



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Second Session

Alberta Hansard

Thursday afternoon, March 17, 2016

Day 7

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta
The 29th Legislature

Second Session

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

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

Party standings:

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

Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly

W.J. David McNeil, Clerk	Stephanie LeBlanc, Parliamentary Counsel and Legal Research Officer	Brian G. Hodgson, Sergeant-at-Arms
Robert H. Reynolds, QC, Law Clerk/ Director of Interparliamentary Relations	Philip Massolin, Manager of Research Services	Chris Caughell, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
Shannon Dean, Senior Parliamentary Counsel/Director of House Services	Nancy Robert, Research Officer	Gordon H. Munk, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>

Executive Council

Rachel Notley	Premier, President of Executive Council
Sarah Hoffman	Deputy Premier, Minister of Health
Deron Bilous	Minister of Economic Development and Trade
Oneil Carlier	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Joe Ceci	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
David Eggen	Minister of Education
Richard Feehan	Minister of Indigenous Relations
Kathleen T. Ganley	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Christina Gray	Minister of Labour, Minister Responsible for Democratic Renewal
Danielle Larivee	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Brian Mason	Minister of Infrastructure, Minister of Transportation
Margaret McCuaig-Boyd	Minister of Energy
Stephanie V. McLean	Minister of Service Alberta, Minister of Status of Women
Ricardo Miranda	Minister of Culture and Tourism
Brandy Payne	Associate Minister of Health
Shannon Phillips	Minister of Environment and Parks, Minister Responsible for the Climate Change Office
Irfan Sabir	Minister of Human Services
Marlin Schmidt	Minister of Advanced Education
Lori Sigurdson	Minister of Seniors and Housing

STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

Chair: Ms Miller
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Schreiner

Cyr	McKitrick
Dang	Taylor
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Chair: Mr. Sucha
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schneider

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

Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee

Chair: Mrs. Littlewood
Deputy Chair: Ms Miller

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

Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Chair: Ms Goehring
Deputy Chair: Mr. Smith

Drever	Pitt
Hinkley	Rodney
Horne	Shepherd
Jansen	Swann
Luff	Westhead
McPherson	Yao
Orr	

Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

Chair: Mr. Shepherd
Deputy Chair: Mr. Malkinson

Cooper	Littlewood
Ellis	Nixon
Horne	van Dijken
Jabbour	Woollard
Kleinsteuber	

Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Chair: Mr. Wanner
Deputy Chair: Cortes-Vargas

Cooper	McIver
Dang	Nixon
Fildebrandt	Piquette
Jabbour	Schreiner
Luff	

Standing Committee on Private Bills

Chair: Ms McPherson
Deputy Chair: Mr. Connolly

Anderson, W.	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	McKitrick
Drever	Rosendahl
Drysdale	Stier
Fraser	Strankman
Hinkley	Sucha
Kazim	

Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

Chair: Ms Fitzpatrick
Deputy Chair: Ms Babcock

Carson	Loyola
Coolahan	McPherson
Cooper	Nielsen
Ellis	Schneider
Goehring	Starke
Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Mr. Fildebrandt
Deputy Chair: Mr. S. Anderson

Barnes	Luff
Cyr	Malkinson
Dach	Miller
Fraser	Renaud
Goehring	Turner
Gotfried	Westhead
Hunter	

Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Chair: Loyola
Deputy Chair: Mr. Loewen

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

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, March 17, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Happy St. Patrick's Day. Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Hon. members, we have a number of guests with us today, and we welcome all of you to this Chamber, starting with some school groups.

The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

Dr. Starke: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's indeed a great pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly visitors from the Dewberry school. Now, Dewberry is a village in the constituency of Vermilion-Lloydminster that boasts that it is the home of the two-time reigning Rangeland Derby champion of the Calgary Stampede, none other than Kurt Bensmiller. And not only that: tomorrow night they're hosting the final family skate. I'll be on the ice, and to find me, you just have to look for the tall guy who's going to where the puck was. Ladies and gentlemen, my colleagues, I'd like to ask that you all offer a warm Assembly greeting to the visitors from Dewberry school, who are in the members' gallery today.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-South West.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my great pleasure today to introduce to you and through you 24 visitors from George P. Nicholson school in the greatest constituency, Edmonton-South West, along with their teacher Mrs. Maxine Sprague, who are situated in the public gallery today. If the Assembly would please give them the traditional warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: I must tell the guests and the Assembly that we know why we have such a great province and the best province. Every time one of the MLAs stand, they come from the best part of the province.

