept of privilege. Indeed, it has been a consistent finding of Speakers past throughout the Commonwealth that breaches of privilege are among the most serious contraventions of our procedures and practices. Privilege is so important, in fact, that at the commencement of every parliament – and you will remember this, Mr. Speaker – the newly elected Speaker, in the name of and on behalf of the members, lays claim by humble petition to the members' ancient and undoubted rights and privileges. Now, some may consider this to be a mere ceremonial rite or a quaint, traditional formality, but in those few words, that have been uttered over the centuries, the gravitas of privilege is reinforced. It is a concept that cannot and should not be casually dismissed as an anachronistic relic of bygone days.

In this specific case, Mr. Speaker, the abilities of members of the opposition to conduct their duties were obstructed, and therefore I would submit that important democratic functions of the Assembly were impaired. I believe that the government has committed a contempt of the Assembly by providing information about the Speech from the Throne to members of the media prior to the speech being read in the House and without offering opposition members a similar opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, the breaches committed by the government yesterday extend beyond the realm of breach of privilege to the very serious issue of contempt. Chapter 15 on page 251 of *Erskine May* opens with the words:

Generally speaking, any act or omission which obstructs or impedes either House of Parliament in the performance of its functions, or which obstructs or impedes any Member or officer of such House in the discharge of his duty, or which has a tendency, directly or indirectly, to produce such results, may be treated as a contempt even though there is no precedent of the offence.

Mr. Speaker, I submit to you that failing to provide a full text of the Speech from the Throne to the members of the opposition yet placing said speech into the hands of the media a full seven hours before has impeded members of this House in the discharge of our duties. Specifically, during a media conference in advance of yesterday's speech attended by the leader of our caucus, the Member for Calgary-Hays, and me, a member of the parliamentary press gallery asked us for our opinion on the proposed repeal of Bill 22, which is outlined on page 11 of the throne speech. Of course, neither of us had seen the throne speech, and the technical briefing we had received from the government at 1 p.m. made absolutely no mention of any intention to repeal Bill 22. The government's failure to provide us with the information directly impaired our ability to discharge our duties as members of the opposition.

In that moment what we experienced yesterday was virtually identical to the scenario described as unacceptable by House of Commons Speaker Peter Milliken on pages 1840 and 1841 of *House of Commons Debates* on March 19, 2001, when he said:

To deny to members information concerning business that is about to come before the House, while at the same time providing such information to media that will likely be questioning members about that business, is a situation that the Chair cannot condone.

Speaker Milliken further ruled on March 22, 2011, on page 9113 of *House of Commons Debates*:

The member . . . is certainly not misguided in his expectation that members of the House, individually and collectively, must receive from the government particular types of information required for the fulfillment of their parliamentary duties before it is shared elsewhere.

Mr. Speaker, this issue has come up here in our Assembly as well. On March 4, 2003, the leader of the third party opposition, which I

take some heart in noting happened to be the New Democratic Party at the time, raised a point of privilege under circumstances remarkably similar to the one we are dealing with today, except that in that case the briefing was on a bill, not the Speech from the Throne. Now, in his ruling Speaker Kowalski on page 304 of *Hansard* agreed with Speaker Milliken's conclusion and ruled that the disclosure of the contents of a bill to the media prior to the same information being shared with members of the opposition "constitutes a prima facie contempt of the Assembly [and] is treated in the same way as a breach of privilege."

Mr. Speaker, an excellent summary of these arguments can be found on page 299 of *Hansard* on December 2, 2014, in which the Member for Edmonton-Caldor argued:

These findings further clarify that a member's duties are obstructed when they are provided with necessary information after other parties or if they are provided with sustainably less information than other parties. The Assembly should be the place where public debate about legislation begins, not at a press conference mere minutes after the opposition has seen the bill.

So I am arguing out of fairness to all members of the House.

Our privilege of being the first to see the details of legislation that is brought before this House must be maintained.

Well, I thought it would be hard to find additional compelling arguments to support my petition, but I was wrong. That's certainly not the case. On November 27, 2013, the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona was arguing a breach of privilege based on a media technical briefing on Bill 46 that had begun about 30 minutes before she had received a copy of the bill. Quoting from page 3167 of *Hansard*:

My understanding is that the media were invited to a technical, detailed briefing on the bill, which would have given them . . .

And at this point the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood interjects:

It's on now.

The Member for Edmonton-Strathcona continues:

It's on now, but it commenced at 2:45.

I made note of when I as a member of this Assembly received these bills, Mr. Speaker, and it was at 3:15. That is a profound breach of my privilege as a member of this Assembly. We should not be receiving bills and legislation after any member of the public but certainly not after the media has been provided access to it. There is precedent on that.

Now, I would point out that the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona was justifiably indignant over a delay of about 30 minutes. I would point out that in this case the interval was some 14 times longer.

Mr. Speaker, there is one other point to distinguish that must be considered in this particular situation. Whereas other breaches of privilege have involved improper disclosure of the information on proposed pieces of legislation, in this case the document in question is the Speech from the Throne. To my knowledge this situation is without precedent in Alberta and represents an even more serious breach of privilege and contempt for the Assembly because while the speech is prepared by the government and lays out the government's agenda, it is in fact Her Honour's Speech from the Throne. It is not just any document or any speech.

The Speech from the Throne is very different from the everyday Routine of the Assembly, and we saw evidence of that here yesterday. The galleries and, indeed, the floor space were filled with invited guests and dignitaries. We were graced by the presence of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor. Brass bands played *O Canada* and *God Save the Queen*. That's why it is considered improper and, indeed, a sign of disrespect to interrupt the speech by way of applause, comment, interjection, or desk thumping, a convention which I was pleased to see was followed yesterday but was ignored last June. My point is, Mr. Speaker, that the Speech

from the Throne is not just any document, and the actions of the government taken yesterday represented contempt not only for hon. members on this side of the Assembly but indeed for Her Honour.

Mr. Speaker, the issue of sharing government information publicly or with the media before members of the opposition has come up before both in this Assembly and elsewhere. I view with a measure of sadness that members opposite, who only a year or two ago waxed poetic in high dudgeon regarding breaches of privilege that they had suffered, are now so amnesiac that they perpetrate the exact same contemptuous actions in government today. Albertans were promised better, and indeed many voted for that change, and they, too, must be sorely disappointed. It is clear that these breaches have happened before and will continue to happen if we do not take specific action. I am prepared to propose a motion in that regard pending your ruling. For now I believe I have provided compelling arguments that yesterday's events constitute a prima facie case of privilege, and I ask that you rule accordingly.

3:30

The Speaker: Hon. member, there were two statements attributed to the Speaker. If you have it easily accessible, could you just read that first one back to me?

Dr. Starke: The first of the Milliken quotes?

The Speaker: Yes.

Dr. Starke: Certainly. The first Milliken quote, Mr. Speaker, was from March 19, 2001, and I'll repeat the quote.

To deny to members information concerning business that is about to come before the House, while at the same time providing such information to media that will likely be questioning members about that business, is a situation that the Chair cannot condone.

The Speaker: Are there other members? The Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Bilous: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, I'll say at the outset that I'm quite surprised that members from the third party would raise this issue. Here are some facts. When the PCs presented their last throne speech, they provided embargoed copies of the text to the media with no technical briefing whatsoever to members of the opposition. So if there is a person or a party in this room that's being amnesiac, I believe it is the third party. That was their standing operating procedure.

The other point I'll make is that numerous examples that the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster made were in reference to a bill, not in reference to a Speech from the Throne. These are two different topics, quite frankly.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday for the first time, in addition to the media briefing, the government did in fact offer and provide a technical briefing on legislation in the throne speech to the opposition. This was a positive step which offered more to opposition parties than had previously been the case, an increase in accountability and transparency. I'll also point out that as a member since 2012 I have never received a copy of the Speech from the Throne when we were in opposition and the member who has raised this point of privilege was in government.

Mr. Speaker, I understand that when the opposition was contacted and offered the technical briefing, their leader was more than happy with the terms, and I also understand that he was well aware of what was being offered to the media. When I heard about this point of privilege, I wondered whether the House leader had not only forgotten what the practice of his own government had

been but also whether there had been a miscommunication between him and his leader.

On the specific matter of privilege, I would note that the member's letter to the Speaker does not indicate any information on how his rights and responsibilities have been infringed by the government action. When you look at the actual Standing Order 15(1), it states, "A breach of the rights of the Assembly or of the parliamentary rights of any Member constitutes a question of privilege." It's my submission there has been no breach based on that standard. This House has often debated matters of privilege related to governments providing media with copies of legislation prior to its introduction in the House and its distribution to members of this Chamber. However, this isn't a bill, so the same considerations around privilege do not apply. As I've said before, Mr. Speaker, this is historic practice, and it has never been found to be a breach in the past, nor should it today.

Lastly, the context under which this matter has often come to the House when it has been legislation has been because a member has been asked by media to comment on the contents of a bill that the media has seen but that the member hasn't. In this case, copies of the speech that were distributed were done so under embargo, which, again, has been the traditional practice of previous governments, until after the actual speech had been delivered in the House and that the situation couldn't and didn't arise.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I submit that this is not a breach of privilege. Our government is following the standards of previous governments, but the difference and where we've stepped up and made a positive step is that we've offered more to the opposition parties than has previously been the case or previously been the standard in our province in an effort to increase accountability and transparency.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Cooper: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to my colleague for his pointed remarks. Much of what my colleague from Vermilion-Lloydminster raised in the House today clearly indicates that what we're dealing with here is a breach of privilege, and while the deputy House leader from the government side would like to stand up and say, "Oh, we're just doing what the third party did when they were in government," it is a bit shocking. For days and weeks and months and years the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona stood in this place and raised points that said that the standard that the then government was providing was not good enough. In fact, as the member has referenced, a number of points of privilege and prima facie cases have been found on this very issue. I speak specifically to the Speaker in the House of Commons on an issue just like this here in the Assembly when other points of privilege have been raised around the media receiving briefings prior to the opposition.

Now, let me be clear. If the government had provided the same information under embargo to the members of the opposition, what we wouldn't have is a breach of privilege, but that's not what happened. I heard the deputy House leader say that the opposition was more than happy with the terms, but let me be very clear that this side of the House was given the impression that we would receive a copy of the throne speech along with a technical briefing. What we received was exactly what the member has spoken about, a technical briefing. Some of the contents of the throne speech were not addressed in any capacity at the technical briefing, so while the interaction that took place between the media and the leaders of the opposition parties all took place in an embargoed environment, many of those leaders were asked to comment on information that

the media had that the opposition didn't, and that is clearly a breach of privilege. There is a lot of history on precedent – I encourage you to spend some time going back through those steps – that this is a clear breach of privilege.

I will just close by saying that the Deputy Government House Leader and all members on that side of the Assembly have been passionate about doing things differently, about providing more information to the opposition, about working together, yet their actions are what we saw this morning. When something goes awry, their two excuses are "Well, it's what the government used to do" or "I'm sorry." Quite frankly, in this case I believe that our privileges have been breached and that we need to see steps taken by your office to ensure that these sorts of things don't continue. Albertans expect better of this government and the opposition expects better of this government because it's what they said they would do, and we expect that moving forward, you will find a breach of privilege and that this government will take the necessary steps to ensure that these sorts of things don't happen in the future.

3:40

The Speaker: To the House leader for the loyal opposition: could you advise me what you understand a technical meeting to be? Could you share that with me?

Mr. Cooper: Well, typically speaking, when we see a technical briefing on a piece of legislation, it's done around types of issues that are quite technical in nature. Now, the throne speech wasn't that. I appreciate the fact that they made an effort to provide some information, but what happened yesterday is that they actually made the situation worse because they provided to the media information that they didn't provide to us. So the actual definition of what a technical briefing may or may not be is six of one, half a dozen of the other and splitting hairs amongst the real problem.

The real problem is that they provided information to the media that they didn't provide to the opposition and now are making claims that they're actually the best possible government because it's never been done. Well, the throne speech is just as important as a piece of legislation, and in fact my hon. colleague made the case that it could be considered more important. They want to go down that path of providing information to the media so that the endeavour is for the government to get the information out that they want, not the information that the opposition wants out, which is why I believe our privileges were breached and us not provided with all the information.

