



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Second Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday morning, March 16, 2016

Day 6

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

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Anderson, Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (ND)	MacIntyre, Donald, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (W)
Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)	Malkinson, Brian, Calgary-Currie (ND)
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Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)	McCuaig-Boyd, Hon. Margaret, Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley (ND)
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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)
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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)
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Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)	Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (ND)
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Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (PC)	Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (ND)
Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (ND)	Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (ND)
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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)
Kleinsteuber, 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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Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

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Kazim	

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

9 a.m.

Wednesday, March 16, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Good morning.

Please bow your heads. Let us reflect, each in our own way. Let us be thankful for the privilege we have to hear each other's stories, stories from our rural communities, stories from our urban cities. These stories are the threads that tie us together. When we stop listening to stories, we weaken those threads.

Please be seated.

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.

[Debate adjourned March 15]

The Speaker: The Member for Red Deer-North.

Mrs. Schreiner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with great humility and integrity that I respond to the well-intentioned words of the Lieutenant Governor in her Speech from the Throne. I wish to acknowledge appreciation for the mandate that is ours as a new government.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to express to my friends present today that we are on the cusp of change. The words of task that our Honourable Lieutenant Governor expressed represent our great opportunity for change, for it is change that allows us to bridge the gaps in perception and representation of the true essence of democracy. It is with personal pride and humility that I wish to thank today the trustful Albertans who elected me as their representative within their House. Their voices echo in my words as I stand here as their vehicle to change. Friends, we represent the community-mindedness that is our Alberta. In these current difficult times we are presented the opportunity to place emphasis on the family values that are the cornerstone of our great province.

Mr. Speaker, we come together in this House to represent the collective thoughts and needs of those who make Alberta the province of opportunity. Our collective communities may vary in political representation, but together we sit in their House, seeking resolution and stability for our constituents, their families' futures, and the future of our Alberta.

From our diversity within the House of Alberta stems my personal conviction that together we will champion this economic challenge. To echo our Honourable Lieutenant Governor's inspiring words: "Albertans are community minded, caring, and neighbourly. Ours is a society of friends. In tough times we always pull together." And as a government we must "have each other's backs."

I have called the community of Red Deer-North home for over 30 years. I have chosen this wonderful community as the home for my family. I have participated in and belonged to this community, which has allowed me to care for its Albertans, a responsibility never taken lightly. I engage the health care vocation with the heart and dedication that my fellow Red Deerians deserve. Let me say, Mr. Speaker, that I have been fortunate to listen to my constituents for over 30 years now, and I am proud to belong to a government that finally listens to them as well.

Our decisions to invest in our infrastructure respond to the common desire for Albertans to have full access to the resources they need, their aspirations to maintain their pride and fervent belief that ours is a great province. We can be their bridge builders.

I am an elected representative within the third-largest city in Alberta. The growth has put us over 100,000 strong, and I value their needs. Friends, I also value that the resources within this great city respond to the community needs of many surrounding municipalities. Red Deer is an important part of central Alberta as a community. Our government has responded to our growth and invested in aspects that reinforce our core values. The Red Deer Airport expansion is an example of bridge building. We are fostering the support for infrastructure that engages economic development, recognizes potential, and builds economic stability and job growth. Mr. Speaker, we are building our bridges with fundamental components: sustainability, fiscal responsibility, opportunity, and community-mindedness.

In appreciation of our 2019 Canada Winter Games this expansion proactively meets the needs to inspire success within Red Deer and central Alberta. We recognize that rural Alberta borders every city regardless of population. Our rural partners are very much our enterprising partners. Our rural communities support the agriculture, forestry, energy, and wildlife aspects, and I am proud to hear that our government is committed to building on these strengths in our economy. These are the great resources that underpin our Alberta.

Farmers provide our sustenance, and I wish to thank them for their hard work and dedication. I happily stood in support of the Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act last fall and support the fundamental rights that are inherent in our occupational health and safety diligence. They are now part of the inclusion that echoes the importance of everyone's safety.

Thirty-one years ago I began my investment in Red Deer-North. As a constituent I exhibited the community-mindedness that is ingrained and engaged. I was submersed in the health care field by occupation, but I embraced the educational aspects from the lens of a mother. I participated to encourage the equity and opportunities that our children, our future, deserve. Lunch programs that satisfy the essentials of our being: our children need to eat, to grow, to learn, and to lead.

In these tough economic times we need to be supporting one another instead of making things worse. As Her Honour noted in the throne speech last week, "We don't need to put our short-term bottom line over the interests of long-term recovery." Cuts in education are a detriment to our future, and true democracy does not cap potential. It enhances the belief that education is a resource that is available and merited.

Mr. Speaker, as the member representing Red Deer-North, I am constantly presented with bridge-building opportunities that represent our inherited challenges, infrastructure needs that echo our responsibility for stronger foundations as well as foresight, our shared vision of Albertans having sustainable services that are prepared for growth and its required resilience. With our inherited responsibility is the opportunity, I believe, we can evolve from. Resilience is truly the belief that momentum is the most difficult to

initiate but the easiest to sustain. It is easy to impart mandate during the feast cycle, but how we execute sustainable measures during the famine cycle is our opportunity for momentum.

9:10

Mr. Speaker, May 5, 2015, was a benchmark. It was the day Alberta voted for change. A great testament to integrity is what vehicle we choose for change. We choose to deep-dive into our inherited responsibilities in an attempt to leverage the impact of less than sound policies and practices. We choose to invest in our province so that Albertans and their legacies benefit. We choose to impart accountability and gain efficiencies as well as value-added. We choose to be respectful and aware of our surroundings as well as those who are impacted. Collectively we choose the vehicles that we will drive over our bridges.

I am a strong supporter of our government's plans to diversify our economy. I believe that Albertans deserve options for opportunities. I believe that our economic development ministry is a bridge that fosters opportunities for our constituents. I believe that strong relationships between government and industry can be a catalyst to the changes that are sustainable for generations to come.

I am proud that our government recognizes that the Status of Women is an integral part of growth and equity. This ministry represents the importance of our entrepreneurial potential and how our contributions further our economic climate and expansion.

I believe that our Indigenous Relations minister will provide a bridge to rekindle the relationships between our First People and our government. I am proud to say that in Red Deer-North the groundbreaking of our Asooahum Crossing is the building block of engaging our First People locally. I want to thank you for recognizing the unforeseen challenges and circumstances that stalled this project and initiated the momentum to its realization. It is a great ministry and government that reunites people and their ways.

I am proud to belong to a family-friendly subcommittee that encompasses all political representation in order to ensure family-friendly policies and practices are recognized. These strides represent momentum. As we look around, we represent a government that is indicative of our Alberta demography. The diversity provides for more inclusionary measures and empowers a stronger recognition of the countless needs of our constituents.

It is great to be part of a government that recognizes that our current economic model has increased the vulnerabilities of the vulnerable. I applaud recognition that predatory lending as a business has a negative impact and that we cannot effect responsibility without building a bridge. Vulnerability requires backbone, and we are in a position to better support the structure so that we impart resilience to the cycle of poverty that is a result of current antiquated policies.

Mr. Speaker, I wish now to speak to our most vulnerable, the homeless. This is not their choice but the response to policies that are not cognizant of how many circumstances can impact an individual's well-being, how mental illness and addictions severely impede someone's ability to make sense of the systems, how decentralizing resources makes systems difficult to navigate through successfully. I have visited Medicine Hat in an effort to gain understanding of how they ended homelessness. Friends, I am happy to say that it is a result of strong relationships, which, in turn, are bridges on their own. Results are achieved when goals are common and relationships are transparent. We need to meet the vulnerable where they are at and listen actively to help them help themselves.

I am proud to say that our government responds financially to these needs and recognizes that strong investment in our programs

for the vulnerable is essential and value-added. Decreasing the incidents of our emergency services, law enforcers, and judicial systems flourishes into a stronger Alberta for everyone. It is a solution that represents social and financial responsibility as well as standardizes the fundamental rights to shelter, food, and comfort.

Mr. Speaker, it is with pride that I respond to the Speech from the Throne with actions that support the necessary steps to implement our current mandate. I am proud to stand here as a Member of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta with these members, my friends, and the conviction that our most resilient commonality is the best interests of our collective constituents, our Albertans. We are their collective shield and, as we brave a future of sustainability, economic change, and unification, share the confidence and restoration of a stronger, more resilient province. Let us realize that challenges are the backbone of growth and strength. Our economic tests have opened our eyes to what stark reality results when we continue to execute the same standards without contingency. We have chosen to diversify in order to mitigate impact.

Mr. Speaker, may I reiterate that we are on the cusp of change. We have all found ourselves in situations that test our boundaries, and I applaud and commend that through our individual adaptability we are still standing here together today, cumulatively effecting change. Our challenges are our opportunities, and I am proud that we did not shy from our calling because of the difficulty our province is under.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

I would remind all the members on both sides of the House that there have been extended conversations going on, and I would appreciate and remind you that – hon. members, I was reminding the House that I would ask each of you to contain long discussions with each other inside the Chamber. If you need longer conversations – I've noticed it on both sides of the House, so please be conscious of that.

The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East under 29(2)(a).

Ms Fitzpatrick: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the member for a really well-thought-out maiden speech. I'd like to just go into a little bit about Red Deer. I lived in Red Deer myself for about eight years in the late '80s and early '90s. Last night we were at a presentation by the resources diversification council, and I happened to be there when you had a conversation with somebody. When they talked about Red Deer, they talked about Gasoline Alley, and I know that that's not all of Red Deer. Would you expound a little on that, please?

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Schreiner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Before I do that, I would just like to finish off. I have a couple sentences I didn't say. Our challenges are our opportunities, and I am proud that we did not shy from our calling because of the difficulty our province is under. We chose to become instruments of change.

To answer that question, yes, I hear that from time to time. I hear Red Deer being referred to as Gasoline Alley. Red Deer is so much more than that. Once upon a time, when people were travelling from Edmonton to Calgary or Calgary to Edmonton, they would stop by Gasoline Alley, looking for the big teapot to go and have a cup of coffee, maybe stop off at Glenn's Family Restaurant for a bite to eat and to fill their gas tanks, but there is so much more to Red Deer.

9:20

Red Deer has 100,000 in population. It encompasses 320,000 in population. Red Deer has a regional hospital, and it is the fourth-

largest hospital in Alberta. It's the fourth-busiest hospital in Alberta. An interesting fact is that the STARS ambulance touches down at Red Deer hospital more than any other hospital in Alberta. I'm very proud of our hospital. I know that right now they're looking to expand two operating theatres, and they're looking to expand with a cath lab to service central Albertans. Red Deerians are known for their volunteerism and their giving nature. Jack and Joan Donald of Red Deer have committed to donating \$10 million towards the cath lab at the Red Deer regional hospital.

Red Deer was very, very proud to win the bid for the 2019 Canada Winter Games. I am so excited for this, and I would like to invite everyone here today to please come to the 2019 Winter Games. It's going to be an awesome time. I can't wait to show you around my city.

With that, there is a health and wellness centre that we are going to be having the groundbreaking for right away. This health and wellness centre: Gary W. Harris and family have donated \$5 million towards the health and wellness centre, and I wish to thank Gary Harris and family for that contribution. As well, I'd like to thank Mr. and Mrs. Donald and family for their contribution to the cath lab when that happens.

Red Deer has a college, Red Deer College, and it services Red Deer and surrounding area. It has trades, and Red Deerians are looking for a polytechnic university so that we can keep Albertans in their communities so that they are able to go to college.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Hon. members, again I remind you that conversations are continuing. If you want to have extended conversations, please leave the House.

The Member for Lethbridge-East. Hon. member, is this with respect to 29(2)(a)?

Ms Fitzpatrick: No. This is . . .

The Speaker: No, it's done. My apologies, hon. member.

I think it's time for me to go to Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It appears your hearing is very good this morning.

Mr. Speaker, in response to the throne speech I would like to present my maiden speech. I have many concerns with the approach this government is taking to the latest energy price shock and its consequences. This government is proposing that Albertans should try and spend their way to prosperity with deficit and debt, keep spending beyond our means, all while they experiment with an economic development strategy of a greener, more sustainable economy. This greener, more sustainable economy has proven to fail in many other jurisdictions of the world. A move to a greener energy economy, while laudable, is not going to fill the revenue shortfall that we are currently experiencing. We must begin to address the large gap in our current cash flows. We currently spend far beyond our means.

Mr. Speaker, I am fortunate to have lived my entire life in and to now represent what I consider to be the best constituency, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock, in the best province, Alberta, which is in the best country in the world, Canada. May we always be thankful for this wonderful place that we have the privilege to call our home.

My constituency covers a very large geographical area. There are over 200 kilometres from one end of my riding to the other. I am very thankful for the highway system we are able to enjoy. These highways allow me to travel with relative ease to all areas of my riding.