Ms McKittrick: Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly a group from Woodbridge Farms elementary school. There are, I think, 24 students that are there, and they have as teachers Antonia Triska and Garth Baker and as parent helpers Heather Whittaker, Rebecca Campbell, and Celina Mysyka. I'm delighted that some of them have chosen to wear the dress code of the Assembly as they tour the Assembly. Would the students stand up and receive the traditional welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

I would now recognize the Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's with great pride that I rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly nine members of the family of the late Edward John Polanski. The family members are here to hear me commemorate the accomplishments of Mr. Polanski later today, which include bringing proceedings of this Assembly to live television broadcast. The family members include – and I'll ask them to rise and remain standing – his widow, Phyllis Polanski; daughter Michelle Belland; daughter Kelly Polanski; son James Polanski; grandchildren

Drayton Trumble, Makayla Polanski, Lauren Polanski, Zach Belland, and Barrett Belland. I'd ask that they remain standing as they receive the warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Peace River.

Ms Jabbour: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you a group of fourth-year journalism students from Grant MacEwan University. Led by their instructor Peter Ryan, the group is here to meet with the LAO manager of corporate communications and broadcast services, Rhonda Sorensen, to observe Oral Question Period, and then later to meet with the *Globe and Mail's* Justin Giovannetti, a member of the press gallery, for a Q and A on what it's like to work in this type of environment. I know they're going to have a great time.

Each year the fourth-year student journalists research and craft three news reports and one full-length feature, which can then be submitted to the volunteer editors of the *Capital Report*, so if any of these students contact you, I'd encourage you to treat them as you would any other reporter, and you just might find yourself as one of the subjects on the online annual political magazine capitalreport.ca, which is published May 1 and reaches over 50,000 readers.

As I read their names, I'd invite them to stand. Anthony Bacchus, Taryn Brandell, Paul Gazzola, Jennifer Henderson, Nicholas Hobson, Zach Howe, Jasmine Pushak, Pierre Royal, Sahar Saifee, and Jibril Yassin, please accept the warm, traditional welcome of the House.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly representatives from the SAIT Students' Association: the president, Brigitte Matheson; the executive director, Blair McCormick; and SAIT's director of external relations, Mr. Glenn Shepherd. As you may know, the student's association not only provides many services on campus, but they're a strong advocate for SAIT students across Alberta and the entire country. I know that SAIT students are well represented by Brigitte and Blair, so I'd ask all members to give a warm welcome to our honoured guests.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister and Environment and Parks and the minister responsible for the climate change office.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you Miss Ashlea Golding. Ashlea is graduating with her B.S.W. from the University of Calgary Faculty of Social Work in April and has been completing her senior practicum at my constituency office in Lethbridge-West. Ashlea has been a wonderful addition to my office and has significantly contributed to a number of important case files. My staff have told me that they are dreading the end of her practicum and will miss her contribution to the office. I thank her for her hard work and congratulate her on completing her degree. Ashlea is joined by my constituency manager, Lisa Lambert, who keeps the office moving at all times. I ask the House to join me in a warm welcome for Ashlea Golding and Lisa Lambert.

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

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Keeping on that theme of constituency staff, I am honoured and privileged to be joined today by my constituency staff. We all know that the work we do here in this House and in our constituencies is a team effort, and I am truly

fortunate to have remarkable people on my team, as I know all of you are. I feel especially fortunate, though, to have the two folks on my team that I do. Jodi Christensen: she's been with me from the very start. Not only does Jodi help me keep on track, but far more importantly, she does remarkable work on behalf of and for the people of Calgary-Elbow. A new addition to the team, Miranda Martin, has a background in palliative home care and social work and has taken on a tremendous amount of work already as a caseworker in my constituency office. I'd ask that Jodi and Miranda please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly two wonderful people from my constituency of Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, Kevin Moore and Yolanda Pickett. If you could please stand. Kevin is a veteran with over 24 years of service in the Canadian military, and he'll be receiving the Queen's Diamond Jubilee medal. His wife, Yolanda, is an operating room tech for the Canadian Forces. They are also owners of Fort Saskatchewan's Two Sergeants Brewing, and I will be talking about them more later this afternoon. Of course, Kevin is joined here by his wife, his Rock of Gibraltar, and I invite everyone, please, to extend our warm traditional greeting to them.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Ms McKittrick: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly three individuals from the group RiverWatch: Cal Kullman, Andrea Myers, and Chris O'Brien. Cal is the RiverWatch founder and executive director, and his efforts to make the real world a valued teaching resource were recognized with the first-ever Alberta excellence in teaching award in 1989. Andrea is the group's business manager, and Chris is the director and was formerly the governmental relations specialist with EPCOR. RiverWatch is also involved in preparation for World Water Day, which will be celebrated on March 22. I'll ask all of my guests today to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