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. I will just be very brief here. If, in fact, you do find that our privileges have been breached – and I will absolutely agree with my colleagues on this side of the House that, in fact, they absolutely have in this case – I just want to identify that this government has done some things somewhat differently than the previous government, which I think we on this side welcome. I've seen evidence that the government has shown a willingness to work with us, and to the degree that that has happened, I think that's a positive thing.

My simple submission to you, Mr. Speaker, is that if you do find that there has been a breach of privilege here – and I would argue that there has been – the simple rule be that if the media gets it, the opposition ought to get it as well. If the media gets access to the budget in the morning of budget day, the opposition ought to have access as well. If the media gets a full copy of the throne speech, the opposition ought to have it as well under the same rules, under the same agreement that we also will respect the embargo. We have

made some progress with this new government, but I think that would go an awful long way.

What I would worry about if you do find, in fact, that there has been a breach of privilege is if the government says: "Fine. No one gets it until such time as that's released." I think that would not serve democracy well, not serve Albertans well, nor the media, nor the opposition.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Are there any other comments by other members of the House? Additional new information? Proceed.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, I just will add one piece of information that just came to my attention, and I would be happy to table it once I get a hard copy if you are interested. It's come to my attention that the only reason the opposition were provided with that briefing was because they asked, because it came to the attention of our staff that this was going to the media in advance, and we contacted the government to make sure that we would be able to participate in that process. In fact, there was no intention, it appears, to allow us to participate in that process from the start.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Seeing and hearing no other members wishing to provide new information, clearly I appreciate the details that have been shared. I'd like to take that under advisement and consult with the table officers. I wish to indicate to the House, though, that I must be absent from the House because of some official responsibilities I have tomorrow, so it would be my hope that I would be able to make a ruling on the matter on Monday of next week if that's agreeable.

Thank you.

Orders of the Day

Consideration of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor's Speech

Mrs. Littlewood moved, seconded by Mr. Westhead, that an humble address be presented to Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor as follows.

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

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

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

Mr. Piquette: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my great honour and privilege today to rise and respond to the Speech from the Throne. I know that in doing so I have some rather large boots to fill. My father, Leo Piquette, represented a large part of my present riding of Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater from 1986 to 1989. He used the occasion of his response to lay claim his right to speak French at the Legislature due to it being enshrined in law in the North-West Territories Act. Later he asked a question in French during question period to prove that point and was ruled out of order by the Speaker of the day, and this is what set off the famous Piquette affair, as many of you today may still remember. His eventual vindication and the government's response to it has now led to not only French being allowed in the Legislature – and this is a right that many of my colleagues have availed themselves of – but all languages.

However, this also does mean that I'll have to come up with my own theme for my maiden speech. Now, by the way, once he had made his point concerning the French language, he actually winged

the rest of his speech. What did he say? He said: I'm speaking straight from the heart. And so he did. Although I do admire my father's courage in winging his maiden speech, I'm not so certain I want to do quite the same thing. However, that does not mean that I'll be speaking any less from the heart than he.

I am also fortunate in that there is certainly no shortage of issues to discuss. Our Lieutenant Governor gave an excellent throne speech yesterday, and there is a lot to talk about. One thing I know that will really resonate with the talented and hard-working and fundamentally decent folk – okay, maybe I am winging it a little bit there, Mr. Speaker; I'm skipping around here – the fine folks of the four counties, one First Nations reserve, and the many municipalities, incorporated and unincorporated, that I have the great honour to represent, are the statements that she said in her closing remarks yesterday, which I quote.

Albertans want to build an economy that is widely diversified and resilient to energy price swings, an economy that captures the full value of our resources, holds the promise of prosperous futures for our children, and shares its benefits widely and fairly among all Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, these are words well said, and they are also a very fair approximation of what my constituents have been telling me on doorsteps and in get-togethers and at meetings across the riding. It also speaks directly to the great sense of frustration that I felt myself as a lifelong resident of this province and in my various roles as teacher, businessperson, and parent. Indeed, it's one of the major motivations for my having put my own hat in the ring this spring.

Like so many of my friends and neighbours I'd gotten sick and tired of hearing the same old excuses for why we seemed to be so unsuccessful in not only capturing fair value for our common resources but also in preparing ourselves against the inevitable bust that follows. After all, how many oil booms do we need to let slip by before getting things right? How many knee-jerk and destructive reactions to the inevitable bust and decline in revenues did we have to suffer through? This is something that I was and am still convinced that we can get better at although I admit that this is not an easy nor a new problem. However, I'm very proud that I'm part of a government that is sincerely endeavouring to do its best to change that.

Now, I'm saying that this is not a new problem. In fact, this has been an issue that has been a problem for Alberta since there was an Alberta. Alberta has always had an overreliance on a few very cyclical commodity or resource-based industries. Energy is only the most current. We've had to navigate the centuries-old tension between concerted efforts to develop a few key resources necessary to help provide a prosperous future we want ourselves and for our children while at the same time not becoming so dependent on them so that when prices crash, all the good work wrought with their use does not come crashing down as well.

3:50

Now, although many today think of energy when they think of Alberta, it was not so many years ago that they would have thought of wheat instead. It was the lure of cheap land and high wheat prices that brought the waves of hopeful settlers from across Canada and indeed from around the world into Alberta. These would actually in fact include my own great-great-grandparents, who made the trek from Quebec and who were indeed the first settlers in Donatville, which is just a short drive away from where I presently live, in Boyle, Alberta. These are also the same people that populated the fine communities of Athabasca, Smoky Lake, Warspite, Waskatenau, Radway, Redwater, Gibbons, Bon Accord, Thorhild, and many others. Hopefully not too many of my constituents are

listening today for this in case I forgot their community, but be sure that, you know, I know where they are.

In turn, these communities boomed, both the service centres for the rapidly arriving homesteaders but also borne on the railway-driven hope that each new village might become the great city of the future, a hope that unfortunately was dashed when drought and the collapse in wheat prices in 1914 caused a crash so spectacular that it took decades to recover from. For example, it took Athabasca, one of the older communities in my riding, a good 60 years to get back to the population level it had achieved in 1914. Some of the communities in my riding have never achieved those original levels, so it's never been an easy thing.

Just the same, however, many farmers did stay behind, and over time they learned how to survive the vagaries of the weather and of grain prices and even prosper despite the often poor commodity prices, the rapacity of the grain monopolies, the railways, and the eastern merchants. Having grown up on a mixed family farm myself, I have to say that I have the utmost respect for the kind of hard work that it took and, you know, the work and struggles they had to go through to come up with solutions to these problems.

Now, how did they come up with these solutions? They did this by working together, by organizing their own producer co-operatives and associations, by working together with their friends and neighbours to build corduroy roads over muskegs to market, and, finally, by forming their own government, a government of farmers for farmers. That government, the United Farmers of Alberta, is a government that I'm proud to say the NDP in Alberta is a direct descendant of. And I don't think it's any accident that as we find ourselves in similar times, we have a similar type of government.

Part of my riding also helped set off the next great boom. Redwater went from a sleepy farming hamlet of about 140 people to a boom town in just a few short years when oil was discovered there in 1948, only a year after the great find in Leduc. Thus began the next great phase in the Alberta boom-and-bust cycle, a cycle that dominates our economy and politics to this very day.

This cycle is obviously not an easy problem to solve. It is also definitely not the kind of problem that has only one solution. It needs many solutions, and I'm happy to say that many of these solutions can actually be found within my own riding.

An Hon. Member: Ask a farmer.

Mr. Piquette: Okay. Actually, it's not customary to talk during somebody's maiden speech.

All right. Thus, I'm happy to report that I represent the riding that, despite the very challenging times we're in today, is still holding its own. Now, what are these sectors that are holding their own? Well, first of all, we're fortunate to have a very strong and innovative agricultural sector with very progressive farmers using, you know, world-class techniques and sustainable farming methods to produce agricultural products and commodities that are second to none in the world.

We also are blessed with a very vibrant and innovative tourism sector. These would include community-driven initiatives such as Bon Accord's dark skies certification. Bon Accord is, in fact, the only community in Canada and one of the first in North America to be certified for having dark skies sufficient to see all the stars that we can see.

We also have great work in developing some of our heritage resources such as Métis Crossing, Victoria Trail, and the remarkable Iron Horse Trail, that starts up from Smoky Lake. It kind of connects east and west. We also have unique attractions such as Jurassic Forest, Prairie Gardens, a rapidly growing historic

park in Gibbons, and we have great festivals and rodeos across the entire riding, including the famous Smoky Lake pumpkin festival, where I was pleased to give the opening remarks this year; Boyle Rodeo days; the Thorhild Stampede; the Athabasca Magnificent River Rats Festival; Redwater Discovery Days; Bon Accord Harvest Days; and, well, the list goes on. Needless to say that during the summer I get the opportunity to see a lot of different events and eat a lot of excellent pancakes.

Now, we also are very fortunate to have a strong forestry products sector. Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater is the home of Alberta-Pacific Forest products, which at conception was the largest craft pulp mill in the Americas and which today still remains a leader in sustainability and innovation. We are also quite recently home to a softwood lumber mill in my home community of Boyle, Alberta, and this is a mill that I'm hoping will be able to reopen soon.

We're also extremely fortunate to be the home of Athabasca University. Athabasca University is a world leader in distance education, and it is through their innovative approach that we're able to bring high-quality degree-granting postsecondary education to students in rural communities across the province and to nonconventional students from across the world. Through this approach we have been able to train the leaders and innovators that will be needed for tomorrow's diverse economy within their own communities. Athabasca University is not only an exemplar of distance education; it's also an exemplar of anchoring high-quality knowledge-sector jobs in the rural communities, showing that this is something that is possible and desirable to do, and for the community of Athabasca the university being there has been a real saving grace.

Now, finally, and especially relevant to the work going forward to diversify Alberta's economy, the riding is home to the North West Redwater Partnership refinery project, which at last count is providing over 8,500 direct jobs both on-site and in the surrounding communities. There are also other notable employers in that area, including Pembina Pipeline, Agrium fertilizers, M.G. Williams, and I'm very hopeful that with our royalty tax credit there will be many more enterprises setting up and helping to diversify our economy in that area.

Now, the success of this development is due to a very far-sighted and, I think, excellently conceived partnership between government and industry. The Industrial Heartland Association, which is a unique partnership between municipalities and industry leaders, provides a single point of contact to facilitate economic development and diversification in the area as well as the land base. I'm quite confident that our new economic development ministry, which is based on a very similar philosophy, is going to be successful in providing those types of jobs across the province.

Finally, I would be remiss, of course, not to mention Canadian Forces Base Edmonton, which is an essential feature of my constituency and serves to not only protect Canadians but is also a powerful centre of economic activity for our region.

It is by building our existing strengths by, as the Lieutenant Governor has stated, capturing the full value of our resources that will we succeed. But what resources are we talking about? I think that our greatest resource all along has been the hard-working, resourceful, and compassionate folk that I have the great privilege to represent. If we remember our history and respect the contributions of those who went before us while at the same time having the courage to make the kind of changes we need in order to secure that prosperous future we all want for ourselves and for our children, then I think that things will work out just fine for us, and I pledge to my constituents that I will do my absolute utmost to make this so.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

4:00

Mr. Nixon: Standing Order 29(2)(a), Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: Yes.

Mr. Nixon: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I'd just like to ask a question through you to the hon. member. Actually, let me first congratulate the member on his maiden speech before the Assembly. I know the area of his riding well, particularly around Athabasca. I've done a lot of stuff with Athabasca University over the years, which the member knows. I am curious if he could elaborate a little bit on the importance of Athabasca University to his riding and to the communities that he represents and what his intentions are as the representative for that community to advocate for that important university in the months to come as the government faces tough decisions in the community of Athabasca and the university faces tough decisions on the future of that university, which serves, last time I checked, about 44,000 students across this country.

Thanks.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Piquette: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, hon. member, for the question. Athabasca University is responsible for, I think at last count, about 485 direct jobs within the Athabasca community, and beyond that, it enriches Athabasca and the surrounding community culturally and economically and all the other sort of synergistic effects of having a world-class institution in that community, including world-class research projects.