The town of Morinville is one of the oldest communities in my constituency and is found in the southeast end of my riding. It was founded in the late 1800s, when Father Morin brought many French settlers to the area. They were followed by several German pioneers, who together helped establish the agricultural industry in those early years. Today Morinville also serves as home for many commuters working in Edmonton and also home for many members serving with our Canadian armed forces at CFB Edmonton.

Mr. Speaker, travel 200 kilometres to the northwest and you will find one of the youngest communities of my constituency, Swan Hills. Although considered to be in northern Alberta, it is the nearest settlement to the geographical centre of Alberta. Following the discovery of oil in September 1956, Swan Hills became the first township incorporated in Canada's centennial year, 1967.

There are many other towns, villages, and hamlets that I represent, some of them being Cardiff, Legal, Rivière Qui Barre, Alcomdale, Busby, Pickardville, Dunstable, Vimy, Clyde, Tawatinaw, Westlock, Manola, Barrhead, Neerlandia, Vega, Pibroch, Dapp, Jarvie, Fawcett, Flatbush, Meadowview, Thunder Lake, Tiger Lily, Fort Assiniboine, Goose Lake, and more, Mr. Speaker. All of these communities have a unique story of their own. All of them were established through the hard work and vision of individuals that came to this country in search of opportunity and the freedom to pursue their dreams.

Most of my riding was established thanks to the renewable industries of agriculture and forestry. During the early years many families worked their small farms through the summer, and the father would spend the winter months in the bush harvesting logs for sawmills located throughout the area while mothers and children stayed at home tending to the livestock.

Today we have modern large-, medium-, and small-scale farms growing diverse crops and livestock. Large farm equipment is common on many farms, but we also have smaller operations with the equipment to match. For anyone with a dream to farm, it is still possible with a little ingenuity and a good business plan.

The forestry industry, Mr. Speaker, has also evolved into a very well-organized operation, with large equipment doing most of the work. I went out to witness an operation harvesting logs north of Fort Assiniboine last winter. Seldom is there a need for a chainsaw anymore as the large machines fall, skid, trim, pile, and load the logs. A very impressive operation.

Like so many constituencies in Alberta, the energy industry has played a significant role in helping to advance the well-being of our communities over the last 60 years. The high standard of living that we enjoy today in this province and, indeed, in this country can largely be attributed to the discovery and sale of our natural resources. I believe that we have been very fortunate in this province to have been blessed with this nonrenewable resource.

Mr. Speaker, the people that settled in my constituency did not have an easy time. In fact, many joked that the government bet the \$10 filing fee that you would not last the three-times-six months required to get the title of your homestead. Times were very difficult, but many people did survive through tough winters and hard slogging.

The area of Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock as we know it today has seen many changes over the last century, a relatively short time frame. Much of what was once undifferentiated forest is now farmland criss-crossed with many roads. We have highways that have been built, giving us the ability to safely move products and people throughout my riding.

I'll take you on a little drive through the riding. I'll start in the town of Swan Hills, in the northwest corner of my riding. The Swan Hills town: the province decided in the early '50s that it was prudent

to build a highway into the Swan Hills. The discovery of oil happened shortly after that. It was not necessarily much of a highway. It was more like a mud road. I have an uncle that delivered a lot of the supplies up into the Swan Hills work camps in the '60s and tells many stories of being towed through the Swan Hills gumbo by Cat at that time. It currently enjoys a highway, and the foresight of the leaders at that time gave the possibility for Swan Hills to be developed as a very strong economy.

9:30

If you travel southeast to Fort Assiniboine, you'll find a small town that was developed through the fur trade along the Athabasca River. The Hudson's Bay Company established it as a post, and to this day there are many traplines to the north of Fort Assiniboine.

Travelling west and a little bit north, you get to enjoy going on the Klondyke ferry. The Klondyke ferry is one of the few ferries left in Alberta currently operating. It goes across the Athabasca River into the Vega-Neerlandia area, which has some of the best farmland in my constituency. Neerlandia was settled as a Dutch farming community. That's the area in the province where I was born and raised. I'll get the pleasure of opening a new grocery store in a community that has less than a hundred residents. They have a grocery store, a co-operative, that will probably be one of the largest grocery stores in my riding.

Travelling south to the town of Barrhead, Barrhead is well known for its golf course, and people travel from all across the province to play the golf course in Barrhead. They also have a large business there, Northplex modular homes, developing and building modular homes to deliver throughout much of the northern part of the province.

To the east we come to the town of Westlock. Westlock this current year is celebrating their 100th anniversary. They have many events planned for this year. This weekend I get to enjoy one of the events by a charitable organization there, Rainbow for the Future, that is raising funds to build schools and help with literacy in Ethiopia. They have done this over many years and have several volunteers that continue to go to Ethiopia and help establish the economy there and help to bring education to the people of Ethiopia. Westlock is home to the Canadian Tractor Museum, a museum with well over 100 tractors, some dating over a hundred years old, and is well worth the visit for anyone interested in taking a look at some of the history of the farming in that area. Westlock also is home to a new generation co-op that exports grain all around the world. Westlock Terminals, I believe, is the largest new generation co-operative in Alberta at this time and is proudly owned by many residents in both the town of Westlock and the counties of Westlock, Barrhead, and Athabasca.

If we go a little farther east, we come to Clyde, a small village where we have the large North Central Livestock Exchange, that handles many of the cattle from the northern area of the province and sends cattle all over the province for finishing and trade.

When we head south from Clyde, we come to Legal and the start of a very francophone part of my riding. Legal is a small town. If you go to the café there, you can be pleasantly greeted in the French language or the English language. They're very proudly a francophone community, as is the town of Morinville.

Morinville, like I said earlier, in the very southern part of my riding, is home to close to 10,000 people. I was pleased to participate in the grand opening of one business's new lab and kitchen for their pet foods, Champion Petfoods. They are a company that develops pet food in their kitchen and delivers it to over 40 countries in the world. They're very proud to be exporting all over the world.

Mr. Speaker, the constituents of Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock are very resourceful people. The people of Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock know what it takes to get through hard times. These people realize that sometimes hard decisions are necessary to get through difficult times. The renewable and nonrenewable commodities we harvest, add value to, and sell around the world will create the wealth necessary to provide jobs and to provide the services all Albertans need. If we manage our resources well, we will be able to supply the services Albertans need as well as set a solid foundation for the generations that follow us. We can set the stage for our children and grandchildren to be able to thrive with as much opportunity and vision as our forefathers came to this country with. If we fail to manage those resources well and continue to spend beyond our means, we will saddle the generations to come with a lifetime of debt and lost opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, commodity cycles will always be with us. We are currently experiencing a low point in the price of our number one commodity, oil. What the previous government failed to recognize and what this government needs to recognize is that we must manage our spending based on the bottom of cycles. We can no longer spend as if oil is at the top of the roller coaster. It is a recipe for disaster. If this government truly wants to get off the roller coaster of oil, they would begin to manage their spending accordingly. It will take this government many years to develop their dreams of diversifying our economy. By the time we see any significant payback from those dreams, we may well be broke if we do not get our spending in line with our revenues. This is not rocket science. We need action now.

Mr. Speaker, the Speech from the Throne seems to promise that we will spend our way to prosperity. This is not a plan. This is an experiment, a gamble on the backs of hard-working Albertans. This government needs to get serious, get their fiscal house in order, present the road map for success, and get us off the road to just more deficit and debt.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, 29(2)(a). The Member for Airdrie.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you very much. Thank you very much for that speech, colleague from Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock. You mentioned a project that your community is supporting in Ethiopia. I was wondering if you could tell us a little bit more about that project and what specifically you're doing to help this organization in your community.

Mr. van Dijken: Certainly. I'd be pleased to. Rainbow for the Future was started by a few individuals within our community that recognized the need to help beyond the boundaries of our local economy and recognized the need in the African area of Ethiopia. They focused on three main things: bringing literacy, education for the children there, so they built schools; bringing water to help with the sustainability of these communities so that they can have clean, fresh drinking water to help with their health; also, helping with some of the challenges with the AIDS epidemic, the single-mother families and the orphan children.

This weekend they're having a sports weekend where participants will participate in curling, hockey, or a walkathon, and I'm being challenged to participate in the hockey tournament. It's a tournament with hockey games going 24 hours a day. So I will be participating in that and raising funds to send to Ethiopia. Ethiopia is currently experiencing a drought. Not many in the mainstream media have been carrying the story of Ethiopia. They are in a serious time of starvation, so a lot of this money will be going towards the care of orphans in that country.

Thank you for the question.

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

Loyola: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock for his maiden speech. I really enjoyed it. I enjoyed the tour through your constituency. You talked a lot about, you know, the settler communities that were established, but I wanted to know a little bit about any experiences you may have had in reaching out to indigenous communities and what you believe as a member are your treaty obligations.

Thank you.

9:40

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you for the question. I tried to figure out a way to include the whole discussion with the indigenous people that lived in my area, largely Cree, and some of the negotiations that happened on the sale of the lands and that type of thing. One of the stories I will relate is that as a young man growing up in the Neerlandia area, we had farmland around Shoal Lake, and I got an early education on how the indigenous people were established in our area. During the time of clearing land, picking a lot of roots and picking a lot of stones, we would quite often stumble upon the odd arrowhead, the odd spearhead, and some stones that were used for peeling hides. So I recognized that the indigenous people came and were established here before the rest of us also arrived. How that's evolved over time is that we continue to work with indigenous affairs to recognize the obligations that we have to those communities and to those people and try to work together in a way that can move our province forward in a co-operative manner.

The Speaker: The Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the hon. member for an excellent maiden speech. Your predecessor in your constituency was one of the key Wildrose organizers on the idea of strengthening property rights against what the earlier government had put in for, you know, taking away some of our property rights and the covenants that are attached to property. I'm wondering how important it is to your constituents that property rights are key, that property rights are better protected, and I'm wondering if they're surprised at the inaction of this current government. [A timer sounded]

The Speaker: The Member for Lethbridge-East.

Ms Fitzpatrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to rise today to deliver my maiden speech and respond to the Speech from the Throne. Thank you to the Lieutenant Governor for delivering such a forward-thinking speech, looking to the future of Alberta. Now, even though this is my maiden speech, I've actually spoken many times in this Legislature about my community, and yesterday the MLA for Lethbridge-West expounded on more of the reasons we feel the way we do about our home. I love Lethbridge. Words can't accurately express the depth and breadth of the diversity of my community. To help you understand why I feel this way, I will give you just a few details about my constituency, which may give you a glimpse of the diversity in the place I call home.

My riding is home to 25 schools; 26 church organizations; 15 senior and care facilities; the Nord-Bridge Senior Citizens Association, of which I am a member; the exhibition grounds, where, among many other things, Family Fest is celebrated on New Year's Eve; Spitz Stadium, home of the Lethbridge Bulls; Henderson Lake, probably one of the most walked pathways in all of southern Alberta, lays alongside Henderson golf course; Chinook regional hospital; and Lethbridge College.

There's a variety of businesses, large and small. They are evidence of the entrepreneurial spirit within my community. There are parks and community associations, the Sik-Ooh-Kotoki friendship centre. There is the Polish-Canadian club, the German-Canadian club, the Italian-Canadian club, the Nikka Yuko gardens, the Southern Alberta Ethnic Association, Outreach, the Bhutanese community, and now the Syrian refugee community.

My constituents are my neighbours. They sing with me in the church choir at McKillop. They volunteer with me at the Labour Day barbecue or weed the vegetables for the food bank with me in the community garden or be part of the team for the dragon boat festival or attend SACPA to keep abreast on what is happening in public affairs. We are a diverse group of people who work together to make our community better. This, my dream job, is to do the best I can to represent all of my constituents.

I spent some time thinking about how to incorporate what I want to share with you and how to do that while providing a reasoned response to the throne speech, so here goes. I will begin my story by telling you how I came to be here today. I grew up in a home in St. John's, Newfoundland, where political discussion occurred on a pretty regular basis at the kitchen table. It was there where I learned about the purpose of a government and a little about debate. There were six of us. I learned that the world of politics did not appear to be open to women and that in Newfoundland the church exerted considerable influence. This left me quite ill at ease.

I attended Memorial University in the late '60s and early '70s in the faculty of education and physical education. I played on the junior and then senior varsity basketball teams and was the only member of the university's women's track team. I saw the lack of funding for women's teams. In fact, for me to attend the university track and field championships in Winnipeg, my track club paid for my student flight pass because the university did not have money assigned in their budget for me to participate. I was a nationally ranked sprinter, so some pressure was raised, but money was not. Eventually, I believe, things changed, but not necessarily equal funding for male and female teams. The lesson I kept seeing over and over again was that things were not always equal for men and women, and that just seemed to be a matter of course. I believed and still believe this is wrong.

Throughout my life I have seen this inequality raise its ugly head over and over again. I have shared my story about my violent marriage and how inequality played a role in that situation, so now I will move forward to my career in the public service. Almost immediately after being hired within the federal public service in 1982 I became part of the fight for pay equity, which for the women of the public service lasted for 15 years. For the women working at the post office it was a 30-year battle.