1:40

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly three grade 6 students and their parents from Aurora elementary school in Drayton Valley. Earlier this year I hosted an essay contest for the schools in my constituency around the theme of the Magna Carta, and Rylee Rogers, Jeremy Carefoot, and Jenna Harrison were the winners of the contest. They are accompanied by their parents: Heather Rogers, a former student of mine; Murray Carefoot, a former colleague of mine; and Benita Harrison, who I'm just starting to get to know. They've toured the Legislature today. They've collected MLA autographs on posters of the Magna Carta. They've had a meeting with Minister Eggen. Thank you, Minister. Could Rylee and Jeremy and Jenna please stand and rise with their parents and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Top of the afternoon to you, Mr. Speaker. It's my absolute pleasure to rise in the Assembly today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly a great Albertan. He's one of Alberta's top stand-up bass players and has represented Alberta well all across this great country of ours with the T. Buckley Trio. I understand that a number of you had the opportunity to meet him last night. You can see him all around our province playing with other great, wonderful Alberta acts in every corner, including folk festivals and community events. More importantly than all of that, sir, he's my brother-in-law, a great husband, and a superhero dad. Now, he does have one small fault. In this past election he voted for the NDP and his good friend the Finance minister, but I love him anyway, my brother-in-law, that is. Anyway, if you'll all join and welcome Mr. Derek Pulliam to the Assembly this afternoon.

The Speaker: Someone overheard the Finance minister in the hall saying that he loved you, too.

The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The luck of the Irish would have it that I have to follow that act.

I rise to introduce to you and all members of the Assembly members of the Alberta Students' Executive Council who have been here all week advocating on behalf of postsecondary students across Alberta. I would ask that they rise as I call their names: Joshua Bettle, SAIT Students' Association, vice-president external; Kimmi Nguyen, SAIT Students' Association, vice-president academic; and Kristen George, ASEC chair from Grande Prairie Regional College. Please join me in welcoming ASEC to the Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Northern Hills.

Mr. Kleinsteuber: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise here today to introduce to you and through you Ms Janine Giles. If you could please rise. Janine has been active in politics for several years now. She has run as a candidate in the federal riding of Macleod and has volunteered on many campaigns in the past. Janine is about to submit her PhD dissertation to the University of Calgary and is a teaching assistant at the University of Calgary as well. She not only brings a wealth of academic training to her position but has also had international community development experience. Janine recently started as a part-time assistant to my constituency office, and she'll be joining Shannon Martel in providing a variety of services to the many constituents of Calgary-Northern Hills. I request that my colleagues now extend the fine traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Do any other hon. members have guests to introduce today? Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Nielsen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to be able to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly three wonderful pharmacist associate-owners of Shoppers Drug Mart stores in the absolutely amazing riding of Edmonton-Decore: Beverley Rushton, Londonderry Mall; Lynn Gilmour, Namao Centre; and Joanne Mostowich from Namao. The focus of my outreach in my constituency office in 2016 is to visit numerous businesses in my riding throughout the year. As such, I did spend a wonderful morning learning about Shoppers Drug Mart and about the pharmacy services in my riding. I want to thank Lynn and Joanne and Beverley for their continued hard work

and dedication to assisting the constituents in my riding with all of their needs. I would now ask Beverley, Joanne, and Lynn to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Ministerial Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Human Services.

Leilani O'Malley Muir

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to commemorate the life of Leilani O'Malley, who was victimized by those who were supposed to protect her but who emerged as a hero for thousands of Albertans sterilized between 1928 and 1972 under the authority of the government of Alberta. During a dark era in Alberta's history she experienced first-hand the horror of eugenics at the age of 14 and the thinking that some people have less value than others.

Leilani O'Malley died earlier this week, but her legacy is a reminder to us in this House of our obligations to uphold the fundamental rights of all Albertans. She never had an easy life. Born into poverty, she was neglected by her family. By age 10 she was sent to Michener Centre. Based on the belief that people with developmental disabilities were of, quote, inferior genetic stock, unquote, Leilani was among thousands of Albertans sterilized against their will and often without their knowledge. It was only years later, after failed attempts to conceive a child, that she learned the truth.

She sued the government of Alberta for wrongful sterilization and in early 1996 won her legal battle, paving the way for a class-action lawsuit for other Albertans who were forcefully sterilized. Her advocacy forced an about-face from the government of the day, an apology from Premier Klein. In part due to the advocacy of former NDP leader Pam Barrett, the government withdrew planned legislation that would have limited compensation to victims of forced sterilization.

Today the Michener Centre is no longer a place that people are forced into against their will. Though it remains open, decisions regarding its future rest in the hands of those who call it home and their families.