Now, as to the member's second question, about my intentions regarding Athabasca University, these are some things that I've made clear from the very first day that I, you know, was a nominated candidate, and they have not changed. I'm committed to seeing a vibrant and sustainable Athabasca University remaining in Athabasca, and I have done and will continue to do my utmost to make sure that it remains in Athabasca and that it remains the world-class facility that students get to enjoy today.

The Speaker: Member for Calgary-Currie, under 29(2)(a)?

Mr. Malkinson: Yes, 29(2)(a). The hon. member was speaking of his background as he has a long history in this province, and I was wondering if he could elaborate on some of his own background before entering politics. Since it sounds like he has such a rich history in the Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater area, I was wondering if he could elaborate for us.

Mr. Piquette: Okay. Thank you, hon. member, for the question. That's a pretty open-ended question, hon. member. Well, I've done a lot of different things. I haven't spent my entire life within that riding. In fact, I grew up in a little community called Plamondon, which is just outside of that, literally, by about five kilometres. However, I have been proud to call Boyle my home for the past five years, and previously I spent a few years living in Athabasca.

I've been fortunate in having a variety of occupations that helped inform my present position. I worked for some years while I was going to school as a chemical operator at Celanese Canada here in Edmonton. That's how I kind of got through my graduate degree, and that's kind of where I got a taste of just how important previous efforts at economic diversification really were. I mean, Celanese Canada, unfortunately, is no longer with us, but while it was here, it provided hundreds of very high-quality jobs, and it was the result of government policy.

After that, I worked in business, where I did a regional publication for local chambers of commerce, where I had an

opportunity to meet a lot of different small-business people from different areas and got to understand and hear their concerns. From there, jeez, I don't know where we'd go. Like I said, it's a pretty open-ended question. I've been at times, I guess going back, a farmhand. I've done mud jacking. You know, I've even chased cows on horseback, so I don't know if you'd call it cowboying or not, right? I've done that.

More applicable to this job, I had the great opportunity of teaching ethics in law education at the University of Alberta for several years. I think that gave me a great understanding of not only the critical importance that teachers and teaching ethical behaviour and open-mindedness have in the formation of, you know, well-rounded citizens but the general importance of education for our continued survival as a democratic country as well. So I feel quite honoured that way.

My last job just before becoming elected: I was a financial adviser and insurance agent for Co-op. Oh, I guess we're out of time.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Ms McKittrick: Mr. Speaker, it is my great pleasure and honour as the MLA for Sherwood Park to respond to the throne speech. Thank you to the people of Sherwood Park for the trust that they placed in me last year when I became their MLA.

In the throne speech the Lieutenant Governor stated:

We are currently overdependent on . . . a single price, and a single market. Alberta will address this in a number of ways.

First, we will diversify our energy markets. Second, we will pursue a coherent and effective economic development strategy . . . [and] we will invest in a greener, more sustainable economy.

This is great news for my riding of Sherwood Park, which is home to many employed in the upstream, downstream, and midstream oil and gas industries. We already have industries that have been engaged in exploring diversification and value-added production and who have taken big steps to reduce gas emissions and use energy more efficiently.

The Alberta petroleum diversification program, the review of the royalty system, the proposed investment in small and medium-sized businesses are all great news for my riding. Bill 1, Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act, introduced right after the throne speech, will provide the tools that are needed to support industries, small businesses, and Albertans in my riding.

The throne speech commitment to helping Alberta families who are facing immediate financial hardship and the implementation of the Alberta child benefit plan will help low-income families in my riding and support those families whose breadwinners have lost their jobs due to the price of oil.

Mr. Speaker, Sherwood Park is the urban hamlet of Strathcona county, a specialized municipality which I share with the MLAs for Strathcona-Sherwood Park and Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville. I was also happy to discover that Nellie McClung was the MLA for what is now Sherwood Park, and I understand that the MLA for Edmonton-McClung has already claimed her. I am pleased also to note that I followed four other female MLAs when I was first elected, including the hon. Iris Evans, that many of you know.

Strathcona county includes the urban area of Sherwood Park and a large rural area with eight hamlets. I am sometimes asked about Sherwood Park's status as a hamlet. In Alberta the term "hamlet" describes urban centres because of the way they are governed, not because of their population or geographical size. If an urban centre is governed by the county in which it is located, then it's deemed to be a hamlet. On January 1, 1996, the province granted Strathcona

county the designation of a specialized municipality, and this is what it is known as.

Mr. Speaker, Sherwood Park is actually the creation of a developer's vision in the 1950s to build a community to serve the new petrochemical industries in the county. Today it is its largest hamlet. The developer, perhaps thinking of the area's forested background, combined Sherwood with park to name the new development Sherwood Park. By the end of 1956 Sherwood Park had 30 families and has continued to grow. In 1961 it had 2,900 persons, with a total number of residents in Strathcona county of 12,000, which meant that the rural area had three times as many residents as the urban area. However, in 2015 out of a total of 95,500 residents, two-thirds, or 69,000, live in Sherwood Park and one-third in the rural areas, so as you can imagine, Sherwood Park has grown a lot in the last little while.

There are many special things in Sherwood Park. It is home to Festival Place, a 500-seat theatre, at which I hope many of you have gone to see a show. This theatre accommodates world-class performers, community theatres, musical recitals, and trains young people in the circus arts each summer. Each summer a favourite of the residents, including myself, is the weekly summer patio series, an outdoor concert featuring local and international performers. Maria Dunn will be performing at Festival Place in April.

4:10

It is also home to the Strathcona county library. However, it is a place that I have less time to visit these days. The library has wonderful pieces of art, including murals by artist Alex Janvier. This year the library board has decided to provide free library memberships for all residents, making the library even more resident friendly than it has been.

The Strathcona County Art Gallery @ 501 opened and unveiled its first exhibition to the public in 2011. The art gallery offers art education programs to children, teens, adults, families, groups, and schools. Currently the art gallery is showing photographs by Ethan Russell, photographs of important musicians, actors, and other celebrities. I'm hoping that many of you here today will have the opportunity to go and visit this exhibit. I am fortunate to have on loan in my office two paintings from the artist's collection of the art gallery.

The Strathcona county museum has done an incredible job of preserving the history of the county and its pioneer families, offering a rotating special exhibit and educational programs. I'm especially pleased that the museum offers an ongoing special exhibit highlighting the indigenous heritage in this area of Alberta, which also includes a mural by Aaron Paquette.

Unlike Edmonton, which has many community leagues, Sherwood Park has only one, the Gilmore Park Community League, headed by Tammy Greidanus. The Common Ground Community Cafe, run by volunteers and featuring fair trade coffee, local artists, and space for community conversation, is now becoming the community's gathering place. Kudos to Eileen and Ian Edwards, who spearheaded this initiative.

I am particularly delighted to see more and more ethnic and culturally diverse families moving to Sherwood Park. While door-knocking, I began to see that a change was happening in the Park, and the development of a mosque confirms that, like other communities in Alberta, Sherwood Park is a welcoming community for new and old Albertans.

Sherwood Park is home to a high percentage of families with school-age children. As a former hockey and soccer mom myself I appreciate the important volunteer work that parents and other adults do to ensure that children can be involved in team sports. We are fortunate in Sherwood Park with generous corporate

sponsorships of our sporting facilities and youth teams. Meyer's Insurance sponsorship of youth sporting teams is well worth noting. Millennium Place, in part funded by local industries, is a large complex with ice arenas, which is sometimes the home for the practice session by visiting NHL teams, youth lounge, pickle-ball and badminton courts, a running track, fitness equipment, competition-length swimming pool, and my favourite, a spin cycle studio.

Under the leadership of Mayor Roxanne Carr council is currently exploring options to ensure that there are more affordable housing options in the Park. Seniors, in particular, are concerned about their ability to stay in Sherwood Park. I would like to take this opportunity to compliment the mayor on this initiative, and I look forward to working with her and council.

Now, the riding of Sherwood Park contains a number of important industrial areas. One of the oldest Canadian refineries is located at the border between my riding and Capilano. This refinery, the Imperial Esso refinery, is the only refinery in Canada that includes a manufacturing plant. It produces oil for the retail market that is packaged on-site. This refinery, with its pipeline terminals, rail car terminals, storage facilities, and all the gas- and oil-related industries in the Strathcona industrial area, provides employment for many in my riding and in Edmonton. As midstream industries they have not been as affected by the downturn in the price of oil.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

While the Industrial Heartland area is now located in Sherwood Park, its activities are integrated in many of my riding's businesses. Located in the riding is also Alpha Steel, a steel recycling plant which uses discarded steel to make vials and rods. It was one of the biggest thrills, I think, so far in my career as an MLA when I went to this plant and in protective clothing watched the high-intensity furnace melt the old steel. I want to thank the intervention of our government, which allowed this company and others throughout Canada to successfully defend the Canadian International Trade Tribunal ruling that China, Korea, and Turkey were dumping steel, therefore preserving the local jobs in my riding and other ridings.

Many of the residents in the riding are interested in renewable energy projects. Two schools are exploring installing solar panels. These projects have been spearheaded by teachers who view these projects as a way to engage their students on climate change activities and to equip them with the tools for employment in the renewable energy industries.

Madam Speaker, my path to this Legislative Assembly is probably not that different from many of those who were elected on May 5 as we represent the most diverse set of MLAs ever elected. My first influence was as the daughter of a French Jew who as a young man deserted the French air force after the Vichy agreement and made his way to England to fight in the Free French Air Forces, in the famous Lorraine air squadron. My family's Jewish roots and the courage of the many who resisted and risked their lives to help others so they could be safe have been at the core of my own work in human rights and social justice.

I also have to thank my father for the second major influence in my life. When I was nine, we left France for New York City as my father had joined the United Nations Secretariat. Growing up I attended the UN International School, where I was exposed to cultures, languages, and ideas from around the world. I also spent a number of years living in England and Thailand before obtaining the international baccalaureate and graduating from the UN International School. The highlight was receiving my high school diploma in the General Assembly from the then Secretary-General

of the United Nations, U Thant. I then went on to attend McGill University in Montreal as this offered me the possibility of living in French while pursuing my studies in English. I have to be grateful to the then Prime Minister of Canada, Pierre Elliott Trudeau, for the amnesty program that granted draft dodgers and students like me permanent resident status.

J'ai ensuite travaillé avec des jeunes francophones pour les aider à conserver leur langue et leur culture en Colombie-Britannique. Cette expérience me fait une ardente défenseur de nos communautés francophones. Je comprends leurs besoins d'écoles francophones et l'importance des programmes qui favorisent le maintien de la langue et de la culture. Je suis fier de faire partie d'un gouvernement qui reconnaît le fait francophone, d'un caucus composé de 15 francophones et francophiles, et de pouvoir parler en français dans l'Assemblée.

[Translation] Moving to British Columbia, I worked with francophone youths, helping them to maintain their language and culture. This experience has made me a strong advocate for our francophone communities in Alberta, understanding their need for francophone schools and the importance of programs that encourage the retention of language and culture. I am proud of belonging to a government that recognizes the francophone presence in Alberta, of belonging to a caucus with 15 francophone and francophiles, and of my ability to speak French in the Legislative Assembly. [As submitted]

I want to thank my colleague from Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater for reminding the Assembly of the Piquette affair. I am thankful to Leo Piquette for his leadership in allowing me to speak French today. I am proud to belong to this government, that recognizes the francophone presence in Alberta.

The government's support for the resettlement of Syrian refugees is one I can well identify with as I worked in the early 1980s helping match refugees from Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam with sponsors in Canada and initiating programs in refugee camps throughout southeast Asia. In Sherwood Park there are at least five different refugee-sponsoring groups. One of them, the ecumenical refugee group, under the leadership of Marion Bulmer and Stephen London, has sponsored a family of 15, including a disabled adult.

My third major influence on the path towards becoming a Member of this Legislative Assembly is my marriage to an Albertan. Since my husband had followed me to Thailand in the late '80s, where we worked with leprosy patients and on sustainable farming practices, I thought it was only fair for me to follow him back to Alberta. While we lived in Thailand, we adopted two boys from a government orphanage. Our sons were brought up in a household where Thai, French, and Canadian cultures were intermingled. I am proud of their success. One is a teacher in an elementary school in China, and the other is a finance manager for a car dealership.