During my time in the federal public service I was elected as local president for two different locals in which I was a member. I chaired three different regional women's committees and was elected to the senior executive of my national union, representing 60,000 members in the NCR. These experiences honed my skills to recognize what little changes can actually mean in the broader picture for good or bad, and that was certainly noted once the federal government settled its pay equity complaint. Changes began to happen within classification, and I would say that they were not positive changes but rather supported the status quo. Most of the clerical regulatory classifications became administrative services classifications, and those were top-loaded in the hierarchal classifications with males and the lower with women but now more difficult to prove disparity. Needless to say, I began searching for ways to stop this gender disparity. As you can see, Mr. Speaker, the tone of my presentation so far is about inequity and the ongoing struggle for gender parity.

9:50

The Lieutenant Governor's speech was given on International Women's Day, and as she said, we reflect on past accomplishments and renew our call for change. I have identified many areas where societal acceptance of gender disparity perpetuates this situation. I have committed myself to changing this behaviour by changing societal acceptance of the status quo. I challenge women to accept nothing less than being fully respected and to be fully valued for all of their skills and abilities. Their worth is no less or no more than a male counterpart. Equality lies in mutual respect and acceptance.

I challenge the men of Alberta to do a little self-reflection and decide what they can do to be part of that mutual respect and learn what it is to truly value the women in their lives. I hope that during my tenure as MLA for Lethbridge-East this change will be forthcoming for the betterment of all Albertans. I believe this was the first reason why I came to be here today.

Now, Mr. Speaker, for the second reason why I'm here. During the 32 and a half years that I worked for the federal government I saw first-hand the steps that were being taken which began to erode services for the public, where the bottom line became more important than the required services to be provided. I saw the federal government change hands several times and the erosion grow. In the last 10 years I watched the destruction of so much of the incredible progress my own department had made towards protection of the public, reduction of the crime rate, and reduction of the cost to the public coffers, all of which was done by front-line staff, working with offenders, assessing their issues, identifying their needs to address those issues, and finally assisting them in changing their behaviour to become pro-social, law-abiding citizens.

I saw, Mr. Speaker, an incredible addictions research centre shut down, 30 years of research on addictions, much-needed research, when working with a population struggling with all kinds of addictions. I saw farming projects shut down, projects that not only provided much-needed job skills, pro-social activities but also which provided food for institutions. I saw similar cuts happening in almost every other department of the federal government. Service counters in CRA closed. I saw Canadians' individual income tax records being archived outside of our country with no way to protect the data included in those records, your personal records.

Mr. Speaker, I returned to Alberta for the last three years of my career in corrections and realized very quickly that things had not gotten any better since I left Alberta nine years earlier. The same kind of damage was happening here in Alberta with provincial departments under a previous government, with cuts to front-line staff and programs. For example, you no longer see work crews from the jails doing cleanup on the highways and secondary roads as you did in the past. There is no longer a work crew program, where inmates were hired as a crew to work on local farms. As time moved forward, things continued to get worse: cuts to front-line staff in hospitals and schools.

Despite the drastic cuts that were made, it was actually costing more. Nurses were being forced to work overtime on a regular basis to cover shifts despite not having sufficient rest between shifts. No time for oneself or family. Had these positions not been cut, the stress of working constant overtime, the possibility of mistakes because staff were exhausted would not have occurred. Patients would not be at risk because of the exhaustion that was created by being forced to work so much overtime.

Mr. Speaker, whether I was in the supermarket, walking in my neighbourhood, at the doctor's office, or even on the golf course,

conversations all around me were about how bad things were with the ongoing cuts to services and how the government must change.

A number of people asked me if I would consider running as I had a good understanding of the issues and could certainly represent their concerns and perhaps make change happen. I made the decision that I would run, and I retired from my position with the Correctional Service of Canada so that I could work full-time on a campaign. For 14 weeks prior to the May 5th election I went door to door, attended many events, and listened to Albertans. I continue to listen to Albertans and share their concerns with my colleagues in caucus and the ministries related to their issues.

Now, Mr. Speaker, to the specifics of the throne speech. With the current status of the economy being drastically affected by the price of oil, this throne speech lays out a plan for not just surviving the downturn in oil prices but thriving. It is a time to be encouraging businesses to grow. Not only is this a role that our government will be promoting, but this is a role that could easily be taken on by chambers of commerce in every single community. They could be encouraging local businesses to utilize the job incentive monies, to take advantage of the expanded access to workforce and skills training and retraining people facing unemployment so that they can upgrade their skills. We are all in this together, and we all need to be promoting job creation and economic diversification if we are to take advantage of this opportunity in our province.

In my community, as in every other community in Alberta, there is potential for growth. Growth does not happen unless we move on that potential. For example, in Lethbridge the thebaine poppy seed project has the potential of a \$5 billion industry. Our mayor has sought support from both provincial and federal governments. Our provincial government continues to liaise with the federal government for the required federal approval of the project before April 1 so that the project will be ready to go in time for this year's growing season.

There are projects at both university and college to provide more diverse opportunities, including a joint project in agriculture and growth in science programs, an example of which is the work done by Dr. David Naylor and his team on the Herschel SPIRE space program.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park; 29(2)(a)?

Ms McKittrick: Yes, please. Mr. Speaker, I wanted to ask the MLA for Lethbridge-East about more of how the throne speech is helping her community of Lethbridge.

Ms Fitzpatrick: Thank you to the member for the question. Mr. Speaker, since I didn't actually finish, I'm going to finish, and then I'll get to your question.

Dr. Naylor was the Canadian lead through the Canadian Space Agency on this world project. This kind of exposure to the world stage brings the university's programs and attracts incredible minds into these programs. This also helps to grow our local and provincial economy.

Mr. Speaker, there are groups in my constituency like Farming Smarter, the agricultural research centre who does the on-the-ground research to make the way we farm and our crops better. There are entrepreneurs in the city pursuing alternate energy: the biogas plant on the east side of Lethbridge. Wind, solar, thermal are being pursued by individuals and at the university. And, of course, there is the destination project at the university. All of these projects and forward-thinking people recognize that we need to invest in a greener, more sustainable economy. We recognize the need to diversify our energy markets. We need to supply the green energy for our own use as well as expanding market access. In Lethbridge

we know that, living in the Palliser Triangle, water is a precious commodity.

10:00

We know we have been successful in the agricultural industry because of the utilization of irrigation and protection of our water supply. We also know that this is the second year of very little moisture, either on the ground or in the mountains, which feeds our reservoirs. We know the importance of protecting this resource. This is why a group called No Drilling Lethbridge grew very quickly to stop a proposed project which had planned to frac within our city limits and under the Oldman River. The company pulled out because of the outcry of over 75 per cent of the population. My government understands the need for protection of our climate; hence, this is why our government introduced the climate leadership plan.

Mr. Speaker, there are vulnerable populations in my community as well: seniors, children, the homeless. This speech outlines that our government will not make things worse. We recognize that trying to survive on a single commodity whose price is controlled outside our borders is not a wise course of action. We will maintain excellent services for Albertans to protect our most vulnerable. Now is not the time to make things worse by cutting essential front-line services and staff.

Lethbridge sits on Treaty 7, Blackfoot territory, the edge of the largest reserve in Canada. Many of our indigenous brothers and sisters live in our community and deserve equal support. The vulnerabilities in our community are also their vulnerabilities; hence, the same supports are needed. Albertans are community minded, caring, and neighbourly. In tough times we always pull together. I can go on to each point, but I know I'll run out of time.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I was elected to represent my constituents and to make the best decisions I can given the circumstances which we are facing. I believe we can make the most of this situation by working together. We have an unlimited resource, and that is the people of this province. We can work through these tough times and thrive, and we will.

Now, I must acknowledge the support I have always received from my kids and grandkids, without which I could not go forward every day. It is also because of each of them and every constituent that I continue to fight for a better Alberta. I have also received and continue to receive support from my incredible staff and EDA. Sherry, Arie, Esther, Mary, Terry, Judy, Bob, Patti, Doreen, Johanna, Nick, Bev, Henning, Mark, Leona, Tom, and Anna: thank you from the bottom of my heart for helping me to be the best MLA I could possibly be.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Let me just draw to all members' attention that 29(2)(a) is really intended to be used as a response to specific questions from another member or additional information, so I want to remind everyone, when we're addressing that issue, to respond accordingly. Thank you very much.

The Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to respond to Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor's Speech from the Throne. While this is the second throne speech delivered under this government, it is the first time that I've had the opportunity to respond since May of last year.

In the last 10 months we've started to see how this government intends to operate and the direction they would like to take us. Since last May I've spoken to thousands of Albertans both in my riding and the province at large. I've used these conversations to

get a sense of what Albertans feel about where we're headed under this government, as I hope my colleagues across the floor have as well.

With a year of trial and error under this government's belt the reviews are not good. The only guiding philosophy the NDP has seemed to display so far has been relentlessly extracting more money from the productive sector and Alberta's households. There has been an unrelenting focus on revenue, but on spending and the value all Albertans receive from spending we haven't seen any commitment to improvement. There's plenty to say about Alberta's spending problem, that has been created over several years of unrestrained, runaway budgets, but I'd like to touch on something that has been quite distressing to me about this government's attitude on the revenue side. There seems to be a pervasive view of the economy as nothing but a source for the government to tap. Through the raising of taxes on income, to taxes on consumption and the inputs of consumer goods, to increased fees on certain services and transactions, we've been told that Albertans are not doing enough for their government.

Albertans are having more of the burden of inefficiency and government bloat shifted onto their backs, and all the while the government has expressed an attitude that almost borders on entitlement when it comes to our hard-earned contributions. If they need more, they simply demand it from the people. The economy cannot bear these constant money grabs. The people of this province cannot be leaned on ever more heavily as they face the challenges within their own businesses, their own communities, and their own households.

The citizen of Alberta has a personal obligation to manage his or her finances prudently, cautiously, and carefully. The money left in Alberta households and businesses must be well spent because, frankly, there is no other alternative. There is no option but for families in this province to use what they have earned wisely, to scrutinize, to assess value returned on their own expenditures.

So I ask the NDP: why the lack of trust in the people of this province? Why the reluctance to unleash the human potential of Alberta? Why does this government feel that it knows better than the earners, job creators, and taxpayers that it is supposed to serve? We've seen the NDP government engage in a number of tactics and practices that it once spoke out loudly against. We've seen a further erosion of trustworthiness. Perhaps even more troubling than the loss of trust Albertans have in the government these days is the loss of trust the government has in Albertans.

As a province we find ourselves facing great hurdles in bureaucracy and taxation. We find it harder to thrive and grow at precisely the time when things need to be made simpler. The price of oil poses a challenge, yes. But these hurdles were not put up by the price of oil; they were put up by deliberate government actions. In all corners of this province I found one thing to be universally true: the people of Alberta are humble and determined. Albertans do not ask for more than a fair shake and equal chance. We've never shied away from hard work or a challenge.

We need a government that shows us the fundamental respect that leads to restraint. A government that respects its people is a government that knows its limits and stays within them. In my wide experience discussing these things with Albertans, it's clear that they are not asking for more than just an opportunity to show this famous resiliency. They want a government that acknowledges that they are and always have been the true drivers of the economy. The economic engine of this province is, thankfully, not determined by the government's coffers, which have been in a state of disarray for some time now. Albertan industry and commerce has managed to thrive in spite of flawed government fiscal management.

10:10

The throne speech promises more of the same erroneous thinking, that we can tax and spend our way to prosperity. Despite some misguided and failed experiments already, they seem undeterred in their quest to throw money around at risky and unfounded projects and programs. Mr. Speaker, this government has doubled down on its hubris, thinking itself far more wise and efficient than the people who make up this province. The NDP government has committed to picking winners and losers. They trumpet their ability to diversify the economy while displaying no particular joy or pride for what already exists. In fact, recent economic policy has done nothing but put the squeeze on productive, competitive, innovative enterprise. To borrow a famous line, the government's view of the economy could be summed up by three short phrases: if it moves, tax it; if it keeps moving, regulate it; and if it stops moving, subsidize it.

After creating barrier after barrier to economic growth in this province, methodically stripping away our competitive advantage, the NDP now sees fit to try to kick-start things the only way they know how: more intrusion, more spending. Having no sense of restraint themselves, they instead restrain the economic potential of Alberta. But, Mr. Speaker, I can assure you that I know this province well, and I know that there are no people more capable of building a strong, resilient economy than Albertans. I implore this government to turn away from the temptation to intrude more and, instead, to give the people of the province the economic freedom to get to work, to build, to grow, and to prosper as Albertans always have.