Mr. Speaker, Leilani O'Malley was a survivor who spoke up for so many who couldn't. While we mourn her loss, may Leilani rest in peace knowing that Alberta is a better place because of her advocacy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [Standing ovation]

The Speaker: I would recognize the Member for Airdrie.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with great sadness that I rise today to pay respect to the late Leilani O'Malley Muir, who passed away last weekend. Leilani was a strong advocate for persons with intellectual disabilities and dedicated her life to exposing the institutional mistreatment of our most vulnerable Albertans. In 1928 this Legislature enacted the disgraceful Sexual Sterilization Act. It was a policy on eugenics and forced sterilization that targeted people with disabilities, mental illness, and undesirable social traits, and by doing so, it showed complete disregard for the inherent dignity of each human person.

1:50

Leilani was a victim of this act. At just 11 years old, after being abandoned to the care of a government institution, she was subjected to an impromptu intelligence test. She scored only 64. Based on this result, the Eugenics Board sentenced her to sterilization for the crime of being mentally defective. In 1965 she

was released from the institution but did not fully understand what the government had done to her until a year later.

Mr. Speaker, despite this tragedy Leilani persevered and became a strong voice in this province. She led the charge in protecting Albertans from the government's flagrant violation of human rights. Her story is moving, powerful, and should serve as a reminder to all members of this Assembly of the effects that policies made here in this Chamber have on Albertans. We must remember Leilani and never enact legislation that could cause such immeasurable harm to the Albertans we should be protecting, lessons which must be extended to all marginalized groups.

In the mid-90s Leilani became the first victim of forced sterilization to successfully sue the Alberta government, setting a precedent for thousands of other victims to receive financial compensation. Mr. Speaker, Leilani never gave up fighting for the 3,000 people who fell victim to the act, and for that, we should thank her. After being in place for a shocking 40 years, forced sterilization in Alberta ended in 1972. It is a disgraceful part of our history, and we must learn the lesson it has to teach us about the importance of respecting human dignity, the lesson Leilani fought so hard to teach us.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would request the unanimous consent of the House for a representative of the third party as well as independent members from Calgary-Mountain View and Calgary-Elbow to participate in a response if they so choose.

[Unanimous consent granted]

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

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister and the member from the Official Opposition for their recognition of notable Albertan Leilani O'Malley. Ms O'Malley's legal victory in 1996 asserted that her most fundamental human rights and integrity as a person were violated. It also set a higher standard for government, Albertans, and Canadians not to stigmatize others we don't understand or judge for the appearance of mental illness. There are no spare people.

Every human being deserves to be treated with dignity and humanity. This case is an example of where that did not happen. The fact that we're talking about it today is due to Leilani O'Malley's courage, and it highlights the importance. It means that all Albertans know this must never be allowed to happen again. Ms O'Malley's willingness to publicize her tragedy and tell her story was an inspiration for others who are wrongfully judged and thereafter violated.

Although the harm done cannot be reversed, it is because of Leilani O'Malley's courage and the fight that she underwent that her tragedy and the tragedy of thousands of others cannot and must not happen again. We must do our best to honour that legacy.

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

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's truly right and proper for us here in this House to reflect on the passing of Leilani O'Malley. Ms O'Malley came from a dreadful home. Abused and ignored, she was eventually taken into care and entered the Provincial Training School for Mental Defectives. A more Orwellian name could be hard to imagine. Shortly after admittance she failed a trivial IQ test and was deemed mentally defective, a

diagnosis with tragic consequences. Leilani was taken into surgery and sterilized as a result of the Sexual Sterilization Act of Alberta, 1928, a law passed right here in this room.

A ward of the province for 11 years, she was eventually released and attempted to live a normal life, only for her world to be shattered again upon realizing the misdiagnosis and the consequences. None here can imagine the pain in overcoming such hardship, yet Leilani O'Malley did not crumble, nor did she simply accept what was done to her in silence. Instead, she decided to fight for all those who could not speak for themselves. Her courage and determination brought a light to one of the darkest chapters in Alberta's history.

During the trial that opened our eyes to this horrific practice, Leilani stood fast in the face of immense pressure to quietly accept a financial settlement. She was resolute in her belief that money mattered far less than revealing the injustice done to her and to many others. Because of her strength, thousands of Albertans received a long-overdue apology and some recompense for their suffering. After her court victory Leilani continued as an activist for the rights of others. I quote: people don't know what goes on behind closed doors. End of quote. But she did, and she was determined that others would know, too.