I have lived in some of the world's biggest cities, but I have also been fortunate to work and live in rural communities such as the county of Newell in southern Alberta. This is important for me as the MLA for Sherwood Park because while my riding is in the urban part of Strathcona county, it is really difficult to separate urban issues from rural issues in this municipality or, I think, throughout Alberta.

As I look back on a career and a path to this Legislative Assembly, I could not have chosen a better time in the history of Alberta. As an ecologist I am part of a government that has drafted a forward-thinking climate change strategy. As someone who has worked towards eliminating discrimination, we have amended the human rights legislation to include transgendered individuals. As an advocate for those living in poverty and of fair employment

practices, we have increased the minimum wage and given farm and ranch workers the same coverage as other workers. As a francophone I am delighted by the efforts that our government is making to support language and culture retention. As the MLA for Sherwood Park I am proud of the work our government is doing to ensure diversification of our petrochemical industries and the focus on job creation.

Thank you.

4:20

The Deputy Speaker: Under 29(2)(a), the hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Please, Member, I would love to hear more.

The Deputy Speaker: Go ahead, hon. member.

Ms McKittrick: I'm not sure if the hon. member would like to hear about some of my adventures as I lived in other countries, but maybe the Assembly might be interested in one of the things that I have done that probably was the most moving thing in my life. In 1980 I was sent to Cambodia, Kampuchea at the time. It was just after the fall of Pol Pot. The organization I worked with was one of the first aid organizations in this country. I remember that the first time I was there was just before Christmas. The country was devastated. There barely was running water in the place where we stayed. There was no food. It was a very, very difficult situation. There was garbage all over Phnom Penh.

I think that this experience of spending Christmas in this country has moved me profoundly to always think about what happens in a country that has been subjected to war, discrimination, and hatred. It's very hard for me to describe the experiences that I lived when I went to see the tombs, the devastation, the people around that had no limbs because they had stepped on mines, the devastated hospitals, just the beauty that had been Cambodia totally destroyed by war and hatred. Like many people who now visit Cambodia and go to Phnom Penh, I went to the museum, where there were pictures of all the people that had died in that thing.

The other experience you might be interested in, if you want to hear about my experience overseas, was that in 1997, around the same time, I went to Bosnia-Herzegovina to be an observer for the Canadian government in their election. Again, I was in a country that was devastated by war. I was a European. You cannot imagine what it's like to be in Europe, that looks like World War II because things have been bombed, farmyards had been burned, and people had died. People had been murdered. There were graves everywhere. Here I was as an international observer having to watch out because the countryside was totally mined. When I was there, we were shot at. I don't know if anybody has been shot at in a country at war, knowing that people hate you so much because we happened to be in a car with Serbian plates even though I was part of an international observing mission. There we were, and it was in the night, and people shot at us because they didn't want any Muslims there.

Again, this experience has stayed with me, to know how much hatred is causing division, is destroying the economy. Can you imagine this country, just like Cambodia, if the economy of this country had been totally destroyed?

Anyway, those are just two of the incidents in my life that I think have made me as passionate and why I'm so happy to be part of this government, that has those issues at the core of who we are.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Red Deer-North.

Mrs. Schreiner: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to congratulate and thank the Member for Sherwood Park for her maiden speech. I would like to thank the member for not only the work she is doing in her constituency but for the work she is doing in other constituencies in our beautiful province. Because of her knowledge and passion for co-operatives, the member recently joined me at a co-operative meeting held in Red Deer. Also, because of the member's fluency in French, she has very graciously accepted an invitation to help with the 2019 Canada Winter Games, to be held in Red Deer. I would like to ask the Member for Sherwood Park how she feels her fluency in French has been or could be an asset to Albertans.

Thank you.

Ms McKittrick: Madam Speaker, I think fluency in another language is an asset for whomever, and because I've had the opportunity, the pleasure, and the experience of being exposed to an environment where everybody spoke more than one language and to the importance also of retaining your mother tongue, I am a promoter of anyone speaking another language and of programs in our school, be they French immersion, Spanish, Cantonese, Mandarin, or Ukrainian, the opportunity for young people to speak another language and to be proud of their cultural heritage.

The Deputy Speaker: Next on my list I have Calgary-Currie.

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Today I am pleased to give my maiden speech to the House, and with it I'd like to tell a bit of my story, the story of where I came from and why I'm here. Some of the members of this House may know some of the story, the story of how I came to this province seeking a better life and how I found it in Alberta. I came to this province in 2011 after feeling the economic crunch of 2008 in very real ways. After bouncing from tech start-up to tech start-up in an environment where surviving was the new success, I left B.C. to find new opportunities, and I found them here in Alberta.

For generations the saying was: head west, young man. It was uttered to young men seeking opportunity. I found myself heading east from my home in B.C. over the Rockies to a land that I saw as full of opportunity. When I came east to Alberta, I found a place where I found not only a job but a career, a community, and a home. When I got here, I looked around for any kind of job, whatever was on offer. Madam Speaker, given the common knowledge of my love of automobiles, finding a job in a mechanical field, I think, was a stroke of serendipity. At the time the guy who was hiring me painted a picture of what Alberta was like at that time. He asked questions such as: "Can you show up on time? Can you do that most of the time? Could you show up sober?" And it was a bonus that I grasped the concept of lefty loosey, righty tighty as it applies to bolts.

At that time Alberta was bleeding for skilled labour, and I found a niche bolting bits of industrial generators together. From there I soon found myself on the way up the ladder, going from the shop floor to shipping manager to project manager, eventually settling into a sales position that I held before getting elected. In a few short years I had gone from making diesel generators to selling them to a wide variety of industrial oil and gas clients right across this province. I am proud that I have helped energize Alberta industry but also to recognize that Alberta is more than just a set of economic numbers. Alberta is the people that make it up. Whether you are one of the people who have been here all their lives or if you're a relative newcomer, it doesn't matter. We are all Albertans, and we are all a part of this great province.

In coming to Alberta, I found the career, the home, and the sense of community I was looking for when coming to this province. Here I found a diverse group of people: people to go skiing with, people to enjoy tinkering with cars with, you name it. Wherever I went, I found people in the midst of building strong communities.

4:30

Today I sit in the New Democratic caucus proudly representing the communities that make up Calgary-Currie. Calgary-Currie is a vibrant inner-city riding that has seen great transformation over the years, from its pre-World War II airstrip and barracks to lumber mills and factories in the postwar boom and now as a developing part of Calgary's new urban, commercial, and residential cores.

Things change over time, and Calgary-Currie has grown with the city. The constituency has matured and is host to a diversity and vibrancy that excites me. Why does it excite me, Mr. Speaker? Because diversity and vibrancy are at the core of quality communities, communities of people who through thick and thin have stood for their community, stood by their neighbours, not because their families came from the same place in the old country or because they are in the same income bracket. No. They stick together because they are part of a community. They share the streets, the grocery stores, coffee shops, and parks. It doesn't matter that on one side of the street there is subsidized government housing and on the other multimillion-dollar homes overlooking the beautiful Bow valley. It doesn't matter because they are a community, and that is the important thing.

This diversity extends from our streets and into our schools, where we see a great number of different types of learning environments: elementary, high school, traditional learning, various immersion and Montessori programs. The list goes on, from private schools like Clear Water Academy, based in the former Currie barracks, where I actually attended Remembrance Day ceremonies this past November, to Richmond elementary school, where I spent a morning with students talking about environmental issues and waste. I have to admit that that was one of my toughest crowds to date, as I've never seen a group of 10-year-olds so excited about garbage. And it doesn't matter what we do or where we are from or how much money we make; what matters is that we come together as fellow Albertans and fellow human beings.

As members of the community residents of Calgary-Currie know that it takes more than strong families to build strong communities. It takes people willing to look past their differences. It takes people looking at the ties that bring us together rather than hurling insults across the aisle at those we disagree with, which we are often prone to do in this House.

I am so proud to be a part of the communities of Calgary-Currie, community associations like Killarney, Glengarry, Sunalta, Bankview, Richmond, Knob Hill, Rosscarrock, just to name a few. All offer an assortment of programs and services, from youth soccer and outdoor skating rinks to consultations on road speeds and community gardens. Beyond community associations we can find seniors' groups and service-oriented groups like the Calgary Society for Persons with Disabilities, HIV Community Link, and even the Federation of Calgary Communities. All find a home nestled in Calgary-Currie. We also have groups that draw on their cultural and ancestral ties like the Ukrainian cultural centre and the Hellenic society, who certainly cater to a particular group but are always willing to open their doors to curious neighbours or MLAs.

From LGBT activism to seniors' care to immigrant supports, Calgary-Currie has communities of people working together to make the world around them a better place. Honestly, Madam Speaker, it warms my heart whenever I think of the good work being done by all sorts of people in my community and my

constituency because that is why we are here, to make the world around us better. Sometimes we disagree with each other, but we are all here in this Chamber working to make our world better, and we are all here due to the hard work of others who have supported us all our lives.

In my life I have a number of people who have helped me get to where I am today. Without a doubt my parents, Stuart Malkinson and Denise Paluck, have been the largest contributors to the man I am today. They instilled in me a sense of duty and respect to all people, and I'd like to think that the caring and empathetic man I am today is because of my parents.

My grandparents Eugene and Verna Paluck also played a huge role in my development as a person. It was with them that I first explored this province, visiting them every summer for a month, camping, fishing, and hiking along with their ever-present family dachshund. In all, I enjoyed the wilderness that we have in this province and am privileged that here in Alberta we have all of those recreational activities at our fingertips.

On the other side of my family Gladis and John Malkinson truly earned the title of grandparents, and while they passed away some years ago, I know in my heart of hearts that they would be beaming at the knowledge of where I am today.

Madam Speaker, more than the family I was born to, the family I chose has also played a huge role in my life. Long-time friends like Issa Kamisky, Rob Mackenzie, Steven Davenson, and David Wildmen were my partners, my compatriots, and my comrades in arms. Even those like my dear friends David Hollywood and Martin Carr, who were unable to live to see this day: I'm sure I'd be doing them proud now as well.

Among all those people who've supported and mentored me, Barry Bell is the one who got me into politics. He was a man of integrity, a man who meant what he said even if he knew it wasn't what you wanted to hear. He was honest to a fault at times, sometimes having a crowd of allies around him and being clear that he disagreed with them on a particular point. He wasn't going to lie simply to appease the crowd, but he was never beyond listening, having his mind changed, listening to the evidence and facts in front of him.

It was in their honour that I stood for election with the Alberta NDP three times, and I've always aimed to conduct myself with the same level of integrity and honesty that these people I've previously mentioned have instilled in me throughout my life. It is these people who've made me the man I am today, the family I was born to and the family I chose. These are the people who've made up my community through my life.

Whether it's the schools, community organizations, or even just community gardens, the greatest thing about Calgary-Currie is the people. I've worked with parents who give days, weeks, and months of their lives to seeking solutions, to providing for their children the greatest opportunities possible. I've sat down with groups of seniors who were incredibly interested in a gamut of controversial topics. I've also met with business owners, both large and small. Even those who've come into my office in crisis situations, I feel, have come away with a greater sense of purpose and courage, not because me or my staff are able to solve their problems in that moment but because, before they came into my office, they felt alone, isolated, and in fear. No. They leave my office knowing that there are people out there who care, that there are communities of people out there willing and able to support them.

When I used to cast my ballot on election day in the past and now on a daily basis here as part of daily Routine, I looked beyond the policies, beyond the rhetoric and tried to find the people who we are trying to help in this Assembly. When we vote on farm safety,

when we vote on job creation, when we vote on LGBTQ rights, I strive to find the people behind the policy. I think of the tradespeople who work often late at night, outside or in shops, fixing our infrastructure, keeping our utilities running and the literal gas and diesel engines of commerce running. I started my career in Alberta working with these people and understand their concerns, their hopes, and their dreams of making a life for themselves and their families. As a result, concerns of safety and fair taxation will always be close to my heart.