Perhaps it's tempting when getting into this building to think that we have total power to solve every problem that arises. As nicely as the word "diversification" might tickle your ears, when governments dabble in the world of diversification by subsidy, they tend to create bad investment, skewed market incentives, and rent sinking. I have heard big dreams, but these are hardly backed up by any serious economic rationale. Precious little consideration has been given to value. When the NDP spends our money and that of future generations, are they doing it for just the sake of spending? Have they considered fiscal multipliers and whether they justify any public investment in their pet projects? Have they considered what measurable performance targets will be? In short, are they looking at this from the perspective of real, firm deliverables and value or just throwing around flashy numbers and unfounded hopes?

When Albertans are facing punishing increases in costs from the NDP's carbon tax – the PST in disguise – rising utility rates, increased prices of goods and services, and diminishing employment prospects, Albertans deserve better than vague assurances from the NDP government. They deserve a government that takes the stewardship of their dollar seriously and aims to return value for what they take and collect. And if the government relentlessly pursues its flawed economic strategies, refusing to show restraint and confront economic realities within its own finances, future generations – future generations – will ask why we did not give proper consideration to value. They will wonder why we were so committed to throwing good money after bad instead of thoughtfully asking if such priorities were actually well placed and well founded. Most of all, they will ask why we left them to pick up the tab for such folly.

This province could achieve great things now and for the future, Mr. Speaker, but it all hinges on putting the trust back in Albertans, where it belongs. If we wish to support the families, communities, and businesses of this province, we can begin by offering a level playing field and allowing the innate strength of our economy and exceptional ability of our residents to rise up and be in control.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to offer my response to the government's direction as outlined in their throne speech. I am honoured to once again represent Cypress-Medicine Hat in this House, and I promise that I will do all that I can to ensure that their voices are heard here every day.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky under 29(2)(a).

Mr. Loewen: Yes. I want to thank the member for the statement. We heard lots of talk about government finances. In particular, I enjoyed the discussion about Albertans and their strengths and how they're so hard-working and entrepreneurial and how they can really help us in this tough economy if they're given the chance.

Now, we have a government that brought forward Bill 1. This government talks about other bills being a waste of time, but when we look at Bill 1, we see that that's a real waste of time, so I want to get the member's opinion about that. You know, my thoughts on Bill 1, just in short, are that I guess that maybe this is described as a job description for the minister in charge of creating jobs, and since he's done nothing since he was appointed as minister, I would suggest that taxpayers are not getting their money's worth. This minister gets an extra \$60,000 or so a year to do his job, and of course he brought forward a failed jobs plan, so I would like to hear this member's opinion on that.

Also, I'd like to hear his discussion on the previous government, which, when we had a \$100 barrel of oil and all sorts of revenue, still spent more than they took in. This government now is spending even more than that. I'm wondering how they can ever expect to balance the budget when they're spending more than what the government did at \$100 a barrel. Carry on.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you for that question. Yeah, diversifying the economy: rules and regulations and the onerous, you know, costs that the extra government spending has caused have been exactly the wrong approach to what we need to do to diversify the economy, and more rules and regulations, more picking winners and losers are going to lead to the wrong way. The two questions are related.

The hon. member talked about the previous government's tendency to spend. You know, two things, to me, are important on that. There's a lot of information out there that shows Alberta on a per capita basis spends almost 20 per cent more than any other province. That 20 per cent more has led to many levels of bureaucracy, many levels of inefficiency. It's been very inflationary. We look at the almost 4.2 million Albertans at \$2,000 per year per person: that is \$8 billion in extra spending that could have been placed in the heritage trust fund. It could have been used to build necessary infrastructure to grow our economy or, best yet, left with Albertans to grow their businesses, to grow their communities.

You know, I've said it in the House before: we can debate whether we should have a heritage trust fund; we should have a trillion in the heritage trust fund. There are pros and cons on both sides, but the one thing that this exact situation has shown is the previous government's folly in not saving at least \$100 billion in the heritage trust fund. The interest annually on that \$100 billion would have gone a long way to offset the loss in oil and gas royalties right now and the loss in lease sales. I understand that the last time this government tried to sell some oil and gas leases, the net sales were zero, partly because of the uncertainty, partly because of the confidence that has been destroyed.

It would have been easy for the previous government to have saved that amount of money, I think, because they had over \$275 billion in royalties flow through their coffers since they were elected. With just the original \$16 billion, that was put aside in the late '70s, if they had just let the interest compound rather than directing this spending to bureaucracy, to picking winners and losers, it could have grown to well past \$200 billion.

Now we have a government that is doing exactly the same thing, a government that is not looking for the value when they spend, a government that is not recognizing the effort, the ingenuity, the creativity that wealth builders have put into building the wealth before they tax it and spend it without value top of mind.

10:20

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Northern Hills.

Mr. Kleinsteuber: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege and honour to rise here today to deliver to you and the other Members of this 29th Legislative Assembly my maiden speech as the Member for Calgary-Northern Hills.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank you for the impartiality that you bring to the chair. I believe that you represent the position with honour and distinction, and I wish you the best as we continue on this legislative journey together.

To the residents, neighbours, colleagues, and friends of Calgary-Northern Hills, thank you for giving me the opportunity to represent you in this Assembly. During the election campaign I met many of the constituency's teachers, health care workers, construction workers, oil and gas sector workers, postal employees, parents and grandparents, community advocates, and the others that were ready for change and who expressed that desire at the ballot box last May. I was honoured when the constituents of Calgary-Northern Hills placed their trust in me, and I have continued to work every day to represent the constituency to the best of my abilities.

Calgary-Northern Hills is an electoral district on the northern edge of the city and comprises the neighbourhoods of Panorama Hills, Coventry Hills, Country Hills, Country Hills Village, and Harvest Hills. Also among the hills there is the community of Hanson Ranch in Hidden Valley, which happens to be the neighbourhood where I live. Calgary-Northern Hills is one of the newest areas of the city and has grown rapidly in the last two decades.

The 2011 Canadian census indicates that the area is exceptionally diverse, with only 42 per cent of residents born in Alberta. Take a walk along the streets of Northern Hills and you might hear Cantonese, Mandarin, Punjabi, Spanish, or one of many languages spoken by Canada's indigenous peoples. You'll find restaurants serving cuisine from around the world: Vietnamese, Chinese, East Indian, Korean, Thai, Japanese, and the two delicious shawarma shops from the Middle East. I've come to rely on these restaurants more and more since being elected as I'm finding it increasingly difficult to keep fresh food in my refrigerator. However, this does provide the perfect opportunity to sample the fine cuisine in Northern Hills.

Like many of my constituents in Calgary-Northern Hills, I came from a different region of the country to make Alberta my home, moving here for the unparalleled opportunities that Alberta has to offer when it comes to employment, lifestyle, and outdoor recreation. Not long after I transferred to work at Calgary's airport, I moved to a newly built neighbourhood in Cochrane. Shortfalls in service to newer neighbourhoods motivated me to get involved in local politics. During my run for a position on Cochrane's town council I learned much from others wrestling with how to best

provide public services, maintain quality of life, and manage tax rates amid a rapid population growth and nonstop urban development and infrastructure debt.

In the 2012 provincial election, as the NDP candidate in the riding of Banff-Cochrane, I was able to speak to the issues of the day and gain experience with which to serve the community in the years that followed, as my friend the Member for Banff-Cochrane can likely attest to today.

One aspect of greatest concern to rural residents was land-use planning, particularly in the Ghost valley, where the community has always advocated strongly for watershed health, wildlife habit, and wetland protection. I know that the hon. member is a strong advocate for these issues as well, and I'm glad to work with him in the House on these issues, particularly relevant to our community as we are downstream from these resources and watersheds.

In 2014 my Cochrane neighbours and I founded a community association to advocate for path systems, road networks, and neighbourhood safety. We attempted to hold land developers responsible for fulfilling their commitments when building communities. This experience taught me that neighbourhoods must be good for people who live in them, not just for those that build them. Ideally, ways can be found to create win-win solutions for everybody, but good planning and follow-through are required.

Eventually I moved to Calgary-Northern Hills to be closer to my place of employment and airline colleagues. Shortly after the provincial election was announced for the spring of 2015, I again put my name forward as the NDP candidate. Between door-knocking and meeting with those active in the Northern Hills Community Association, one of the biggest in the city, I learned of the community's priorities.

At the door and at the community forums residents repeatedly told me that the area lacked school facilities even though 15 years earlier a public high school had been promised, with land already designated by the city for that purpose. Yet schoolchildren continued to endure long bus rides to other high schools in distant neighbourhoods. As a result, youth find it a challenge to participate in extracurricular activities with their school peers, potentially leading to feelings of social isolation. While it has been a long-time concern, I was encouraged to see that the Calgary board of education has recently designated a north-central high school for year 1 of its most recent three-year capital plan, 2017-2020, for capital priorities in new school construction.

In the constituency of Calgary-Northern Hills empty grass fields mark our infrastructure debt, the legacy of a previous government's neglect. With our government's commitment to invest in our provincial capital plan, these empty fields now give me hope.

One particular grassy field is designated for a north Calgary health centre. A decade of inaction means that over 50,000 residents travel to other neighbourhoods for health care, often to community clinics and sometimes to emergency rooms at the Peter Lougheed Centre and the Foothills medical centre. A significant number of residents from northern Calgary report travelling to Airdrie regional health centre for their health care needs as well. The residents of Calgary-Northern Hills would be better served by a community health centre on a designated site in Northern Hills. Such a health centre would take the pressure off facilities in the city and allow the system to run much more economically and provide needed care in a timely manner.

Calgary-Northern Hills is playing catch-up after two decades of rapid growth and shortfalls in capital investment. Fortunately, the community possesses a wealth of talented and engaged community members focused on bringing health, transportation, and educational services to the community. Those who volunteer with the Northern Hills Community Association and the Hidden Valley

Community Association demonstrate dedicated hard work and time commitment that are nothing short of inspiring. The future of Calgary-Northern Hills is bright with these passionate residents advocating for their community.

The Nose Creek Sports and Recreation Association is a living example of this community spirit. This not-for-profit organization was founded to spearhead the development of a community recreation facility. The organization has since evolved into a self-sustaining charity, Vivo for Healthier Generations, whose mandate is to help individuals and families in north-central Calgary live their best, healthiest lives, and is committed to pioneering solutions to get all Calgarians more physically active. The employees, play ambassadors, and volunteers that operate the organization have made it the hub for our diverse community in Calgary-Northern Hills, hosting events such as Vivo Culture Fest and making space available to other organizations who in turn host different events such as Chinese New Year Riddle Guessing Festival and an event called One Nation, which is a meet-and-greet to increase understanding of Muslim culture, food, and traditions.

During the Calgary Stampede as MLA for Calgary-Northern Hills I carry on the tradition of partnering with Vivo to host one of the biggest Stampede breakfasts in the city, feeding over 2,000 people while providing entertainment, bouncy castles, and fun for all.

10:30

I'm grateful to the many Calgary-Northern Hills residents who have worked so hard to establish and maintain our community's recreational facilities and after school programs, language courses, and seniors' programming in Calgary-Northern Hills. As an MLA I will continue to work with these outstanding community members to advocate for more schools, a much-needed community health centre, and the construction of the LRT green line, which will connect our communities to the core of the city.

Mr. Speaker, I'd now like to take a moment to respond to the Speech from the Throne. I believe it lays out a bold vision for the province as we begin the Second Session of the 29th Legislature. The throne speech references to income security, diversification, and job creation indicate that the government will take meaningful action to address concerns voiced by my constituents. The throne speech promises to invest \$34 billion into our provincial capital plan in order to build the roads, transit, schools, and other facilities we need to support the quality of life of a growing population. Not only could these capital projects address many of the infrastructure shortfalls in Calgary-Northern Hills; they will promote job creation and economic diversification.

Just as many Albertans are, my constituents are struggling with job losses and underemployment. It is reassuring to hear in the Speech from the Throne that our government will vigorously urge the new federal government to reconsider federal employment insurance rules that exclude too many Albertans from benefits. A successful outcome would provide much-needed relief to residents of Calgary-Northern Hills and the many other Albertans affected by the downturn in the oil and gas sector.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to conclude by taking a moment to mention a political role model from my youth, someone who inspired me to join the New Democrats. During trying economic times the people of Saskatchewan elected an NDP government. The words of Premier Roy Romanow's 1991 victory speech made deep impressions on me. He said then: "It will take a lot of hard work, a lot of tough decisions, and a little bit of luck, but I'm confident that we the people of Saskatchewan can do it. We shall do it. We shall overcome our obstacles and rebuild." Following that victory speech

the NDP in the province of Saskatchewan left a series of surpluses nearly a decade long and formed government for over 15 years.

It's true that Alberta has elected an NDP government for the first time ever, but like the people of Saskatchewan, we the people of Alberta can build an economy that is widely diversified and resilient to the energy price swings, just as the Speech from the Throne describes. We can build an economy that captures the full value of our resources, holds the promise of prosperous futures for our children, and shares the benefits widely and fairly among all Albertans. I will work to help make this vision a reality.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the time to speak.