In 2001 Leilani O'Malley made an unsuccessful bid for a seat in the Legislature here in Alberta. The irony of standing here, where the Sexual Sterilization Act of 1928 was passed, would not have been lost on her or on the rest of Albertans. In remembering Leilani O'Malley, I want to recognize her remarkable achievements and express condolences to her loved ones. I also wish to remind myself and my colleagues that we must be vigilant during our time here in the Assembly. The actions we take while seated in this Chamber can have consequences far beyond what we could ever imagine. To quote Leilani: nobody has the right to play God with people's lives. End quote.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak of a tragedy, the horrifying law that existed in Alberta's past as the Sexual Sterilization Act, but, more importantly, to speak of the life of one of its most fearless opponents. Leilani O'Malley Muir and nearly 3,000 other Albertans were sterilized in a devastating program meant to prevent those in the province referred to as, quote, mental defectives, unquote, from passing on their genes, something referred to as unlawful, offensive, and outrageous by the judge presiding over her case. I'm sure that all those present today can agree that that is absolutely the truth.

Leilani was a remarkable person, one who had the courage to step up and say: this was done to me, and it was wrong. She took the government and its vast resources to court and won. Her courage led to many other suits being filed across the province as Albertans fought against this tragic program. She fought a battle that laid her personal life and her most personal tragedies out to the public, but it didn't matter. She wouldn't agree to a nondisclosure clause as she believed that Albertans had to be made aware of the legacy of sterilization in this province. She was an advocate her whole life. Working with the living archives on eugenics in western Canada project, she wanted to ensure that Albertans who were affected by eugenic sterilization had their stories heard so that terrible tragedies like this could never be repeated.

Many people sterilized were, in fact, members of marginalized groups: single mothers, First Nations and Métis people, eastern Europeans, and those living in poverty. She made it her life's mission that this would never happen again. Leilani O'Malley Muir is a role model for never giving up the fight, for always doing

what's right. Her perseverance and strength are a testament to what Alberta is. Her memory will live on, her work will live on, and the legacy she left us will continue forever. May she rest in peace.

2:00

Oral Question Period

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

Government Policies

Mr. Jean: Another day gone by with more jobs lost under the NDP government. This time it's in Medicine Hat. Trican Well Service announced that 100 jobs would vanish, and Calfrac services announced that it is closing shop and laying off 200 workers. These are families out of work, desperate, and looking for hope, and what's the NDP's response? To raise taxes and bring in a \$3 billion carbon tax grab that hits every single Albertan and these industries very hard. What does the Premier have to say to these 300 Albertans who are now out of work?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Certainly, our hearts go out to anyone who's been impacted by the current state of the global economy. The international price of oil has had devastating impacts on families here in Alberta as well as in other parts of the country, including Newfoundland. That's one of the reasons why we believe the people of Alberta elected a government that actually had a job-creation strategy in the platform of their campaign last year. We continue to move forward. We're very proud of the fact that we're working to diversify the economy instead of doing what the members opposite propose, which is to sit on our hands and continue to rely on a single resource.

Mr. Jean: Here's what the mayor of Medicine Hat has to say about the NDP government record, quote: I don't see our provincial government doing anything; I don't see job creation; I see increased taxes at a time when I don't think the economy can bear it. End quote. Ouch. They're the same concerns that business leaders gave just earlier this last week, and it's why Wildrose released solutions through our Wildrose jobs action plan. Will the Premier listen to the mayor's advice, do no further harm, or will she stick to her government's ideological agenda?

Ms Hoffman: If you want to talk ideology, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite are proposing to cut billions of dollars from the public treasury. They think that firing teachers and nurses because of cutbacks in the private sector is a way to find a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. They're delusional. What we're doing is that we're continuing to work on a job-creation strategy and ways to make sure that we continue to put Albertans back to work. Members opposite should be well aware of our climate change strategy. We're very proud of it, and Albertans are going to see the impacts very soon.

Mr. Jean: The Premier doesn't just have a problem with Medicine Hat. Municipalities right across Alberta made it quite clear how they feel about the NDP's economic agenda. Parkland county pointed out that NDP policies will lead to \$224 million in lost tax revenue. The mayor of Rocky Mountain House said that the Premier's policies have, quote, taken their toll. Business groups, mayors, employers: they all agree with one thing. NDP policies are hurting Albertans. When will the Premier back down from her risky policies and start helping Albertans instead?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, we're very proud of the fact that we are actually working to make sure that we stabilize public services while at the same time supporting industry and supporting small businesses and investing in other areas of the economy. This is very important for us. We take our responsibilities very seriously. Albertans are resilient, and they have elected a government that believes in them and is going to continue to work to make sure that our plan to create jobs results in a net increase for families. We're very proud of the fact that our energy future includes phasing out cancer-causing coal emissions, and we think that we should keep right on track. Members opposite want to keep polluting.