I think of the men and women who I marched with on February 14 at the murdered and missing indigenous women's march which took place in my riding, recognizing the abhorrent situation that faces too many of our First Nation, Métis, and Inuit friends. It is not okay that we have let so many of our sisters fall through the cracks, and it is not okay that for so many years we have been systematically ignoring their plight.

Policies, community, and politics: it all comes down to people. It all comes down to what people do. I am here because I was supported by people, and I want to support people. It takes more than individuals to build a strong province. Just like it takes a village to raise a child, it takes vibrant communities to build vibrant communities. Madam Speaker, I am so proud of where I have come from and what I have gone through, but I am even more proud of the work that I'm doing now supporting communities of people who form the backbone of what makes Alberta great.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

4:40

The Deputy Speaker: Under 29(2)(a), the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Madam Speaker, thank you so much for recognizing me this afternoon. Just very briefly, while the member and I may see the path to getting there significantly differently, I just wanted to point out that his passion for people and his words that he shared with the Assembly today are certainly heartfelt, and I myself will be taking them home, if you will, as I look at my own family and as I look at the constituents of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. It is a wonderful reminder to us all why we're here, so I commend the hon. member for his remarks today.

The Deputy Speaker: Edmonton-Mill Creek, 29(2)(a).

Ms Woollard: Thank you very much. Member, I was wondering – I was really moved by your words as well – if you'd like to elaborate any more on some of your experiences, especially about some of the inspiration you derived especially from Mr. Bell and any possible examples you'd like to share of how he inspired you to develop those honourable qualities that you saw in him.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I'd like to also commend the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. I think it's important that we think about the people that we represent.

You know, the story that comes to mind when speaking of Mr. Bell and sort of how he did politics: in 2006 Mr. Bell was running for the federal NDP, and at that time I was still in university, and I had decided that I wanted to get involved. You know, I didn't like what I saw of the government of the time, so I went out to an all-candidates debate that was hosted by a local church. In that election all the candidates were up there, including Mr. Bell, and at some point in the evening a member of the congregation asked the valid question about gay marriage, which at that time was a very

controversial issue. The question was something to the effect of: would the people up there vote against their party if enough of their members wrote them or phoned them? Something to that effect.

Now, one of the things that struck me is that at that time all of the other candidates, you know, pandered to that particular audience. At the end to speak was Mr. Bell, who said something to the effect that for him on that issue it was a very deeply held personal belief and that for the party he was representing, it was also a deeply held belief. He also pointed out that for at least some of the other candidates that were up there, that particular point was a deeply held belief of those other parties. One of the things he suggested was that maybe those other members didn't quite get how party politics works when it's a core belief of the party, suggesting perhaps that they were willingly misleading that particular crowd. Of course, as you can imagine, that particular answer went over very well. I believe there were pieces of paper thrown and some boos. What I took away from that was sort of what I alluded to in my speech, which is that we need to be able as politicians to say what we mean.

Many people have come into my office who have suggestions that perhaps I don't agree with or I feel that they haven't given me enough evidence that I would want to take up that particular cause or a particular change to legislation. I feel it's important that when I have those constituents come into my office who, like I said, I feel haven't convinced me that that is something that I want to take on, that I don't want to have them leave my office feeling like I'm going to, you know, do that just because I want to make them feel happy leaving my office. I always tell them that, for whatever reasons I have at that moment, they haven't convinced me. If they have some new evidence or things change, they're welcome to come back into my office and meet again and attempt to change my mind. I feel it's important that I'm honest with whoever I deal with in the community about what my position is that I'm bringing forward on behalf of the community. I think that's something we can all strive to do.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

If the Assembly would allow me, it's a privilege to represent our people, but I can tell you, as someone who has a little bit more grey hair than most of you in the House, that it's also a privilege to be serving here with people and to get an opportunity to learn so much about their lives and stories. It really is quite a unique opportunity that happens for very few, so we should consider ourselves extremely lucky.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my distinct honour to rise today as a representative of the good people of Edmonton-Centre to reply to the hon. Lieutenant Governor's delivery of the Speech from the Throne. When I received the nomination to run as my party's candidate in Edmonton-Centre just over one year ago, I couldn't have imagined that I would find myself standing here today in this Assembly among such a diverse representation of the people of Alberta, having the privilege and the responsibility of helping to lead our province.

Having been awarded that honour, I embrace it with all of the joy and gravity I learned from one of my early mentors, a woman named Yin Liu. I met Yin in the summer of 1995 when I was enrolled in the outdoor leadership training program at Crowsnest Lake Bible Camp. Now, Yin was not your average woman nor what one might expect from an instructor in wilderness survival. She stood about five foot six, weighed maybe 120 pounds. She wore large-framed glasses, and her daily uniform consisted of a white lab coat, T-shirt, khaki pants, hiking boots, and an ever-present camp

baseball cap. She was, in fact, a doctoral student studying medieval English literature, but she was also one of the greatest examples of a leader that I've had the privilege of knowing. She was quiet and unassuming. I don't believe I ever heard her raise her voice. Yet Yin rarely ever had any trouble commanding respect, and that was because Yin led by example.

One of the first things Yin introduced us to as part of our training program was the concept of servant leadership. Yin believed that the role of a leader was to take on the jobs that no one else wanted to do. Not only that, she believed that you didn't just do them with a sigh of resignation. Yin believed in taking on the things that no one else wanted to deal with and doing them with joy. The jobs and the problems that leave everyone standing around, looking at their feet or quietly making for the exits, were the things that Yin would make her own.

She'd jump up after dinner, and she'd race to the dish pit for the privilege of scrubbing the burnt pots. After a four-day out-trip she'd be the first one to offer to stay behind and clean and hang the groundsheets to dry so that others could go and take a hot shower first. You know what? That kind of attitude is infectious. It didn't take long before our group of trainees began to adopt a similar attitude. It became a game to see who could outdo the others in taking on thankless tasks.

That, I believe, is the mark of a true leader. Leaders inspire. They bring out the best in those they lead, and they do it not just by standing in front and telling others what needs to be done. They do it by rolling up their sleeves, getting down in the dirt, and working alongside everyone else. They do it by taking on the jobs no one else wants to do and taking ownership of the problems no one else wants to tackle.

4:50

In the first months after my election as an MLA I took the opportunity to immerse myself in the rich diversity of Edmonton-Centre and connect with as many of the people, communities, and organizations who call it home as I could. Mr. Speaker, I daresay that Edmonton-Centre is one of the most diverse and dynamic constituencies in the province of Alberta. Between 2001 and 2014 the population of our downtown core more than doubled, from just over 6,000 to over 13,000 residents, and that growth continues with 140 new residential units in 2015, another 1,500 currently under construction, and another 2,000 planned. That population is incredibly diverse, including new Canadians, postsecondary students, professionals, public servants, families, and seniors. They span all income levels, social classes, ethnicities, ages, and gender and sexual identities, and I'm proud to have the honour of representing them all.

I've met with the Oliver and Downtown Edmonton community leagues, committed collectives of young leaders who have stepped up to build real community in our urban core through gardens, potlucks, community investment, local advocacy, and civic engagement, building a better city not only for themselves and their members but for us all. Oliver is also home to a significant portion of Edmonton's LGBTQ community, members from whom I've had the pleasure of learning of their deep, local history, working to build and support their community and advocate for their rights. I've also had the honour of accompanying them to meet with the Minister of Justice and celebrating with them as our government moved forward with adding gender identity and expression to the Alberta Human Rights Act and aided our schools in adopting policies to support full inclusion of trans, nonbinary, and two-spirited youth.

These neighbourhoods are also home to many buildings and facilities for seniors, many seniors' homes, and I've enjoyed the opportunity to visit with the residents at each, to hear their thoughts

and perspectives and make note of their concerns. I look forward to building on these relationships and continuing to learn from their years of experience.

I've had the pleasure of supporting the work of community volunteers in Central McDougall, a community that is home to many new Canadians and many families, all of whom are working to reach out to their neighbours to provide programs and facilities that bring people together and offer much-needed support. I've spoken with the residents of Queen Mary Park, also home to many new Canadians, who are regularly invited to connect with the longer term residents, again to build community and work towards the revitalization of these historic family neighbourhoods. In the river valley I've connected with the residents of Rosedale and learned of their work to build stronger community and work with the city towards a new redevelopment plan.

It's important, Mr. Speaker, to recognize that Rosedale and indeed much of the land on which we are currently standing were historic meeting grounds for Alberta's indigenous peoples. I recognize that within my constituency there are many residents of indigenous descent. With them we are all treaty people, here by the grace of an agreement to share in the bounty and prosperity of this territory and to provide for the health, welfare, education, and infrastructure of Alberta's First Nations and their members. I am proud of our government's commitment to see this treaty truly and fully honoured.

I was moved by the Premier's heartfelt apology last June for the legacy of residential schools, the effects of which we still see rippling through the heart of our city. I've been pleased to see First Nations given increased prominence, their voices being heard in our consultations on the climate leadership plan and mental health review. I look forward to new opportunities for us to continue to rebuild trust that will come with the repeal of Bill 22 and repatriation of indigenous sacred objects.

Mr. Speaker, in my 10 months since being elected, I've had the opportunity to meet with countless community groups and organizations who embrace the philosophy I learned from Yin Liu and take on the challenging work of supporting many marginalized communities. In Edmonton-Centre there's no hiding from the fact that there are many in need. Every day our residents see people who are homeless or inadequately housed; who are struggling with mental health, addictions, or emotional trauma; or who are simply caught in the economic turmoil caused by the recent historic drop in the price of oil and our overdependence on a single commodity, a single price, and a single market.

I am constantly amazed at the number of dedicated men and women I meet every week who roll up their sleeves day after day to do whatever they can to help meet these needs. There are far too many for me to name, but I look forward to opportunities to introduce some of them in the future to this House. These organizations are out there fighting homelessness, promoting harm reduction. They're offering safe spaces, meals, bathroom and laundry facilities for homeless youth and adults; affordable, accessible health and dental care and mental health supports; assistance navigating government programs and services; and, most importantly, a chance to reclaim the dignity that should be afforded all human beings.

Mr. Speaker, I ran for this position in no small part to ensure that government would continue to support this important work while endeavouring to reinvest in key services as we are still recovering from the effects of poorly planned or considered cuts by previous governments. I'm pleased to have the honour to serve with a government that is holding that line.

I also have the honour of representing two strong postsecondary institutions. NorQuest College offers a wide range of ground-level

programs and offers thousands of Albertans, including new Canadians, indigenous students, and students with disabilities, access to new and better careers. I'm excited to see that impact expand with their new Singhmar Centre for Learning.

Grant MacEwan University, which is my first alma mater, though it was a community college when I attended, is a university that now offers a wide range of degrees in a uniquely student-focused learning environment. I graduated from their internationally acclaimed music program in 1995, and I'm incredibly pleased that it and all of their arts programs will be coming to Edmonton-Centre in the fall of 2017.

Edmonton-Centre has long been one of the city's main hubs for the arts, being the home of the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra and the Winspear Centre, the Citadel Theatre, the Art Gallery of Alberta, the upcoming new Royal Alberta Museum, music venues like the newly launched Needle Vinyl Tavern, and a wide variety of galleries and artist spaces. It's been my pleasure to offer my vigorous support to all of these organizations, and it's amongst my highest priorities to continue to see them thrive and contribute to the vibrancy of our city's culture and economy.

I'm also thrilled with the growth of new independent businesses within our downtown core, particularly along its northern edge, and will continue to work with partners and local government and community to remove barriers to their success and help them access the many tools our government is making available to help them thrive.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge that I have the honour of representing many public servants, men and women who spend every day working on behalf of the people of Alberta, including many who provide the essential supports that allow us to do our work in this House. I'm proud to stand with our government in our commitment to maintain secure and stable funding to our key services and a rational, evidence-based approach to improving the operations of our public service so that my constituents, from the front lines up to our ministries, are not needlessly vilified but, instead, are engaged as willing partners in offering the best service for value to the people of Alberta.