The Speaker: Under 29(2)(a), the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Dr. Turner: Yes, please. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to my seatmate. A superb speech, I think one that's invigorated at least this side of the House.

I want to follow up on what you were talking about towards the end of your talk. It can be argued that the prosperity that Saskatchewan enjoyed from 2007 until recently was the product of the wisdom of the Romanow and Calvert NDP governments in Saskatchewan. They balanced the budget and helped Saskatchewan reap the benefit of natural resources revenue from potash and oil and gas. To my seatmate: do you think that our royalty review and the diversification plans that are well under way will lead to future prosperity similar to that that was seen in Saskatchewan with the Romanow government?

Mr. Kleinsteuber: Well, thank you to my colleague here and fellow seatmate and member. Being a student at the time, back in the '90s, I think the Romanow government was a particularly inspiring government to learn from as a political and economics student, particularly also with some of the constitutional issues that were widely discussed at the time with the '95 referendum. He was a particularly strong advocate for Canada. Being a resident from Ottawa U at the time, it left a particular impression on me.

I think the Saskatchewan government had a bit of a rough start in the sense that they inherited a pretty rough financial picture, similar to what we've seen in this place. I think that with a lot of hard work and determination, we can definitely learn from that government and the experiences and the positive impression it left on that province, and hopefully we also can share a similar success story here in this province.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Under 29(2)(a), the hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

Mr. Westhead: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, I also want to congratulate my colleague. He mentioned my riding and the work that he had done in my riding in the 2012 election, and I'd like to thank him for sort of laying some of the groundwork, for going out and meeting people in the community and establishing those kinds of connections.

He also talked a little bit about watersheds and the importance of protecting our natural landscape, and I wonder if the member can talk a little bit more about the work that he did while he was in the community.

Mr. Kleinsteuber: Thank you again to another colleague and member here in the Legislature. Yes, during my time in Cochrane it was a good chance to gain a lot of political experience and work with some of the organizations and groups out there, particularly learning how to advocate for organizations and communities that

hold sort of special relationships to the town and community. But I think that, more importantly, now that I'm living downstream in Calgary, some of the experiences from that time, concerns about watershed health and environment, definitely hold true as much then as now on the water quality that the city of Calgary and all of the residents there definitely need. Yeah, I think that these experiences are well placed and have helped me along in my experience and career so far.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Loyola: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the Member for Calgary-Northern Hills. I really appreciated your maiden speech and want to congratulate you on it. I wanted to ask you a little bit about maybe some of the experiences that you've had with constituents that you've met with. Perhaps you could share a few anecdotes of those experiences with us.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Kleinsteuber: Yes. Thank you also to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie. Definitely, since the campaign I've met with a lot of constituents and as well in the office worked with a lot of people that have had a lot of concerns with some of the resources available.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Hon. Member for West Yellowhead, please proceed.

Mr. Rosendahl: Is it okay if I remain sitting?

The Speaker: Yes. Hon. members, the member has recently had surgery. I passed a note, and I agree. Please proceed from your seat.

Mr. Rosendahl: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First, I have to congratulate you on being elected as Speaker of this great House. I would like to also recognize and congratulate the Deputy Speaker. You both have been doing a fantastic job keeping order and decorum in this Assembly and have shown great impartiality.

I rise with great pride today to give my maiden speech on behalf of the citizens of West Yellowhead. Eighteen individuals have represented this geographical area before me, and I'm honoured to be number 19. I believe that West Yellowhead is one of the most diverse and complex constituencies in Alberta. The constituency is large, covering an area of 37,331 square kilometres. Starting in the east, the constituency begins at range road 160, which is near Wolf Lake, and then goes all the way to the B.C. border. The southern boundary is the Brazeau River and ends north of Grande Cache at the Smoky River.

10:40

Mr. Speaker, my constituency is made up of the following major municipalities – Edson, Hinton, Grande Cache, and Jasper – as well as a few smaller communities, including Cadomin, Robb, Brûle, Carldale, and Millers Lake. All of these areas, big and small, consist of Albertans who work and play right here in our great province. Like the rest of Alberta, the prolonged economic slowdown our province currently finds itself in has not left our constituency untouched, but my constituents have all seen a drop in the price of oil before and know that we'll get past this one as well.

Mr. Speaker, when I tell you that my West Yellowhead constituency represents a snapshot of all aspects of our province's economy, I'm not kidding. My constituents work in industries and businesses that include forestry, coal mining, oil and gas, tourism, and recreation, all the while playing in the beautiful and world-

renowned Jasper national park, in many wildland parks such as Willmore and Whitehorse, in provincial parks that are scattered throughout the constituency, and also in their own backyards.

Specifically, Mr. Speaker, as you approach the constituency from the east, you enter the prominent town of Edson, a town that is home to Weyerhaeuser, a strandboard mill that utilizes poplar trees in the constituency; a West Fraser dimensional sawmill and furniture product manufacturer that also supplies wood chips to the Hinton pulp mill; Coal Valley coal, a mine located south of Edson that produces lower grade coal that is primarily shipped overseas to China for the production of power and steel. The Duvernay gas field is also within this area. All of this industrial activity employs and provides spinoff jobs to the community in and around Edson.

Also, Mr. Speaker, approximately 975 farms and ranches surround this section of West Yellowhead and add to the agricultural industry of this great province.

Edson is also a recreational community that has prominent sales in all-terrain and recreational vehicles. It also features the upcoming completion of the Edson hospital this spring, Mr. Speaker, and has a plan to replace the pre-existing Dakin elementary school infrastructure. It is our hope that the province addresses this town's dire need for additional seniors' housing and works together with the Evergreens society at expanding current facilities such as the Parkland Seniors' Lodge.

Hinton, west of Edson, is also in need of additional seniors' housing as the Pine Valley Seniors' Lodge is in dire need of expansion while the Good Samaritan Society requires improved measures for providing its residents with consistent, quality care. Hinton, which I'm proud to call home, provided Alberta with its first pulp mill in 1956. It continues to strive as a resource-based town consisting of the West Fraser pulp mill and sawmill; West Fraser forestry and silviculture division; Teck coal, which is metallurgical coal; and it has many gas fields. It is home to the original forestry centre, a facility that has world-renowned training for forest firefighters and for their pilots, using the centre's flight-simulation technology, a facility that is looking to expand.

Nestled in the foothills, Hinton has a unique community of partners making up the forestry research institute, an institute that aims to drive Alberta towards sustainable land and resource management through increased research on the mountain pine beetle, grizzly bear study, caribou study, to name a few. Industry and government funding continues to be needed to pursue further research that will directly affect and impact our province as well as the rest of Canada.

Forest recreation, Mr. Speaker, is also key to the local economy within the foothills. Hunting, fishing, recreational activities, and annual events such as the Wild Mountain Music Festival attract hamlets of people to the region. The government of Alberta needs to actively continue to address the environmental impact and damage of random camping, ATV use, as well as the increased risk of forest fires.

Heading north up scenic highway 40 leads to Grande Cache. Mr. Speaker, with the recent shutdown of Grande Cache Coal in December the town has increased reliance on its production of dimensional lumber and pellets through Foothills Forest Products and its possible investment into a shakes mill, oil and gas, the Grande Cache Institution, the Maxim Power plant, and the spinoff industries within the surrounding area.

With the airport closure the town of Grande Cache has an ever-growing need to attract tourism and thus holds events such as the Canadian Death Race on an annual basis. West Yellowhead already has a strong tourism base, and we know that in this period of economic decline and with the low Canadian dollar tourism is an industry that is going to continue to grow faster than ever before.

The government of Alberta needs to continue to work with the town council and local citizens to address the closure of the coal mine and airport, and as the representative I'll continue to fight for the success here in the Assembly every day. Despite these minor setbacks I'm confident that our government's plan to promote job creation and economic diversification will help the people of West Yellowhead to get back on their feet. Our government's commitment to build on our strength in agriculture and forestry will be of particular importance to my constituents as we go forward. Mr. Speaker, I'm looking forward to the introduction of Budget 2016 and promises, mentioned in the Speech from the Throne, to expand access to workforce skills training and retraining. I expect many of my constituents will be interested in taking advantage of these measures.

Lying in the heart of Jasper national park, Mr. Speaker, is the picturesque community of Jasper. As an international tourism destination Jasper national park boasts some of the most photographed sites in the world, from Maligne Lake and Spirit Island to the local wildlife, Marmot Basin, Jasper in January. Jasper has a small-town infrastructure that attempts to host thousands of tourists. I'm confident that our government's investment of \$34 billion into the provincial capital plan will finally start to address the pressures on our local infrastructure and help us to build the roads, transit, and other facilities that are so badly needed.

As I've stated, Mr. Speaker, the West Yellowhead constituency is diverse, and a large aspect of the diversity is the First Nations peoples. Alberta contains eight Métis settlements; however, none are within West Yellowhead. There are, however, many indigenous peoples that live in the many communities and smaller hamlets throughout. When Jasper national park was created, a few of the First Nations indigenous people that were living and operating in the park were evicted to the area in and around Grande Cache. This relocation has left some of the people very bitter and has left an overall distrust of both the provincial and federal governments, and thus some are not very co-operative when meeting with government officials. Who could blame them?

There are also two larger settlements located within the constituency, one being southwest of Robb, and it's called the Alexis Cardinal River 234, and the other settlement is Alexis Elk River 233. These settlements rely on the hunting and trapping pursuits in their respective areas. The Aseniwuche group is a small group of indigenous people within the constituency that represents its members. This group receives money from the province and uses the funding for its members. I'm currently setting up meetings with the Aseniwuche group to better understand their function in relationship to the many other First Nations in the constituency.

Another issue, Mr. Speaker, in West Yellowhead is the issue of the co-ops. In most cases they lack the ability to raise funding to pay taxes and barely exist on the hunting and trapping that is practised. In some instances they have sold gravel to different companies to raise money. In some situations the money was never paid, and they were left to now deal with the large open pits that they cannot afford to remediate.

There's also a huge mistrust in the hunting community between the First Nations peoples, whose right to subsistence hunting and fishing is constitutionally protected, and other citizens who recreationally hunt. We need to ensure that we're all being effective stewards of the land, air, and water, and ensuring that our wildlife is properly managed as well is part of this equation.

10:50

Some groups of people, including poachers, Mr. Speaker, are disregarding the important role that our wildlife plays and have gone into certain areas and have taken all wildlife they could, in

amounts to fill a reefer truck. Thus the opposing points of view and different regulations have created many issues regarding big-game bag limits and the number of tags issued to Alberta hunters. Also adding to this situation is the number of guides and their allotted tag limits, which are issued to non-Canadian hunters. Many non-Canadian hunters support the local economy of West Yellowhead as they spend large amounts of money on purchasing tags, gas, food, and lodging.

Another area of mistrust, Mr. Speaker, involves the many confrontations on the application of the floods, forest land-use zones, and the many PLUZs, public land-use zones, that were created, and many of the wildlife management units.

So, Mr. Speaker, there has to be negotiation between these groups of individuals. Fairness needs to be applied to ensure that there's enough big game to be shared and the wildlife in the area is managed to sustain their respective populations. It has been my intent to meet with all these indigenous peoples and try to gain a better understanding of their needs. Better rapport and trust needs to be established so we can effectively work with them, try to find solutions regarding these and future problems.

Mr. Speaker, my journey into politics has been long. I believe it originated back in Saskatchewan when I was growing up on the family mixed farm. My father was a CCF supporter because my parents were raising a large family and issues of health care were always front and centre. When the party was changed to the NDP, I can still remember my father telling us that we need to vote NDP. As a result, there were many prominent NDP people that enjoyed the fruits of the family farm over the many years.

I graduated high school in Turtleford, Saskatchewan, went to college at Vermilion. It was called Vermilion agricultural and vocational college. Growing up on the family farm fostered a commitment and work ethic. There was no question. If you wanted to eat, you'd better do as you were told, no argument. That's the way it was. The success of the family farm was dependent on that philosophy.

It was this experience growing up on the family farm that was one of the major driving forces for my support for the Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act last year. All workers deserve basic protection on the job, and I'm proud that our government was able to pass this important legislation.

At the college I entered the renewable resources and wildlife management technology program. The goal was to become a fish and wildlife officer. During the spring and summer of '72 I ended up, however, going to a forestry company in B.C. as they wanted farm people with an excellent work ethic and were not afraid of the bush. I received training as a timber cruiser and had to try out for the different positions. During the first week of training I was going with this long-legged forester who could literally run through the bush, leaving me behind in most cases. I thought I was going to die trying to keep up with him. I persevered and became the head compass man of one of the crews, and later that fall I returned to college after I stayed over in Quesnel for a longer period because they wanted me to finish up some work there. I graduated in the spring of '73. During my two years of college it was one thing that stood out. You had to be successful and basically never give up.