The Speaker: Second major question.

Oil Tanker Transportation on the West Coast

Mr. Jean: Speaking of jobs, Albertans deserve a Premier that will stand up for our interests. One of our key interests is getting access to tidewater for our energy. The Premier has been quiet and vague on this issue, to say the least. Even if you favour quiet diplomacy, you can still make it clear where you stand. The Premier needs to be clear to Albertans. Will the Premier stand up for Alberta and clearly state that she opposes the federal government's tanker ban on the Pacific north coast?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, we absolutely know that pipelines are the safest way to get our product to tidewater. We've been working hard on making sure that's communicated clearly. The Premier has said that over and over again. I'll keep saying it. We'll all keep saying it. We're very proud of the fact that we are actually making progress. Our climate change leadership strategy made its way to Washington, essentially. They're talking about the work that we're doing here in Alberta, a made-in-Alberta solution that's not only going to benefit us but, we think, has the potential to expand, and even our members to the west seem to agree.

Mr. Jean: Well, that was not the right answer. The government of Alberta should be clearly against the tanker ban. You either like the tanker ban and are against Alberta's energy industry, or you are a serious person who knows that this tanker ban is bad policy, and you oppose it. Is the Premier opposed to the tanker ban or not?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to talk a little bit about diplomacy and how important it is to make sure that we respect each other's opportunities and our responsibilities. Certainly, the Leader of the Official Opposition's plan to address the difficulties that we're facing is kind of like a four-leaf clover, shrouded in mythology and hard to find. [interjections]

The Speaker: Hon. members, could we keep it a little quieter with the volume, please.

Mr. Jean: Mr. Speaker, this is not a laughing matter for Albertans. That wasn't an answer to the question. It's a very simple question. I know that this topic makes the Premier's NDP friends in British Columbia very uncomfortable, but the Premier represents Albertans, not the B.C. NDP. Is the Premier opposed to the tanker ban in B.C. or not?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, I have a responsibility to the people of Alberta and our government has a responsibility to the people of Alberta – and I would hope that the Official Opposition would as well – to make sure that we have good working relationships, to make sure that people understand why our product is important to not just Alberta's economy but Canada's economy and the world's

global well-being. We're making sure that we have an environmentally responsible reputation here in Alberta. Instead of acting like dinosaurs from Drumheller, we're actually moving forward.

The Speaker: Third major question.

Coal-fired Electric Power Plant Retirement

Mr. Jean: Yesterday the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake asked some detailed questions about the government's plan for phasing out coal. The government front bench could not answer the questions. Three different ministers are mishandling the file. The environment minister doesn't get it, the Energy minister really, truly doesn't get it, and now the economic diversification minister doesn't get it. Was anyone in the government aware that their coal plan would result in the Alberta ratepayers getting stuck with half a billion dollars in costs for the PPAs?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, I think it's really important for us to acknowledge that science shows that the pollution from coal-burning power plants is bad for our health, it's bad for our environment, and it's economically unsustainable. It causes 100 premature deaths, 700 emergency room visits, and 80 hospital admissions annually. We are ensuring that we have a successful transition plan. We are moving forward on protecting our health and protecting our economy, and we're very proud of the moves that we've made in ensuring that we have Mr. Boston to help navigate those waters with us.

Mr. Jean: The government also had a hard time explaining how and what the coal facilitator was going to do. For \$100,000 a month I hope that Mr. Boston works some very long hours, but I doubt that anyone can develop a plan to shut down coal plants and get replacement electricity in just six short months. It seems that the government set a policy and is only now trying to figure out if it's possible or even advisable to implement it. Did anyone over there ever consider that their climate policy might lead to big problems in Alberta's electricity system?

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've certainly hired one of the best businesspeople in the world to go to bat for Albertans as we support the transition, as we continue to move forward with the companies that will be impacted. Terry Boston has experience helping to guide the transition of one of the largest grids in North America away from coal while preserving reliability, and we're confident that we have the best man for the job. The opposition doesn't believe in science, so they want to keep on polluting.

Mr. Jean: So the answer is: no, they didn't.