In conclusion, there's one more story, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to share about my time at Crowsnest. On the final full day of a six-day out-trip our training group was descending from a mountain ridge, and we began making our way towards our final campsite. This trip on a normal day would take about two to three hours. On that day it took nearly seven. That's because in the upper areas of the Rockies in late May it's not unusual to still have several feet of snow. That day was especially warm, and as at that time I weighed about 250 pounds plus the weight of a 50-pound pack, with every step I took my leg would plunge up to my hip in snow. A phenomenon known as postholing.

As a result I was forced to progress at a snail's pace. But as I did, Mr. Speaker, our leader, Yin, and all of my fellow members stayed with me every agonizing step of the way. They offered encouragement and handfuls of trail mix and ensured that I was never alone because true leadership, true citizenship, true community lies in not abandoning those in need and ensuring that no one gets left behind.

To quote the Lieutenant Governor's gracious speech: "In tough times we always pull together. We have each other's backs. We support each other in these times instead of making a bad situation worse." Most importantly, Mr. Speaker, we don't make short-sighted decisions for short-term gain that hurt the most vulnerable and see them left behind.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to coming alongside the people of Edmonton-Centre, hearing their voices, understanding their challenges, and supporting their work. I pledge to take on the

difficult jobs, to make their issues my own, and to work with integrity with my colleagues on both sides of this aisle to ensure that the Alberta advantage extends to everyone.

Thank you.

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

Loyola: Thank you very much. Through you to the member I want to thank him for his maiden speech. It was phenomenal and inspiring. I have to say that I share this philosophy of servant leadership and leading by example. I'd like to know from the member what lessons learned he has had in the last eight months from implementing this style of leadership in his own constituency. Please expand on it.

5:00

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Certainly, as I said, one of the incredible things that I've found is just the incredible spirit of Albertans and their willingness to pull together and help each other. Again, the number of volunteers or people that are working for nonprofits, for pay far lower than they could be making in other industries, because of their passion, because they care, because they want to help people in need is astounding for me, and it's incredibly inspiring. It's been amazing for me to see how much it means for them simply to have their representative from government come to see them, to encourage them, and to be willing to listen to them and hear what their concerns are.

Mr. Speaker, these are the people that know best what needs to be done. They're on the front lines every day. They see what the needs are. They see what the challenges are. They see the effects of the decisions that we make in this House. It's an incredible privilege that I have as a member of this Assembly and as a representative to be able to go out and see the work they do, to learn about it, to share in it, and to encourage them going forward. I've seen that being done by my colleagues in many instances as well, you know, and from what I've seen on social media, I've seen that from the members and my colleagues across the aisle. That's one of the most wonderful things, I think, about this new Legislature that we have. We have so many here who are just thrilled, who are so excited to have this opportunity to serve Albertans, to be able to go out into their communities and truly listen, represent their constituents, and bring a new voice to this House.

We have such a wonderful diversity of people representing every part of this province: the number of women we have here, the number of people from so many different ethnicities, the fact that we have the first LGBTQ members to ever sit in this House. Again and again when I go out to the community, I hear people who are so excited to see that their government, that their Legislature, that their representatives represent who they are.

These are some of the lessons that I've learned. These are some of the opportunities that I've had. Again, every day I get up and I just recognize what a privilege it is to have the honour to serve in this House.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was with great interest that I listened to the Member for Edmonton-Centre's speech, particularly the part where he said that he graduated from Grant MacEwan College with a degree in music. I know that in my time as Advanced Education minister it's been fascinating to find out all the interesting things that are going on with the training and

investment in fine arts and music training across the province. I do have to say that I am disappointed that none of our postsecondary institutions offer any specific instruction in accordion, but I would like to ask the member to expand upon the value that he thinks a training in fine arts and music in particular adds to the quality of life and the standard of living for the people of Alberta.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. I can honestly say that the skills I learned working as a musician and studio engineer I use every day in this work. You know, the ability to stand in front of an audience and hold a crowd: this job certainly involves a certain level of performance, and I've certainly got good training in that. But, of course, the creative abilities that I explored there, the ability to take a theme and expand on it, to be able to find new arrangements for new ideas, to be able to explore different directions, different ways to approach a particular piece: again, all those things, that creativity, those critical-thinking skills, I put to use every day.

Certainly, the opportunities I had to work with so many other people, to learn about collaboration: there is no greater collaboration, in some ways, than to get on a stage with a group of people, have a simple melody line, and from that create a whole new piece of music. To be able to improvise, to be able to work together, to be able to listen to the people you're working with: an incredible opportunity and another set of skills that I gained from music that, again, I have the opportunity to use every day, including in my work here in this House.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm deeply honoured to be able to rise today and address the Legislative Assembly for the first time in response to the Speech from the Throne, delivered by Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor. Before I begin, I would like to extend my sincerest thanks to the Honourable Lois Mitchell for her work as our Queen's representative in Alberta. This is clearly a new era for our province in more than one way. This is an exciting time, and I'm thrilled to play a part in it.

Now I would like to say a few words about why I'm here in the first place. Bonnyville-Cold Lake has been represented as its own distinct constituency since 1997, when it was originally established. Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to introduce to you today the constituents of Bonnyville-Cold Lake, who have graced me with the privilege of being their voice in this Assembly. The riding encompasses a geographical area of well over 7,000 kilometres, and we have a very large collection of communities who call this home, about 35,000 Albertans, and that means about 10,000 households. The communities are the MD of Bonnyville, the city of Cold Lake, the town of Bonnyville, the village of Glendon, the Elizabeth settlement, the Fishing Lake settlement, Cold Lake First Nation, Frog Lake First Nation, Kehewin Cree Nation.

I do not take the responsibility of representing my community members lightly, Mr. Speaker. In a number of ways Bonnyville-Cold Lake encompasses much that makes Alberta unique. As a largely rural community it retains the foundations of our province's initial success. The oil and gas industries are by far the largest employers in our communities, and they are a key component of the province's economic backbone. In fact, the oil and gas industry alone provides the livelihoods of over 17 per cent of Albertans in Bonnyville-Cold Lake, and it actually is one of the richest oil-producing regions in all of Canada. As such, it is an industry near

and dear to our hearts as well as to all Albertans, who prosper as a result.

We are proud of the role the residents of our communities have played and will continue to play in the tradition of Alberta economic independence, and this tradition of hard work and community building goes back a long way, Mr. Speaker. Long before Bonnyville-Cold Lake came into its own as a presence in 1997, the people of this area were hard at work building the communities and contributing to Alberta's future. These people are proud and diverse groups. We have a significant francophone community as well, complete with two French-speaking schools as well as several French immersion schools, which, proudly, I will announce, my two daughters, Amelia and Charlotte, both attend.

Many hon. members may be aware of the strong Ukrainian presence in the Bonnyville-Cold Lake area as well. In fact, we boast the world's largest perogy, in the town of Glendon. I recommend going to see it. Throughout the riding we have a strong, proud indigenous and Métis presence. These communities have always made me feel welcome at any event that I've attended. This shows the compassion that flows through the indigenous communities, and I am very thankful for all of the outreach they have done to me to date. You also might know that we are the host to a major military base, which plays an integral part in our community. The base brings real stability to Bonnyville-Cold Lake through these hard economic times. It also puts our great constituency on the map as the ambassador of the province to the rest of the country and ultimately to the rest of the world.

5:10

I need to also recognize the veterans within my riding. We have the veterans volunteering, and through the community spirit that they bring – we have a stronger community because of it. Throughout my riding these veterans hold my greatest respect for the contributions that they have made to Canada and our province and the municipalities that are all within my riding.

We as residents also take a great deal of pride in our responsibility of representing the province and the contributions to Alberta's development. We aren't just oil and gas. When people hear Cold Lake, they hear oil and gas, and that is true. We do have a very large oil and gas base, but we also have an agriculture base. The agriculture base adds to our rich, diverse heritage. Cold Lake encompasses so much that makes Alberta unique and competitive. When you talk about my riding, though, to ignore our farms and ranches would be a mistake. These are the hard-working men, women, and children who feed us, and many Albertans and Canadians have forgotten that the food that is on their table isn't actually grown in the supermarket. I have dedicated local farmers and ranchers who take the time to go out to our local schools and teach our local children the value that farms have in Alberta, and that makes me proud.

We as constituents of Bonnyville-Cold Lake understand that diversity in our riding is paramount. Mr. Speaker, it is a truly humbling privilege to be entrusted to represent all of the communities within my riding. However, I do need to credit all of the retired MLAs from the Bonnyville-Cold Lake constituency, who have worked hard moving my constituency forward through the difficult times before. I'd like to name a few because I think it's important that we don't forget these important MLAs that have represented us in the past: retired member Genia Leskiw, who is known for her work within the Ukrainian community and with the senior citizens within our community; retired member Denis Ducharme, who is known for his work to create opportunity within the business community and who served as the minister of community development; retired member Leo Vasseur, who brought

change to our community and brought a new direction, is a well-respected businessman still in the town of Bonnyville; retired member Ernie Isley served as the minister of manpower, the minister of public works and supply and services, the minister of agriculture, the minister of agriculture and rural development, and the minister of agriculture, food, and rural development.

It is an honour to be following such great men and women, and I would like to actually bring forward a statement that past member Ernie Isley had spoken in his original maiden speech on May 28, 1979, at page 39.

Mr. Speaker, over the years governments have probably earned the reputation of being reactors as opposed to actors. I think we're now in a situation where we can reverse that conception. This means that all departments of our provincial government must be prepared to play some real leadership in conjunction with the local governments in making the growth of the Cold Lake area a positive success story.

This government needs to consider the wisdom of retired members. They need to go through what has happened in the past and see what has gone wrong. The wisdom of retired member Ernie Isley is brought through by the fact that we need to stop acting and we need to start working towards bringing jobs to the Bonnyville-Cold Lake constituency. I wish I had more time to list all of the extensive successes of past members, but unfortunately we'd be here for the rest of the evening. We've had some really great MLAs in Bonnyville-Cold Lake that have shaped the future of Alberta, shaped the future of Bonnyville-Cold Lake. The responsibility the constituents have granted me I do not take lightly, and I can assure you that I have men and women before me who are good examples to strive towards.

We do have our own struggles that I am sure the past MLAs have navigated through. We have seen a large migration out of Bonnyville-Cold Lake, which has brought a very large inventory of houses on the market, which is starting to show in lower house prices. The fact is that people are moving away to feed their families. How do we prevent this? We are proud Albertans, and we've forgotten that we have gone through this before, but it's worse. It's worse than it's ever been. And we can blame the price of oil, but it's not solely the price of oil that is responsible for what we are going through right now; it is the instability that this government has brought through legislation in the past, well, almost year.

My conversations with local businessmen and -women across the riding have shown that we have about a 25 to 40 per cent job loss rate happening in Bonnyville-Cold Lake right now, and that is across all industries: restaurants, insurance. That is almost everything that is happening in my riding right now.

This is insane. I have people hurting. Their voices need to be heard. It hurts me to see people that have lived in the riding for 10, 20, and 30 years moving away to get more jobs in either B.C. or Saskatchewan. I understand their need to find work outside their riding. It is important to show that we are still able to provide. We can't. They're looking to us for direction as the MLAs, and we are showing repeatedly that there is no direction that we are going in to help my riding. We're also seeing this across, in my opinion, Alberta.

Now, we have seen the fact that the government has tried, and I will give them credit; they have brought out some legislation that is meant to be job friendly. Let's start with the fact that we have the job creation grant that came out. I have no businesses in Bonnyville-Cold Lake that are hiring new hires right now. It is a shame to see that these grants were never targeted to where the worst layoffs are happening.

We've also seen that the announcement of the carbon tax is affecting our local business community. The fact is that right now they can barely make ends meet. We heard our Premier today state that, really, businesses are rich. They're just holding on, trying to get through this, and to state that a 1 per cent decrease in the corporate tax rate is something that our government can't help our small-business community through is preposterous. The fact that we have more expenses coming on our local business community in this time frame through that carbon tax . . .

5:20

The Speaker: The Member for Drumheller-Stettler. Under 29(2)(a)?