During my college years I put my name in the farm labour pools to work throughout the area . . . [Mr. Rosendahl's speaking time expired]

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

I recognize the Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm just very interested in what the member is saying about his history in this province in a

very important area of forestry and in the rural communities, and I'd really love to hear a little bit more. I wonder if you might have something more you could add to it.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Rosendahl: Thank you. Well, I eventually ended up working for provincial parks for a short time frame, and I eventually ended up working at the Hinton pulp mill for 32 years, where I got my third-class steam engineering certificate. During that time frame I worked for the union, covering many positions. Throughout my time there I was shop steward, chief shop steward, vice-president, covered the president position, presented grievances with the rep to arbitration, chairperson of the grievance committee, health and safety committee, chairperson of the environment committee, chairperson of the advisory committee on the environment, union chair on forest resource advisory committee, and sat on many negotiations.

I also worked with the AFL during that time frame. I was one of the main members that formed the AFL environment committee. I also worked on the AFL healthy and safety committee. I was also chair of the water caucus committee representing workers in this province. I was also the chair of the forestry caucus committee that represented workers in this province. Through that time I was also president of the Yellowhead labour council and sat on many functions for the Alberta Federation of Labour and the Canadian Labour Congress.

Through all of my union involvement I ended up becoming the president of the NDP federally and provincially in the riding. I was very busy, needless to say. A lot of friends and family called me Mr. Meeting. I was either at a meeting, coming home from a meeting, or organizing more of them.

So, basically, that's what I've done over the years. Also, I was president of Hinton Fish and Game for many years, and I'm a lifetime member of AHEIA, which is the Alberta Hunter Education Instructors Association. Through that organization we train new hunters and fisherpeople in the province, and through that organization I've been on many committees and organized things on behalf of those committees. I've also sat on many other organizations in the community, Hinton Search and Rescue, and so on and so forth. The list goes on forever. We also sat on many negotiations with the government on many things: Whitehorse wildland park, negotiating and discussion on other parks, provincial parks, and all those kind of things. So it's been forever since I've been involved.

I hope that answers the question.

The Speaker: Are there any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)? The Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, it's great to hear about the member's constituency. I think we can all agree it's a very beautiful part of Alberta. I do enjoy going there myself and enjoying mountains and the fresh air and the scenery there, too. It's beautiful.

I was interested to hear about the forestry background. Of course, I have a great amount of respect for timber cruisers because of the work that they do, and it's hard physical labour. You mentioned about the pine beetle and the concern that it has been. I'd like to hear the member's opinion about the pine beetle and how the past federal and past provincial governments had worked with this issue and if he had any ideas on solving this.

Mr. Rosendahl: The pine beetle is of huge concern. It's basically damaged the forestry in B.C., and it is spreading into the province of Alberta. We have a large amount of money that's being spent by

the provincial government in the battle of the beetle. We had a meeting this spring that was organized through myself and the mayor of Hinton to get everybody together so that we had a better understanding as to exactly what's going on. In some areas we are winning the battle. In some areas, however, we are not, and that is a huge concern. The thing is that it's an issue that we're working on with the federal park, Jasper national park. They need to address some of the concerns there as it is spreading over into . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

I just wanted to reflect again on 29(2)(a). I'll just read you the last part of it: "to allow Members to ask questions and comment briefly on matters relevant to the speech and to allow responses to each Member's questions and comments."

I would recognize the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

11:00

Mr. MacIntyre: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am privileged to represent the wonderful people of the riding of Innisfail-Sylvan Lake. The area is home to families who came here because Alberta had a climate of opportunity that was attractive to hard-working people. Along the eastern boundary of my riding you'll find the communities of Delburne, Lousana, Elnora, surrounded by rolling prairie and farms and ranches. It might be of interest that in little, tiny Delburne there is a factory named Noise Solutions that builds equipment for NASA space flights, right here in Alberta. These communities were settled in the early 1900s by immigrants seeking a new life and the freedom to own land, freedom and a climate of opportunity that was unavailable to them in Europe, where feudalism and socialism barred any rights people had to their own land.

Moving westward, we come to Pine Lake. It is a small but vibrant retirement and resort community known for great fishing in summer and winter.

In the southern part of my riding is the village of Bowden. The Bowden Daze rodeo is important to the area, and local cowboy Ky Marshall placed first in the Canadian professional association bareback challenge in Bowden this summer. Around Bowden we have long-time farming families, the Marshall and the Anderson families and many others, that are known for helping out whenever there's a community event or a community need. Bowden folks are very excited this year to be building their first-ever home with Habitat for Humanity.

Northward we come to Innisfail. It is the service hub to central Alberta ranchers and farmers, and here you're going to find some of the oldest Alberta family farms in the province still in operation, farms that have survived drought, depression, hail, BSE, and so far a socialist government. Antler Valley Farm, established by the McAllisters, was started before Alberta was even a province, and it is still owned by the McAllisters and still producing grain to this day.

The Daines family settled in 1911. It's famous for the Daines rodeo, the Daines auction market. We have the Edgar family. Founded in 1907, they host the famous asparagus festival right here in Alberta in the early spring of each year. You didn't know that, did you?

The area is also home to members of the Amish community, and we have the Rainbow and Pine Hill Hutterite colonies, integral partners in our farming community.

In the industrial sector of the town Johns Manville Canada employs a great many people making fibreglass insulation, and northwest pipe is a large supplier to the oil field sector.

Northward we come to Penhold and Springbrook, two of Alberta's fastest growing communities. It's attractive there to

young families just starting out in life. It's also home to Sky Wings Aviation and the Red Deer regional airport. What you may not know is that the Red Deer regional airport employs 225 people and contributes about a hundred million dollars annually to the local economy. As part of its mandate to be the aviation gateway for central Alberta, this airport is scheduled for a runway extension that will permit Boeing 737 service daily to Red Deer.

The western boundary is formed by the Red Deer River, where one can enjoy canoeing and fishing and the vista of the majestic Rocky Mountains. You would really enjoy a country drive in the summer to the hamlet of Markerville. It was settled in 1888 by industrious pioneers from Iceland. We have Vikings in Alberta. They were drawn here by our climate of opportunity. You have to pay a visit to the historic Stephansson House and enjoy the many flavours of ice cream sold at the creamery, which ran continuously from 1901 to 1972, and it is still a café today.

At beautiful Gleniffer Lake resort and Dickson dam you can find recreation fun all summer long. It is home to the award-winning Danish-Canadian National Museum and gardens. Dickson was originally settled in 1903 by Vikings, 17 Danish families, and in the following 10 years more Viking families were drawn here by the climate of opportunity.

Next we come to Spruce View, settled by – you guessed it – more Vikings. It is the service hub for surrounding farms and ranches, and it is home to the wild rose women's institute. No connection. Well, not exactly a connection. Long-time farm families, the Hillmans and the Thompson seed farm, and many skilled artisans actually live in the Spruce View area. It was also home to the Spruce View bachelors of paradise, which was founded during the Depression years of the 1930s because men in the area were too poor to get married. They're thinking of resurrecting it once again given the economic climate.

It's also home to the Tivoli Garden Cafe, famous for its Friday night authentic Mediterranean dishes. It's owned and operated by Lina and Samir Bou Saleh, who came here from Lebanon because Alberta offered a climate of opportunity to make a new life for their family. They just celebrated their 10th anniversary. My congratulations to Lina and Samir.

On the northern boundary is beautiful Sylvan Lake, and on its shores are Norglenwold, Birchcliff, Jarvis Bay provincial park, and the town of Sylvan Lake. Sylvan Lake is a young community, with 30 per cent of the population under the age of 19. The median age of our population is only 32. It is rated as the fastest growing rural community in Canada, and our growth averages about 4.5 per cent per year over year, with projections to reach 20,000 people by 2022, just a few short years away. Frankly, our needs for expanded drinking water, waste water, and 24-hour urgent care have not been properly addressed by the provincial government even during our boom times.

Now, tourism was strangely absent in the throne speech, yet it is a significant economic driver in Sylvan Lake. Our lake is arguably Alberta's most popular water playground, attracting 900,000 tourists annually during summer and winter for ice fishing and snowmobiling. Did I say that this town still lacks an urgent care facility?

Sylvan Lake is home to Alberta's most enthusiastic mayor, Sean McIntyre. Yes, we're related, but about 200 years ago. He may have been seen jumping into the icy waters with his fellow councillors during last year's polar bear dip to raise money for charity. In our area we also have the famous hockey family, the Sutters. They're well known around the town of Sylvan Lake. Sylvan Lake actually won last year's Kraft Hockeyville competition, and now we're busy building a new multiplex recreation centre. We are also home to two of the world's most famous ice cream stores, Big Moo and

More Moo. How many people have been to Big Moo and More Moo, right? Everybody. Did I say that this town still lacks an urgent care facility?

This riding is home to farmers, ranchers, oil and gas workers, teachers, health care workers, manufacturing workers employed in many industrial parks along Burnt Lake trail and highway 2 corridor. These are hard-working people, Mr. Speaker, who've invested their lives in this province because once upon a time it offered a climate of opportunity. They are struggling beneath the challenges of this current economy, aggravated by political instability and the pollution of that climate of opportunity that once epitomized our province. But these are hard-core Albertans, Vikings many of them, tough people, common-sense people that hold to the historical values of family and faith that made this province great. They will not give up, and I am privileged to be their voice in this place.

Now, in addition, I'm also responsible for the shadow portfolio of electricity and renewable technologies. Prior to politics I worked at NAIT in the alternative energy technology program. Based on the research we conducted in building that excellent program, I recommend that as this government forges ahead in its green revolution, it must take the time to accurately calculate the adverse economic impact to our already struggling economy. Any successful businessman knows that you have to perform a thorough SWOT analysis to really understand your risks, opportunities, and potentials for success.

I have asked various ministers repeatedly over the last number of months for their economic research, to table their cost-benefit analysis on the human cost of their energy policies and the economic cost of their economic policies and energy policies. To date this government has refused to provide that research, and now we know why. It was never conducted. Worse, this government refuses to accept that without such thorough analysis they are blind. They neither see the pitfalls, but they also do not see the opportunities right in front of them.

The incompetence of this government is profound, and the mounting devastation upon the hard-working people of my riding is equally profound. Fifteen organizations, comprised of thousands of businesspeople who grasp the value of research, have recently pleaded with this government to open its eyes. Will this government listen to the real job creators or continue to listen to so-called experts who told them last November to trust that oil would be \$50 today? Hello. Wake up.

In addition to economic analysis it is also absolutely necessary to take the time to accurately assess the human cost in moving forward with economic and green energy policies that can and will destabilize our people and threaten their personal investments in homes, businesses, and even their children's future. The primary responsibility of government in a democracy is to care for the well-being of its people. The overarching focus and litmus test of any energy management plan, including our own, must consider the well-being of all our people.

11:10

If I may, I'd like to give this House just a sample of what you could learn if you attended NAIT's program in the area of energy management planning. Alberta's electricity system is a complex blend of regulated and deregulated services. Its blended design was intended to provide Albertans and our business sector with stable, reliable electricity, priced at a level that was affordable for homeowners and also priced to keep our industries' goods and services competitively priced in a global marketplace. In addition, the system had to keep pace with our growing population and our growing industrial load without the need for the government of

Alberta to accumulate debt in building generation and transmission infrastructure.

In all of these criteria our electricity sector has proven successful, and the competitive nature of the Balancing Pool forced the players to constantly upgrade and improve their efficiencies. That, Mr. Speaker, is the beauty of open competition in a capitalist free market. By its very design the players always challenge each other to do better to remain in business.

I should add here that over time the practitioners of energy management have found some nonnegotiable principles which, if followed, can almost guarantee the sustainable success of an energy management plan. Conversely, if even one of these principles is not followed, the plan will not be sustainable for long, and it will fail.

Now, time doesn't permit me to go into detail here, but please consider at least a few proven principles. One, begin by using less. That is the beginning point of any energy management plan. A sustainable reduction in energy consumption through energy efficiency measures throughout an economy has proven to provide more jobs and sustain more economic activity, more innovation, more new small local businesses, and reduce pollution and energy waste more than any other component of a green economy plan. Begin by using less.

Two, create a competitive power market that results in affordable and stable energy costs. We already had this. It was in place, and it was working mostly fine until this government began meddling in it. Recent statements by the Premier regarding the power purchase agreements cancelled by Enmax and TransCanada provide proof positive that this government does not understand PPAs or our electricity system and is systematically engineering the demise of thousands of jobs and entire communities when we can least afford it.

Three, improve energy productivity and energy product quality. What does this mean? Well, there are proven market-ready technologies available to us today whose efficiencies far outperform conventional centralized generation. I'm talking about microgeneration, existing resource wells to generate power, run-of-the-river microhydro, microgeneration using modularized combined heat and power for new and existing developments. These eliminate the need for large transmission infrastructure at efficiencies that are more than double the current generation methods. These are significant.