It's becoming clearer that this government's coal plan was ideological rather than researched. Taxpayers could be stuck with some huge costs from cancelled coal PPAs just when we can least afford them. Recently coal-powered generators offered to voluntarily dial down 20 per cent of our coal fleet without asking for any compensation and without impacting Alberta's power bills. What was the answer? The answer was no. This would have immediately reduced greenhouse gases by eight megatonnes a year. Why did this government refuse this free offer and instead saddle taxpayers?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, we're working in partnership to protect the environment, taking a plan that was proposed at the national

level, and we're actually working to support communities in the transition. We're going to have clean air, we're going to have long-term jobs, and we're going to support communities in the transition. I am very proud of the fact that we've hired one of the best experts in the world to help us with that process, and I think that taxpayers will see that it's a wise investment on the return. Certainly, we are a responsible government, and we take our responsibilities both to the economy and to the environment seriously.

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

2:10

Government Policies
(continued)

Mr. McIver: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday at AAMD and C the Health minister talked about some important issues, and I believe that Albertans will be interested in what the minister is thinking. I thank the minister for saying that the rural physician action plan is staying. She did however say that funding will only be extended until fall because they're not getting maximum bang for the buck. That sounds like change. To the minister: how are we not getting best bang for the buck with RPAP, and what changes to the program are you planning in the fall?

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much for the question and for the opportunity to make sure that I clearly communicate to the member opposite what seems to be a little misconstrued. Certainly, at the end of every grant cycle I think the responsible thing for any government to do – for our government, I am sure, for other governments, at the municipal level and so on – is to make sure that you look at the desired outcomes for that grant and the actual outcomes achieved. While that grant in its current structure is set to expire this spring, we've extended the current level of funding through to the fall so that we make sure that we have an opportunity to consider carefully how we're going to continue to move forward. RPAP will continue to be there. We need to figure out how to best use the resources.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Health minister was asked yesterday about funding for a helicopter ambulance service, called HALO, in Medicine Hat and another service in Fort McMurray. AHS pays for 25 per cent of STARS' mission costs, and the PC Party supports that. The minister told a municipal leader that she had no good news today and that an evidence-based decision would be made by AHS after a fair process takes place. To the minister. I know you believe that rural lives are as valuable as urban lives. Will you ask AHS to support air ambulance services in Medicine Hat and Fort McMurray?

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Communities around this province have different ways of making sure that we can safely evacuate individuals in a time of crisis. Some municipalities do use STARS, some use HALO, some used fixed-wing, and some use ground transportation. The appropriate thing to do, I think, is to make sure that we have a budget that's reasonable and sustainable – I'm really proud that we are working to get through interim supply and supplementary supply in this House – and to make sure that money is given to AHS and that they most correctly work with communities to make sure that they have a safe evacuation plan.

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker, yesterday at AAMD and C our environment minister actually complimented Peter Lougheed. She said that his government's support for accelerated oil sands development was a good example of government leadership. Many of us are familiar with the environment minister's vilification of the energy industry in general and the oil sands in particular. My question for the environment minister is simple. After all the conflicting messages, please now make it clear for all of Alberta: do you now support Alberta's oil sands industry? Yes or no?

Ms Phillips: Well, Mr. Speaker, as I made very clear in my response to the Speech from the Throne, I grew up in an oil patch community. My dad was an electrician who worked on oil rigs, and he was one of the people who lost his job in 1982, when the national energy program came into play. So I don't actually think I need to explain my history.

What I will do, Mr. Speaker, is draw attention to all of those folks who stood on a stage with me on November 22 and said things like the following: "I believe [this plan] will lead to Albertans and Canadians receiving full value for their oil and natural gas resources." Brian Ferguson, Cenovus. Brian Ferguson again: "I'm not sure that I would use the word 'radical' to describe being a leader. I would describe it as being bold."

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Emergency Medical Services

Dr. Swann: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. The long-standing difficulties in managing emergency medical services in the province continue today. They risk not only public health; they risk the very people, the paramedics themselves. These professionals put their lives on the line when we are in crisis, yet a recent survey reveals that 25 per cent report an unsupportive culture of intimidation and bullying. Despite large increases in urban populations, there has been little increase in ambulances and staff, and with long wait times in emergencies and red alerts increasing, there's distress. What is the minister . . .

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the hon. member for the question. Certainly, we continue to work with Alberta Health Services and with ambulance employers to make sure that we get EMS back on the roads as quickly as possible. I think that when I've talked to paramedics and other front-line first responders – certainly, frustration around having to wait for people to be admitted is a high frustration for some of the citizens who are transporting our most vulnerable. Of course, building the 2,000 needed long-term care beds in this province to ensure that the people who are currently waiting in acute-care hospital beds have somewhere to transition to will certainly go a long way. We will continue to work with the labour groups that represent the workers and the employers.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

First supplemental.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the minister: we haven't addressed the question of low morale, bullying, and intimidation. How is that going to be addressed?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much for the question. Certainly, conversations with both of the labour groups that represent the workers as well as with the employers are a priority for us. In terms of morale, there are lots of complex factors that contribute to it. Having an open dialogue, investing in public health care, front-line health care, when people aren't worried about the future of their jobs: that certainly goes a long way to people having a greater sense of satisfaction. If the member opposite has some feedback and advice, we'd be very happy to receive it.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, over the last year and a half the department has been examining effective approaches to PTSD, posttraumatic stress disorder. It provided some supports, but they are not comprehensive, and they are not seen to be reliable and valid. Will the minister look into the PTSD program?