Mr. Strankman: Yes, sir. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Under 29(2)(a), to the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake. It's an honour to rise and question the member. You know, he's talking about the passion of facing people who are out of their jobs. We heard the Member for Calgary-Currie comment about his humble beginnings as he came to Alberta from British Columbia. I was pleased to hear that. You are also facing those types of people. Can you elaborate a little bit on the numbers of people that you've had crossing the doors of your Legislature office or the people that have approached you on the streets or at public functions that you've been at? I think that people and the members in this Chamber need to know in many ways the absolute social cost to what's occurring in the economy in Alberta today.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What isn't widely known – and I thank the member for the question – is that a lot of the companies across Bonnyville-Cold Lake right now are holding on to their employees and rolling back their wages. They're cutting off the overtime. They're job-sharing. And that's very admirable. But what we're not hearing is the fact that there are a lot of contractors that also support the oil and gas industry, contractors that right now are asking: where can I go to find work and be able to bring food for my family? I've had several contractors go through my office, and they've been saying: "Scott, what do I do? Where are we going?" I say: "Well, we've got this job-creation credit. Job-creation credit. You need to hire people." "Well, I'm one man and a truck. How's that \$5,000 that's going to be paid in 2017 going to help me?" You're right; it's not going to help you. You aren't qualifying for employment insurance because you are a contractor. You have no choice but to find work elsewhere. That's what the real flaw in all of this comes down to, that we have an industry that is saying: we need some stability from the Alberta government, and we aren't seeing it.

We had a royalty review that came back with no change; seven months, no change. This is crazy. The fact is that when we're looking at the royalty review, that has done so much damage to my riding, now we've got oil and gas companies saying: well, now we've got a carbon tax; where else are we going to go? The fact is that when we're looking for answers from the government, stability from the government, we are not finding it, and my riding – my riding – right now is hurting because of it.

We need to start looking to move forward in a direction that is best for all Albertans. The fact is that we are not seeing that right now. We have brought forward that that job-creation program that the government had put through wouldn't work, and the government just didn't listen. We continued to say: yeah, raise corporate taxes; you're going to hurt us. They didn't listen. If you raise minimum wage, it's going to hurt us. They didn't listen. You continue to raise taxes and – guess what? – you're going to put my

businesses out of business, and that is where we are not going to have any taxes to collect. That means that we're not going to be able to supply money for our most vulnerable because there's not going to be any. How can we have any support for our most vulnerable when there's no tax base left because they've all gone to Saskatchewan or B.C.? This is a travesty.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to ask the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake a question about a comment that he made about the carbon tax. I know that a good portion of the oil and gas development that occurs in his riding is conducted by CNRL at their Primrose and Wolf Lake facilities. I'd like to remind the member that when we rolled out our climate leadership plan, it was, in fact, the CNRL chairman, Murray Edwards, who said: on behalf of Canadian Natural Resources Limited, my colleagues from Suncor, Cenovus, and Shell we applaud Premier Notley for providing us a position of leadership on climate policy. So I'm wondering how good a job the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake is doing in representing the concerns of his constituents when a major producer of oil and gas has specifically endorsed our climate leadership plan.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The oil and gas industry don't even know how to deal with the NDP government. They're jumping on ship just because they have no choice. The fact is that we are going to have a carbon tax that's going to cost my average resident and business a thousand dollars a year. A thousand dollars a year. When we're looking at carbon taxes, we're looking at a tax that is going to attack our most vulnerable. It is going to attack my residents. It's going to attack my small businesses, and the fact that we've got oil companies that are jumping on ship with the NDP government distresses me to no end, but it is what it is. You know what? I am still proud to say that CNRL is an active business in my community employing Albertans right now, and the fact that we've got Cenovus, we've got EnCana, we've got all of these other oil, gas, and pipeline companies that are still functioning in my riding – we need to say: "Good job. Let's keep moving. Let's get through this whole NDP government in three years."

Thank you very much.

The Speaker: Any other questions?

Mr. Hinkley: I guess I just also want to check if the hon. member would like us to go back to the good old days to help his people, and I would remember the Alberta advantage if that's where he wants to go back to. I will refer back to the corporate tax rates and the small-business tax rates of Mr. Klein in 1994. It was 15.5 per cent for corporate tax. We now have it at 12 per cent. For the small-business tax rate it was 6 per cent. We now have it at 3 per cent. So, I guess, who ruined Alberta?

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to respond to the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar regarding his question with the . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: I'm sorry. What was your question?

Mr. Yao: I wish to ask a question through Mr. Cyr.

The Speaker: Under 29(2)(a)?

Mr. Yao: All right. I'd like to ask you, sir: do these oil sands companies, especially these ones that have made these . . .

The Speaker: Directly to the Speaker if you could.

Mr. Yao: . . . agreements with the government, have any projects planned here in the near future?

Mr. Cyr: I could think of one example. We've got an oil company called Osum up in my riding right now. They actually have a full plant ready to go, and it's sitting there. They're not installing it. They're not putting it in. They're not going to build it. The whole plant is sitting on the site. That's in my riding right now. That is what the reality is of what is happening in Alberta right now. They've actually got plants here right now ready to go, and they're not building them, and it's because of the instability this government continues to show our economy. The fact that our economy is the backbone of Canada and we've got no pipeline access is insane. The fact that we've got a Premier that doesn't appear to be supporting the fact that we need pipelines going from Bonnyville-Cold Lake out to start getting our . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.
The hon. Minister of Education.

5:30

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure if I can top that last performance, but I will certainly try. I'm here to respond to the Speech from the Throne this afternoon. I would like to thank, first of all, the Lieutenant Governor for her delivery of the speech. Certainly, it was a very important occasion, and the messages within the speech I think were both edifying and give us a sense of direction of where we'll be going in this legislative session and beyond.

Certainly, as the Minister of Education I'm always looking at each of our policies through the lens of how we can improve and build our K to 12 education system here in the province of Alberta. Mr. Speaker, really, so many of the policies that we do around the economy, around climate change, around building social services all serve, in my mind, to help to build the education for our children for their future.

When we look at ways to have a healthier society, to have long-term stability in our economy and other functions that help to build our society, I always look at it as a means by which we can strengthen our education system here in the province of Alberta. We know that we are in an economically unstable circumstance, but that doesn't mean by any means that we should compromise the more than 659,000 students that we have in our charge from kindergarten to grade 12 here in the province of Alberta's schools. Their need for different education at different stages in their lives does not change with the price of oil. We know that we're willing to make sacrifices, and significant sacrifices, to ensure that education is not just surviving here in the province of Alberta, but it's evolving, and it's thriving, and we have the best education in all corners of the province regardless of where our children live.

I'm proud of the commitment each of these caucus members here and our Premier have made to K to 12 education. From the beginning, when we first took office, when I first took this position, we restored funding for enrolment in the province of Alberta, and we are continuing to do so today. Now, nine months in, we've tabulated at least 740 new teaching positions, new hires, and more than 800 support service jobs that were saved and/or hired again to meet the growing enrolment. We know from each corner, each of the 87 constituencies that we represent, that enrolment in our schools is growing precipitously. We have to make sure that we

plan ahead, long-term planning, to meet that growth over time. The biggest growth, Mr. Speaker, is for children between one and five years old, so you know that they will go right through our school system and need those facilities and need the top-notch teachers there in front of them every step of the way.

To that end, Mr. Speaker, we are embarking and/or are in the midst of – all of you know it, right? – the most ambitious infrastructure building projects in the history of this province: 232 schools across the province from K to 12 in every single constituency here in the province of Alberta. I enlist each and every one of you to make sure you keep a close eye on those projects to see where that progress is so that we have those schools being built for the kids when we need them and in a reasonable fashion.

I'm seeing some promising signs across the province. We've put in a very strong mechanism by which we can monitor the school capital projects as they're being built. I'm starting to see some promising signs in regard to schools being built on schedule or even ahead of schedule now in these last few months. We know that contractors are looking for work, and it's a great time to build public infrastructure here in the province of Alberta. I see some incredible progress.

I was speaking to Edmonton public schools, for example, in the last day or so. They had two schools on tender. The bids were coming in on average 19 per cent below what we were expecting them to, and they chose one bid, or one contractor, that was at 23 per cent below, saving more than \$9 million dollars, Mr. Speaker, in building those two schools. It's great. I mean, it's a great time to build infrastructure.

We will continue on with that strong monitoring process. Each and every one of you must make sure that you're giving me the information – I've been getting it as we've come back here to the Legislature – of where your school projects are at. Bring it on. That's what we need. We need that information, and I need to make sure that we're keeping on top of these things. From October I built a much more transparent mechanism by which to know when those schools – what state they're in. When you're building more than 200 projects, of course, you run into all kinds of individual circumstances. We have schools that were sited on some wells and some methane gas, underground coal mines, but we will overcome those individual circumstances and make sure that these schools are being built.

As well, certainly, as I said, restoring funding is not an easy thing for our caucus to support because of the difficult economic circumstances that we're in, but now more than ever, Mr. Speaker, is the time for us to invest in education, to ensure that the fundamentals of education are there for our children when they need it. We know that education is always evolving, but we always go back to basic numeracy and literacy to ensure that kids have those basic building blocks – mathematics and language and critical thinking skills – that they can apply to all circumstances throughout their lives.

People often say: well, you know, we have our education to make sure that we get people to jobs. Yes, that's true, but it's also to make sure that we enrich each child's life and that each child has the tools as they grow up to have an enriching and meaningful life throughout their adulthood as well and to pass on the spirit of education to their children and so on and so on. It's a daunting task, Mr. Speaker, but certainly what other task do we have as a society than to ensure that our children are educated now and for the future?

It's not to say that we're not looking for innovative ways by which we can work to allow our children at various levels to see what the working world can provide for them. Certainly, we've had some very, very productive and promising dual credit programs with colleges and universities around the province that allow access

for kids that maybe wouldn't normally go to postsecondary school to see that smooth transition from high school into that postsecondary institution. It helps to buttress, I think, our colleges around the province. You know, I think of Olds or Fairview or Keyano or Red Deer College and so forth with literally hundreds of these dual credit students moving through from high school to postsecondary.

Our intention as well is to extend the career and technology studies into grades 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9 so that kids have access and opportunities for career and technology studies in those lower grades as well. People are looking for ways to have hands-on experience – right? – to evolve the shop class and home economics class into a much wider sort of experience for children, employing all subject areas from mathematics to language arts to social studies to building that birdhouse, that I never was particularly good at building when I was in junior high school. These are some of the innovative programs that we will be talking more about here during this spring session.

We certainly see as well lots and lots of room to help to improve performance in our education system. Of course, as a teacher myself for 20 years I look, first and foremost, to the professionals that we have in the classrooms, that are best suited to make the judgments and to make the choices for students in their charge to ensure they get the best education that they possibly can.

5:40

We know, of course – we had party support for it, and I thank you for that – that we're entering into negotiations with those same teachers here across the province over these next few weeks and months. It's our firm commitment as the government of Alberta to make sure we get a fair deal for our teaching professionals but that we get an affordable deal as well for all Albertans to ensure that those scarce and difficult public dollars are spent in the best possible way: in the classroom for our children's education. Obviously, the negotiations will carry on. We are very proud to have the funder at the table for those negotiations, but of course every step of the way we're working with each of our school boards to make sure they're getting the deal and the regional variations that they require for those contracts as well. So it's an interesting process. It's an interesting time. Certainly, it's very important that we focus very carefully on the teachers' negotiations because, of course, it sets precedence for the rest of the public service in the subsequent negotiations that we must undertake here in the province.

Yes, indeed, this throne speech might not have a great deal of education announcements in it, but I say, Mr. Speaker, that all things, all announcements in here, whether they're in regard to the energy efficiency program, the Alberta petrochemical diversification, energy diversification committee, climate leadership implementation, focus back to our capacity to build stronger communities and to look after our children and give them the best education possible. So education does infuse this document. It will infuse each thing we do in the subsequent budget that we have coming up. Certainly, while we are in difficult times, we always have to take the long view to ensure that we are building a better society during good times and difficult times and looking ahead for more stability and a better future for our own children.

I know when I go to schools that there are wonderful things going on. I was in St. Catherine school right here in Edmonton-Centre a short time ago. I met a young kid, first day in school, first day in a Canadian school, from Africa. I thought to myself: you know, what an exciting time that we live in, where we have young children from so many different cultures not just learning reading and writing but learning about the Canadian experience and the Alberta sense of

community, that we look after each other here in the province of Alberta. And what better place and what better way for us to exemplify how we look after each other than the investment and the lessons that we put into our public education system.