These three proven principles that I've talked about – and there are more – are also couched beneath two overarching nonnegotiable principles, requiring that (a) the implementation process must do no harm; in other words, the process of transition must not adversely disrupt the economics, workflow, or quality of the region being transitioned; (b) the plan must achieve universal buy-in. This step is the most difficult of all yet also the most important, and unless everyone in the region takes voluntary ownership of the goals of the plan and everyone contributes to the thousands of small and large changes required to reach these goals, the plan will be destined for failure. Forcing a top-down plan fails every time. Ontario is one of the many places where that's being proven.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I and my Wildrose colleagues believe we can responsibly take Alberta forward in a manner that capitalizes on our current strengths, our current economic drivers and job creators, and works with them to gently move Alberta to an energy-efficient economy, doing no harm, substantially less reliant on carbon-based fuels, substantially more reliant on sustainable renewable energy sources, substantially more diversified in our energy portfolio, and strengthened by the wealth creation.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

I recognize the Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky on 29(2)(a).

Mr. Loewen: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's good to hear about your constituency, fellow colleague. It's probably never happened that the word "Viking" has been used so many times in one speech here in this House, but I did enjoy hearing about your experience and your ideas on energy efficiencies, and I would hope that the government maybe will lean on you for some advice with the experience that you have. I would like to hear maybe a little bit of your background, your career and that sort of thing in this regard, and then maybe some additional comments you may have on energy efficiencies that could be used.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. MacIntyre: Thank you, and thank you to the hon. member. My background is in renewable technologies. I was sort of pulled into it by accident. I suffered an accident and couldn't work very well. I went and took some training and fell in love with renewable technologies and just started out down that pathway and ended up overseas as a consultant and then advising both the Israeli government and other jurisdictions around that area. I've done work in Jordan, Egypt, Malta, places in the States, and across Canada here within that technology field.

Then when NAIT was building their alternative energy program, they asked me to come onboard to help them develop that program and then eventually teach it. Then I got elected, and here I am. [interjection] And now I'm trying to teach here, right?

I honestly believe that renewable technologies have a very vital place at play in any energy market, but I also believe that the industries that surround renewable technologies must not be artificially propped up by subsidies or other burdens placed upon the taxpayers or the ratepayers. If they can compete head-to-head, then that is actually going to develop the strongest renewable industries that we have. I believe, like I said in my speech, that energy efficiency is the place to really start. We don't start by piling on high-technology generation to an inefficient system, where we are basically wasting energy.

Energy savings is actually the most valuable energy that there is. It's referred to in the industry as negawatts. You may have never heard the term before, but instead of megawatts it's negawatts, and it is the most valuable form of electricity that's out there. It's the power you don't use. This is where this government I hope would begin, rather than subsidizing all kinds of alternative energy technologies when we haven't fully maximized or optimized the energy we currently use. So to these ends, I'm going to continue to fiercely stand up for the best interests of the people of Innisfail-Sylvan Lake and the best interests of the ratepayers for energy in this province.

I'll just bring one more thing to note here. Did you know – I don't know if the House knows this – that back in November industry volunteered to dial down coal-fired generation, that it was somewhere around, I believe, 20 per cent across the entire coal fleet, without compensation, without job loss, and without impacting power prices, and was flatly refused by this government? They offered to dial down. It just boggles my mind that this government hasn't got a clue about business or economics or our electricity sector or the impact of taxation on creating jobs. They had an opportunity to immediately reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Had they followed through, they would have been reducing greenhouse gas emissions immediately, starting last November, by .75 megatonnes per month. Since November.

Unfortunately, this government seems to never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity, and that's precisely what happened. They failed to take up industry. It would have been the effect of closing down two to three coal-fired plants without the loss

of any jobs, and this government refused to do that. Industry had a solution, and this government refused the solution. That to me is a shameful thing to do. Now here we are, faced with whole towns that are closing as a result of this government's actions. This government is putting forward what they refer to as a climate action plan – I see it as an energy management master plan because that's, you know, where I come from – and this government's climate action plan fails every one of those principles that I just laid out. In that discipline, in that field, if you fail even one of those nonnegotiable options, that plan fails.

11:20

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

I recognize the Member for Calgary-Shaw.

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy for the opportunity to respond to the second Speech from the Throne. I would just like to thank the Hon. Lois Mitchell for her hard work since becoming Lieutenant Governor. She happens to be the first Lieutenant Governor that my grandma and grandpa had the opportunity to meet when she was presiding over the seniors' Olympics in their apartment complex.

Kind of to refer to a reflection that was made by some comments from the Member for Edmonton-McClung last week, who spoke about a great Progressive Conservative Prime Minister, John Diefenbaker, who was an inspiration to him, I want to open up about another great Progressive Conservative Prime Minister that I was very fond of, Joe Clark, a young politician with a drive for positive social change much like many of the members of this House. I first saw Joe Clark when I was in junior high in the early 2000s – sorry to date myself – and despite the challenges that the LGBTQ community in Calgary had faced and the fact that this very Legislature threatened to use the notwithstanding clause to prevent same-sex marriage, I saw him become the first Prime Minister in Canada to march in a gay pride parade. I think him taking a stand on social change was what inspired me to follow politics in Alberta more closely.

I also found the Speech from the Throne quite fitting in that it was on International Women's Day. As many of my colleagues have noted in their speeches, I am proud of the work our government and our Ministry of Status of Women is doing. Alberta still has a long way to go when it comes to gender equality, but I'm confident that our government will continue to make significant strides. It is amazing to see how far we have come with women's issues. Back in the '70s my mother chose not to change her last name when she got married. She dealt with countless amounts of discrimination, from government departments to people who challenged the strength of her marriage. Now, 40 years later, she is still in a strong, happy marriage. I am fortunate to have a mother so strong, who spoke up against the cuts to public service pensions to a committee that I am now honoured to chair myself.

Calgary-Shaw is home to a great number of fantastic schools, businesses, and organizations. One institution I feel most lucky to have is St. Mary's University. Members here are probably getting sick of me talking about the great things that St. Mary's University does. St. Mary's University's basketball team just left for nationals this week after a victory over the undefeated Lakeland College. Now, I feel it unfortunate that the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster is not here as I would take a jab at his college losing, but that's for another day.

I have enjoyed watching their games all season. They are only three years old right now, so it's quite an accomplishment to go this far, and I wish them all the best in the finals. These women have a lot of heart and passion. I'd like to recognize their star player,

Montana Romeril. This season broke the ACAC record for the most three-point shots scored, and that happened during mid-season. I am also inspired by Kassandra Harkema, who joined the team after being out for nearly 10 years after facing an injury from a car accident while she still played for SAIT. Not only have I enjoyed watching them play, but their professionalism and work ethic is something that I am proud to be able to share with my son, who enjoys coming to games with me. This is one of the many reasons I am proud of St. Mary's University, in my constituency of Calgary-Shaw.

Another inspiring woman, that I had the honour of hosting last week at the Speech from the Throne, is Catholic's Trustee Mary Martin. I must say that Mary is by far one of the most inspirational politicians that I've had the opportunity to work with. Mary sits on the Calgary Catholic board and is also vice-chair of ASBA. She is one of the most sincere people I have had the pleasure to know, and it's a joy working with her in my constituency. Her passion for caring for others is seen by the fact that she is still a practising nurse.

Mr. Speaker, family is very important to me, as I know it is for all my constituents. The other day I had a tear in my eye when I saw the Member for Calgary-Varsity in the Chamber with her son. I think it sets a great opportunity for young people to get into politics. There is nothing harder than going from being a father on parental leave to one who has to commute to Edmonton every week. The second week I came to Edmonton, my wife texted me, informing me that my son cried himself to sleep because of my absence. It is heartbreaking, but I know that the work we are doing in this House is not only making the lives of our constituents better but is making a significant impact on the lives of all people in Alberta. Leaving my family is the hardest part of this job, and I am happy that both sides of this House have committed to working towards making this Legislature more family friendly.

Being a stay-at-home father who was taking care of an eight-month-old daughter on election day, I can say that a stand-alone Status of Women ministry will not only bring equality to women but will even open up doors for men, too. A huge fear I faced as a father going on parental leave was what impact it would have on my career. The stigma hitting stay-at-home fathers still exists. I have seen it first-hand from my brother-in-law, Olaf Bakker, who has stayed at home to support my sister's career.

I have been inspired by my sister Melanie, who is the first Sucha in the family to receive a master's degree. She was given a wealth of knowledge and has given me a wealth of knowledge about the oil sector and the challenges that it faces. Many of my constituents rely on oil and gas for their livelihoods, and they can be confident that our government is doing everything it can to put Albertans back to work and to promote economic growth and diversification.

As the throne speech also outlined, Canada's energy industry must have safe, efficient pipeline access to tidewater so that energy production can command the highest possible value on the world market. As I see it, we have two choices. We can pound our chest or work collaboratively to get pipelines to tidewater. As we have learned from what has happened over the last 15 years, what we were doing did not get the job done. Canada's inability over the past few years to pursue strategic energy policies supported by Canadians has made it impossible so far for our country to diversify our markets. It is time to change our strategy, and our climate change leadership plan is just the start. And that's not coming from me; that's coming from industry leaders.

As a resident on Treaty 7 land I want to thank Métis Calgary Family Services, which has its office in my constituency, who have helped educate me on the many challenges that off-reserve aboriginal people face. I think it is important that we move forward

with meaningful dialogue with all aboriginal people, and that is why I'm happy we are moving forward with the repeal of Bill 22.

Before taking office, I used to lose sleep over the world we were going to leave our children due to the implications we are seeing with climate change. I am happy we are working with industry leaders to find solutions that will allow us to invest here in Alberta while supporting those who are low income and small businesses during the transition. I am happy to say that Alberta is now doing its part in conjunction with industry leaders to help provide a more appealing product to market.

As we move forward with our climate change strategy, it is important that we balance our economy with our social responsibilities. This will be a great way for us to diversify our economy and create jobs. As much as we spoke highly of how we paid off our debt, it came at a cost. At the time the previous government took tactics of massive slash-and-burns, and many Albertans lost jobs. I am proud that our government instead committed to not only maintaining our front-line services and staff but to strengthening our health care and education systems. We don't need to put our short-term bottom line over the interests of long-term recovery.

Because of these slash-and-burn tactics we have seen huge infrastructure deficits. Now with a lot of people out of work and delays in projects and deferred maintenance, I am pleased that our government has committed to invest \$34 billion in infrastructure. This investment will not only help put Albertans back to work, but it will help us build infrastructure projects that our province desperately needs. Investments like these are seen in my home constituency with Fish Creek park. This was not natural parkland space; it was natural farmland. But in the '70s Peter Lougheed had a vision to reclaim that land, and now it is something that I enjoyed as a child and that I get to share with my children, too.

Growing up in Marlborough Park, I have seen the struggles that working families face day in and day out. The current system in place with payday loan companies in Alberta only fans the fires of poverty. We need a system in place that does not hurt those who are most vulnerable. Both my constituents and I look forward to the introduction of an act to end predatory lending in Alberta.

11:30

One thing I heard on the doorsteps that is a challenge that small businesses face is access to capital. This in some cases leads to investment being made in large players that are from out of province. By promoting access to capital, we allow our small businesses to continue being the grassroots job creators they are today here in Alberta. Our government invested \$1.5 billion for ATB to invest in small businesses. It's something that will help our small-business owners in my constituency immediately.

Mr. Speaker, I think Her Honour put it best in her speech last week. "Albertans are community minded, caring, and neighbourly. Ours is a society of friends. 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."

As I move forward, being a business leader, someone who had an opportunity to run a business, and as we move forward through these hard economic times, I want to recognize a very key person, who really helped build me, in the foresight that I see as an MLA who's been here for 10 months, and that is my old general manager, Aaron Haynes, while I was a manager at Milestones. He put a lot of faith and trust in me. He challenged me and pushed me to my brink, taught me how to work hard, and also challenged me to make sure that we made our business the most profitable possible. As we move forward during these hard times, I will always reflect on the knowledge that he taught me during those times as well.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank all members of this House for the hard work that they have put in day in and day out for Alberta. I have enjoyed getting to know you all, and I look forward to getting to know you all even better.

Thank you very much.

The Speaker: Questions or comments under 29(2)(a)? Leduc-Beaumont.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the member's comments and his words today. You know, I have a young family as well. Fortunately for me, I'm not too far away in Beaumont, so when I hear stories like the member's son crying himself to sleep, it touches my heart. Luckily, I get to go home and at least see my kid sleeping in their bed when I get home. I live in the best riding in Alberta bar none, so I get to raise my kids in a pretty fantastic place.

You spoke about the park that Premier Lougheed had put in there and kind of what you grew up knowing. I don't know Calgary-Shaw really very well, so I was kind of curious about what it's like raising your family in that area, what it is that you like about that area to raise your family.