I know that if we measure all the things, the responsibilities we have in our constituencies, that education will take up a great deal of that time along the way, and I thank you each for the work that you do. Certainly, my ministry gets the job done, but we require all of your help along the way to just make sure that our education system is there when all students need it.

We are supporting all education across the province. I mean, there's a lot of misconception. I know people are talking about private schools, home-schooling, charter schools, public education, separate school systems. I need all the capacity that I can get my hands on, Mr. Speaker, to make sure that we educate those 659,000 students and the growing enrolment that I see coming across my desk every day. I need every mechanism and every form of schooling that I have, and I need to have it in the highest quality that's available and to ensure that I provide that regulation for that highest quality as well.

We have to make sure that our education system is working for all students and that we have school board policy that's in line with the legislation that we provide here in the province. So, of course, I've instructed each of my 61 school boards, all schools and teachers, really, to develop LGBTQ guidelines to ensure that human rights and basic equality for all students is extended to every one of our students in the province of Alberta regardless of their sexuality or their gender identity. It's been an educative process, Mr. Speaker, and an edifying one as well. It's generated a lot of discussion around the province, and I'm thankful for all of the input I have received thus far.

It's very important for us to clarify what we're trying to do and how we go about doing it. First and foremost, I recognize the responsibility of each of my school boards to create policy that works for them in their communities regardless of where they live.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

The House leader for the opposition party.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the minister for his comments in the Chamber this evening. It's nice to have you join us.

Well, the throne speech didn't specifically speak to the relationship between the department and school boards at present. Given that you've spoken at some length about some of the things that are happening in education and how the throne speech might interact with those, I have heard from a number of school boards in and around central Alberta who are a little bit concerned about some of the new reporting mechanisms or requirements that they have. I have heard things like: is it the case that the ministry doesn't trust us in the way that we're expending our resources? I'm wondering if you could just provide a couple of comments on the current relationship that school boards and the ministry have as well as any other details of the requirements of the reporting. I know they would be appreciative.

The Speaker: Hon. minister, before you answer, I know I don't need to remind the Opposition House Leader to direct his comments through me next time.

Mr. Eggen: He was thinking about you. He was looking at me, but he was thinking about you.

Those are very valid comments. You know, it's very interesting, Mr. Speaker, to remind ourselves that 97 per cent of the monies – I mean, obviously, my ministry is considerable, the second largest in

the government. So 97 per cent of that money I distribute to the individual school boards for their responsibility. I think that our school board governance system is very strong, and I am a firm believer in recognizing and empowering that level of elected government to get the job done. They are on the ground in their specific jurisdiction. They know what needs to be done, and probably that has efficiencies built right into it inherently just from that knowledge.

Perhaps I've been reminding each of the 61 school boards, for example – and they don't need much reminding. They live in the midst of economic difficulties, and they know that money is tight. You know, we are reminding them to make sure they spend that money efficiently, and that is job number one. But also I do recognize their right to make choices about spending in their schools, especially in different areas. There are different geographic circumstances that they have to deal with, varying distances, special programs that might be required for different areas. That's very important.

I think that I've had a fairly good relationship with our school boards so far. Every step of the way I remind them that I want to empower them to make sure that they're making the decisions and that they are empowered to make those decisions.

You know, a very good example – I always say: judge me on my actions – and a very important initiative that I'm starting on, Mr. Speaker, is to make sure that the Northland school board is reinstated as an elected school board in these next rounds of municipal elections, in 2017, and to respect the decisions of school boards in a wide variety of circumstances as they conform to law as well.

I mean, on the negotiations that we're entering into with the teachers, for example, people seem to accept the combination. We've built a negotiating team, the representative team, which is school board members and government, and they're working together as one single unit. It's not like, you know, government versus the school boards versus the teachers. Rather, it's working as a unified negotiating unit. I've been very pleased to see how that's been going so far. I also have a representative assembly of 61 school boards that are there. Relationship building is always something you must invest in every day, so I am endeavouring to do so.

5:50

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

Mr. Rodney: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister, for your statement today. It's been an honour to work with you for three of your terms, one more for me.

I have two topics. Since this is directly related to the speech – and that's what 29(2)(a) is all about – constituents in the communities of Evergreen and area are really eager to learn. It's Calgary-Lougheed based, obviously, in the southwest corner of Calgary . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member, I believe your time is up.

The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

Ms Luff: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to be able to rise this afternoon to respond to the Speech from the Throne. I apologize that I've cut short the enthusiastic discussion brought forward by the Education minister, but I am going to take this opportunity to speak to how my constituents in Calgary-East can benefit from the initiatives outlined in the Speech from the Throne.

I do want to mention that my constituents are definitely concerned about their livelihoods during this economic downturn. They are concerned about finding work and about sons and daughters who have lost jobs. They're concerned about the cost of

living and if they'll be able to continue to afford mortgages, child care, and transportation costs. The Speech from the Throne shows that we are listening to these concerns. It outlines initiatives that will make a direct, positive impact on the lives of the constituents of Calgary-East.

I want to take a moment today to just speak about how the direction outlined aligns with the goals and directions of the people in my constituency. First off, I'm very excited about upcoming legislation regarding payday lenders. We have a particularly high concentration of these establishments in my riding. There are 11 on 17th Avenue S.E. alone. The prevalence of payday lenders, unfortunately, distracts from the image of the area. International Avenue, as I have mentioned before in this House, is a wonderful, vibrant, and diverse commercial area in Calgary. It has amazing restaurants, corner stores, and ethnic markets, and there are also a wide variety of professional services: banks, financial advisers, lawyers, doctors, and dentists. However, payday lenders affect this vibrancy negatively. Their high interest rates contribute to a cycle of poverty. I've heard stories of individuals who have paid \$2,400 worth of interest on a \$600 loan. This is unacceptable and can't continue to happen.

This type of predatory lending affects people who can least afford to pay these rates. It affects them disproportionately. And \$2,400 is a lot of money. That can be two months of rent or mortgage payments. I am so pleased, as I know my constituents are, that this government is doing something about this. The 17th Avenue BRZ has been fighting payday lenders for many years at city council and at the provincial level, so they're going to be very excited to hear that some work is being done in this area.

Sunrise Community Link and Momentum are organizations that work with low-income individuals and have programs that match the savings of folks enrolled. They allow people to save for down payments on homes or for RESPs for their children or for university tuition for young people, and they do financial education to make sure that people are aware of the options that they have. These organizations are helping to break the cycle of poverty that some people fall into.

Secondly, I am very excited also about the implementation of the Alberta child benefit plan because that is going to help a lot of families in Calgary-East. There are, unfortunately, a disproportionately high number of children who live in poverty in my riding. Families are working hard to make sure that their children have all of the opportunities to succeed that they themselves might not have had. However, there are continued barriers to the success of these children. Lack of access to quality child care is one of these things, and I was excited to hear from the Minister of Status of Women this morning that that's something that ministry is going to be working on.

Poverty itself is another one of those things because it's hard to concentrate in school if you're hungry. Research shows that low-income children are more likely to enter kindergarten unprepared for school. They often have vocabularies a third the size of their peers from wealthier homes. As a teacher, like many others in this House, I absolutely believe in the power of education to create equal opportunities for all children and that all children can succeed in school. That was why I was so excited to hear our Education minister just now speak of how this government has priorities for education.

What I'm really speaking to is the fact that the Alberta child tax benefit is going to help those low-income people. It's going to help them plan for the future. It can put up to \$3,000 directly into the pocket of a single parent with two children, and that's going to help people in my riding. I have a lot of single parents in my riding and I have a lot of low-income families in my riding who are going to

be able to benefit directly from that, and it's going to help them to provide a better education and a better future for their children.

The third thing that I was really excited about was the continued commitment to capital spending, and this is going to have a direct impact on my riding, too. I just want to take this opportunity to thank the Minister of Transportation, who is, unfortunately, not in the room, for the \$65 million worth of GreenTRIP funding that's been allocated for the redesign and the addition of a bus/rapid-transit line to 17th Avenue S.E. This is a project that has been in the works for at least a decade, and it's going to help to make our neighbourhoods in east Calgary more walkable, more cycle friendly, and it's going to provide new opportunities for development and more reliable transit.

This commitment to capital investment will also help the many tradespeople in my riding who have been laid off due to the downturn in oil. Capital construction projects will help to put many of these people back to work and give them the means to continue to support their families. I have a deep respect for these Albertans, who work actively to build things, to create the homes, schools, roads, and bridges that we all rely on for our daily livelihoods. I'm excited that we have the vision during this economic downturn to actively build things for the future instead of tearing things down and leaving an infrastructure deficit for our children.

Lastly, the constituents of Calgary-East will be impressed with the creation of Energy Efficiency Alberta and an energy efficiency strategy. I've heard from many constituents – homeowners, entrepreneurs, small-business owners – and they're committed to improving their carbon footprint. Having help from government will mean a lot to them. There are also folks in my riding who will be more than happy to help government with their efforts on this front. I've talked to entrepreneurial young engineers who are starting their own residential solar business. I have talked to energy efficient window companies, and I've spoken with large businesses who are already working to excel in carbon reduction.

I was recently very excited to tour Executive Mat, which is a business in my riding that rents matting for businesses, cleans

mechanical and printing cloths, and also helps to provide businesses with paper towels and food and beverage containers. The difference with this company is that they have an almost zero carbon footprint. They take back all of the coffee cups and paper towels that they lend out to companies, and they turn them into biofuel. They use that biofuel to run their boilers, and then they turn the carbon that comes out of those boilers into carbonic acid that they use to neutralize some of the water that they use to wash things. And that's just a little bit of what they do. It doesn't do nearly justice to the work that they're doing. They will be very excited to hear that the government wants to work on energy efficiency because that's something that they're really keen on and that they are doing amazing work in.

Mr. Speaker, I continue to be inspired daily by the residents of Calgary-East, by their resourcefulness, entrepreneurial spirit, and commitment to being engaged in their communities and with their government. Not everybody I talk to agrees with me, but they are unflinchingly polite, respectful, and committed to making Calgary-East and Alberta better places to live. The Speech from the Throne speaks to the priorities that my constituents have for Alberta in these tough times: a focus on jobs, diversification, and encouraging high-quality services that Albertans rely on; caring for our most vulnerable; and increasing transparency and accountability in government. These are things that my constituents expect from government, and I was pleased to have the opportunity to speak to them today.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. members, we have two minutes left until the Assembly stands adjourned. I would suggest that what we do is that we leave 29(2)(a) to the next session.

I therefore would suggest that under Standing Order 4(2) the Assembly stands adjourned until tomorrow, March 10, at 9 a.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 5:59 p.m.]

Table of Contents

In Memoriam	
Dr. Ian Wilson Carlyle Reid, May 27, 1931, to January 18, 2016	25
Hon. Donald Ross Getty, OC, AOE, August 30, 1933, to February 26, 2016	25
Introduction of Visitors	25
Introduction of Guests	25
Ministerial Statements	
Hon. Donald Ross Getty, August 30, 1933, to February 26, 2016.....	26
Member’s Apology.....	28
Statement by the Speaker	
Rotation of Questions and Members’ Statements.....	28
Oral Question Period	
Government Policies	29, 30, 33
Pipeline Construction	30
Government Spending	30
Support for Municipalities.....	31
Small-business Assistance.....	31
Job Creation and Retention.....	32
Chief Adviser on Labour Negotiations.....	32
Emergency Medical Dispatch Services in Calgary	33
Seniors’ Care	34
Fentanyl Use Prevention in Indigenous Communities.....	34
Women’s Equality.....	35
Infrastructure Project Prioritization	36
Energy Policies	36
Members’ Statements	
Government Policies	37
International Women’s Day.....	37
Provincial Fiscal Policies.....	37
Turning Point Overdose Prevention Initiative	37
St. Mary’s University Humanities 101 Program.....	38
Pipeline Construction	38
Notices of Motions	38
Tabling Returns and Reports	38
Orders of the Day	42
Consideration of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor’s Speech	42

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