Mr. Sucha: Well, thank you very much, desk mate and hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont. Being, I guess, the second-best constituency in Alberta, Calgary-Shaw is a very unique, diverse community, and we're very fortunate because we have a lot of great parks, not only the provincial park but parks where people have banded together, worked hard to fund raise, and put together. One thing that I've enjoyed, having grown up or raised my kids there when we may not have had as much money, is that there are a lot of amenities that you can utilize that come at no cost, that we need to make sure that we protect, whether it is Sikome Lake at Fish Creek park or even the Somerset Waterpark. I have to show pride in the people in the community of Somerset because they were levied an extra tax to maintain that park. They could make it private, but they opened it up to all people in Calgary, in south Calgary. Right now I hope that as their infrastructure ages, we can work together to really try to restore that area as well.

We face some challenges in Calgary-Shaw as well. I'm probably one of the few MLAs who will say it with pride when a school is not being built in my constituency. It's because a lot of the students in south Calgary, which is growing at a very fast rate, filter into the schools in my areas, and we're starting to really be at the brink right now. I'm happy that our government is moving forward to really ensure that we build all these new schools in south Calgary. I've had an opportunity to attend quite a few sod-turnings in the last little while, and it gives me a lot of excitement because they face a lot of pressures right now, and it will have a major impact in the next two, three years for students in that area as well.

One thing I love about the area, too, is that there are a lot of small and independent businesses. Even the strip mall where my constituency office is has some great Vietnamese sub places, and there are also great sushi places. There are also a lot of independent businesses, that are going to be those job creators during these hard times as well.

I always enjoy Calgary-Shaw because it has that small-town feel to it. It has the old township of Midnapore, it has the university in it, it has basically everything you need, and it's all within walking distance. It's something that I'm so happy that my children can experience, just as many other constituents can as they grow up as well.

The Speaker: Any other questions under 29(2)(a)? The Member for Calgary-East.

Ms Luff: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to take this opportunity to really thank the Member for Calgary-Shaw. His youngest daughter is the same age as my youngest daughter. We campaigned with our daughters together, and it was awesome. I just also wanted to thank him for lending his parents to my constituency association. I just wanted to ask him – he’s been a wonderful advocate for east Calgary; that’s my constituency but also the constituency where he grew up – if he could touch a little bit more on growing up in Calgary-East.

Mr. Sucha: The second- or third-greatest constituency in Alberta, Calgary-East. It was really great growing up there. It’s a very diverse community. I got to learn so much, and it was not just from, you know, attending school but from learning from neighbours as well. People from all over the world live in Calgary-East, and that’s one of the greatest things that I see about it. One thing that I loved is that everyone took care of each other, so you knew everyone on your street corner. Whenever there was something up in the neighbourhood, you knew that someone would have your back. Sometimes, you know, as we live in sort of this Internet age, where everyone is watching Netflix and is on their computer and never goes to play at a park, it’s great to have that reassurance that that still exists. My parents still speak fondly of that. I think that how great that area is is really a testament to the fact that my parents after 30 years still live up in Calgary-East as well. After Calgary-Shaw you have a great constituency in Calgary-East.

The Speaker: The Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I apologize if my voice cracks today.

On March 8, 2016, Alberta’s Lieutenant Governor took the opportunity to remind us all that in returning to this House, we are doing so to carry out the work of all the people of Alberta. As the days have passed, though, it’s become increasingly clear that a number of Albertans will fall through the cracks.

This government continually commits itself to market-distorting policies that see our tax dollars directed toward a chosen few. The facts are undeniable. This government hasn’t chosen broad-based policies based on macroeconomic principles to diversify the economy like the low taxes that once made Alberta the most competitive jurisdiction in Canada, a tax advantage that saw Alberta attract significant human and financial capital. This government hasn’t chosen to listen to the pleas of Alberta’s businesses as they call for a moratorium on policies hurting jobs. This government hasn’t chosen to manage the province’s expenses, ignoring the opposition’s moderate recommendations to look inward and identify the rampant inefficiencies in a bloated public service.

Instead, this government finished dismantling the Alberta advantage. Instead, our debt grows and, with it, concerns about further tax increases. Instead, Albertans continue to face uncertainty about a carbon tax that fails to be truly revenue neutral. Instead, we see numerous financial incentive programs designed to help the few and not the many. If Alberta is no longer an attractive place to invest, it’s not the high construction costs that have been a constant feature of our economy, and it’s not that petrochemical investment is innately risky; it’s because this government dismantled all of the pieces that made Alberta a place where business wanted to invest capital.

In the days since the throne speech, Mr. Speaker, all of the members of this House have been subjected to a series of hollow

talking points on government-driven economic diversification. Government-driven economic diversification seems to be something that the government misguidedly believes to have been an implicitly successful policy over the years. They probably say that Klein was wrong to move away entirely from this strategy, but in reality conservative estimates place the costs of these failed policies in Alberta at \$2.2 billion in 1990s’ dollars.

11:40

Through what is colloquially referred to as their Dirty Dozen, Alberta has lost billions of dollars chasing the siren song of taxpayer-funded diversification projects, and I’m going to give you some examples of some of these projects: Alberta-Pacific Forest Industries, where the province was forced by falling pulp prices to write off \$155 million in interest owed in order to receive back the initial \$250 million it had loaned the mill; projects like the Canadian Commercial Bank, the largest bank failure in Canadian history, estimated to have cost Alberta taxpayers \$56 million; projects like Chembiomed, that saw government losses of nearly \$44 million. Gainers, after defaulting on a \$135 million loan, surrendered the meat-packing plant to the government, only to see the business operating at a loss, costing Albertans \$209 million in total; projects like General Systems Research, specializing in industrial laser technology, whose failure lost the government \$30.6 million.

Projects like the Lloydminster biprovincial upgrader. We know that the government is particularly interested in upgrading, but there are risks. Alberta made a \$423 million investment in this project, and from this multimillion-dollar project Alberta received \$32 million when it cut its losses. Projects like the magnesium company of Canada, which after construction saw world magnesium prices plunge, saddling Albertans with a debt of \$164 million. Millar Western Pulp Ltd.: what would come to be a \$272 million loan, initially intended to aid with construction costs, saw the province receive only a one-time payment of \$27.8 million from a company that consistently failed to turn a profit. Northern Lite Canola, a co-operative canola crushing plant, saw both losses of farmers’ initial investments and \$50 million in government losses. Finally, NovAtel, a cellphone manufacturer: the extent of the financial hit to Albertans was estimated by Alberta’s then Auditor General to be between \$544 million and \$614 million.

The province has experienced a handful of qualified successes, too, but most of these successes were based in the hydrocarbon energy sector. It did little to lower the province’s dependency on the oil and gas sector.

We are stewards of the taxes Albertans pay, stewards of the resource rents that Albertans are entitled to, and we are stewards of the revenue received from the corporate taxes that belong to all Albertans. Subjecting Albertans to risk and liability has consistently proven to be a dangerous course, and Albertans are worried. This government won’t even admit that targeted incentive programs with limited funding will consistently lead to choosing winners and losers. The government needs to recognize that this creates undue risk for Alberta’s taxpayers.

The government needs to recognize that in this fragile economy you’ve already asked Albertans to pay more. When you increase the liability to Albertans with financially risky projects and when you fail to properly manage the province’s expenditure, Albertans fear that further tax increases, which impact the businesses’ bottom line, are pending. Even the \$500 million in grant money for petrochemical diversification is intended to help propane and methane projects and not, for example, ethanol developments or decarbonization projects whereas lower taxes, red tape reduction, further regulatory streamlining, or a commitment to reviewing policies like the minimum wage increases are all broad-based

policies that would help any industry with an idea supported by the free market and economics that enter this game. The government is choosing policies to help a select few, and the government is leaving Albertans behind. Governments are terrible at choosing winners – I'm sure you've heard this before – and losers are great at choosing governments. In choosing these winners and losers, this government will leave more and more Albertans behind. Governments face a terrible . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member, I'd like to emphasize again: could you speak through the chair?

Mrs. Aheer: Absolutely. I'm sorry, sir. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, governments face a terrible and ultimately costly asymmetry of information when negotiating deals for government investments in highly technical areas. This is the fear we hold while the government pursues ambitious economic diversification projects that have not in the past proven to be a safe and prosperous economic course.

Mr. Speaker, there is an opportunity for moderation and caution here, and there is an opportunity to begin to restore the Alberta advantage, which was about making Alberta the best place to invest regardless of your industry and regardless of whether any bureaucrats liked your business idea. I truly believe that Albertans are going to get through this together.

We've seen the government recently take some well-thought-out ideas and policies from the Wildrose opposition and start to acknowledge that we may have some wisdom to impart. We've seen small changes in the government like moderate outcomes from the royalty review, but as an Albertan I still long to see the government show the same passion and conviction for the people of Alberta, their jobs, and the economy that they do for other matters close to the hearts of Albertans like schools, roads, and safe environments for all of our children. The government certainly has not held back from these issues, nor would we want them to. We simply demand the same time and energy and deep-seated convictions in their actions and words when it comes to the livelihoods of Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, I'm still waiting for a government that is actually willing to stand up for our resources and our talent, not to mention the diversity that already exists in this vast, beautiful, and resource-rich province of ours. This means understanding the industry that helped build the province that we all love. It means fighting for pipelines, not talking about them. It means being the front-runner in a world where we are now in competition with those who would once seek out our resources. Please do not turn your back on Albertans in their time of greatest need. Stand up for their jobs and for their livelihoods. The prosperity and respect you garner will come to you full circle as you implement the social programs that are sustainable and improve the quality of life for so many Albertans that you wish to help. You cannot do this if you attack the very prosperity that helped you get to where you yourselves are today.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Airdrie under 29(2)(a).

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you very much, and thank you to my colleague from Chestermere-Rocky View. What a beautifully crafted lesson you delivered here today. I'm really curious, more specifically, as to in your home riding what a lot of these people are saying about the direction that this government is going or has laid out in the throne speech. What are some of the reactions from the people of Chestermere-Rocky View?

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you for the question. In Chestermere-Rocky View, as I'd pointed out in my speech, there are a lot of issues with the things that are close to our hearts like infrastructure, schools, with all of the things that all of us have challenges with in our constituencies, Mr. Speaker. But I think that probably the thing that I hear about the most is the lack of action towards market access for our resources and the lack of action by the government nationally to stand up for the resources that are in our province and for the job creators and for the people who have helped build this province. There seems to be an innate lack of respect and understanding as to how this province got to the prosperity that we have. It's not an intentional lack of respect or anything like that – I would never assume that – but I think that there's a definite misunderstanding of how we've gotten from point A to point B.

11:50

I think that if the government can show that direction and show the initiative and show strength not only at a provincial level but at a national level, this would do so much to improve the failings of the province but also to encourage the people of the province, especially Chestermere-Rocky View, to understand that the government has their backs, has their best interests, that there's not only an agenda to one direction, that the agenda that the government has is one or two of the legs of the same stool.

But there are other pieces that need to be implemented in order to make succinct policy and to make sure that we're covering a broad spectrum of issues and things that need to happen. Mostly, again – and I repeat – it's market access and pipelines and making sure that within the projects of diversification, that are so highly touted, what we are hoping to see one of these days from across the way actually builds on our strengths. We have so many here. It's really important that within this space we don't forget what we've already accomplished. You can't know where to go if you don't know where you came from.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Cooper: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just rise briefly to thank the hon. member for her comments this morning in the House. I think that she's done a great job of bringing an important perspective to the House. There are so many issues that are before the government and that each and every one in this Assembly deals with on a regular basis, and balancing a lot of those issues is of critical importance to the province. I think it's a wonderful reminder about some of the risks that come when it comes to picking winners and losers. I'd just like to thank the member for her comments around just a refresher in some of the past history, both in this province and in other provinces, of the challenges that come when the government takes a position of believing that it knows better than the market, when the government takes a position that it knows better than business.

I think that we need to ensure that we keep these core principles at the front of our discussion. The process that we're going through: not only does it cost today, but it also costs tomorrow. When we invest in diversification and venture down these very risky investments, oftentimes there are significant losers, and generally speaking it's the taxpayer. What that prevents us from doing is helping the vulnerable. When we don't have the resources we need, it prevents us from being able to help the vulnerable, and I know that that's important to every member in this Chamber.

I just might be a little bit curious to know from the hon. member some assurances that when she spoke about losers picking governments, surely she wasn't referring to voters but to businesses.

The Speaker: The Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It has been a tremendously entertaining and informative morning of responses to Her Majesty's Speech from the Throne, but given that it's five minutes to noon and I'm feeling a rumbling in my tumbling, I ask for unanimous consent of the House to adjourn.

The Speaker: I'm advised, hon. member, that you should adjourn discussion.

Mr. Schmidt: I move that we adjourn debate on the Speech from the Throne.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, in light of the spirit of co-operation amongst all members of the Assembly and given that it's almost noon and we've made some very productive work here this morning, I might move that we adjourn the House until 1:30.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 11:55 a.m.]

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