The Speaker: The associate minister.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. We are very encouraged that Alberta Health Services has a variety of programs in place, including the employee and family assistance program, the critical incident stress management and peer support program as well as the mental health line. Clearly, there's more work to do, and I look forward to working with Alberta Health Services and the Health Sciences Association of Alberta to make sure that our front-line responders have all the supports that they need.

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

Athabasca University

Mr. Piquette: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A recent report has caused significant worry in my riding of Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater. Many of my constituents are concerned that IT services at Athabasca University could be moving out of the community as it would mean many jobs leaving Athabasca. Can the Minister of Advanced Education tell the House: is Athabasca University moving its IT services to Edmonton?

The Speaker: The Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to my friend for asking the question and giving me the opportunity to clear the air around Athabasca University. I understand that this issue of IT is a sensitive one, and I want everyone to know that we are committed to working with Athabasca University to meet the needs of the students in the communities. I can say that the space strategy working group recommended consolidating two existing IT satellite offices in the Edmonton area into one location and that there are no plans or recommendations to move Athabasca University IT staff out of Athabasca.

Mr. Piquette: Mr. Speaker, given that the minister stated earlier this week that Athabasca University won't be moved or closed, can the minister tell me what work is being done to ensure the university remains in Athabasca?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you again to my friend for the question. Last week I met with the chair of the board, the president as well as members of the Athabasca University Faculty Association. At that meeting I provided some

direction to them for moving forward with the sustainability plan for Athabasca University, which included direction to work directly with students, faculty, staff, and community as they develop the sustainability plan. We're also working to fill vacancies on the board to ensure good, stable governance of this institution. Our government is committed to working with the board, faculty, staff and students, and the community of Athabasca to ensure the long-term sustainability of Athabasca University in Athabasca.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Piquette: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know my constituents will be very happy with this news.

Mr. Speaker, given that this government is committed to engaging with Albertans, what can the minister say is being done to properly engage the Athabasca University community?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you again to my friend for the excellent supplemental question. I've heard from many community members, staff, faculty, and students about how important Athabasca University is to the broader Athabasca community. In the direction that I provided last week to the board and the chair, I emphasized the importance of developing a consultation plan that includes the community of Athabasca as part of the process. Conversations with the board and the faculty are ongoing, and we remain committed to working with university officials to help find ways for Athabasca University to thrive. I've personally spoken to the mayor and the reeve in this community on this issue.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

The Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

2:20 Coal-fired Electric Power Plant Retirement (continued)

Mr. MacIntyre: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now that TransCanada and Enmax have turned their power purchase agreements back to the Balancing Pool, who reports directly to the Minister of Energy, the pool is the largest coal-fired generator in the entire electricity market, and it appears that this NDP government is now also the largest generator of greenhouse gases. To the Minister of Energy: who is ultimately on the hook for the carbon tax associated with those emissions, and when can they expect to see the bill?

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you for the question. Well, certainly, we're looking at the PPA structure, the structure that was given to us several governments ago, and it has a huge loophole in it that we are looking into at the moment. We're encouraging the Balancing Pool to work with the companies involved. It is a process. There are no closures involved with this, and there are no job losses involved with this process.

Mr. MacIntyre: Thank you for the answer to a question that wasn't asked.

To date we have not seen a single report tabled in this House from the Minister of Energy showing Albertans the actual economic and social costs to ratepayers and taxpayers of this accelerated coal phase-out. If the hon. Minister of Energy has that research, will she please table that research?

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

Mr. Bilous: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's clear that the member wasn't paying attention the other day when the minister of environment tabled an article talking about all of the health impacts to coal particulates, to NOx and SOx, the impact that it's having and the number of deaths that can be averted by phasing out coal. We're doing this in a very orderly and structured way. This is why we've gone and found the best person in the business to go to bat for Albertans, to ensure that we're protecting our consumers and ratepayers.

The Speaker: House leader for the Official Opposition, could you ensure that the voice is down a little bit, please?

Second supplemental.

Mr. MacIntyre: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I did say, "economic" research – economic research. Okay?

Today we have not seen a single economic report tabled in this House from the Minister of Energy. Will the Minister of Energy please agree that a significant amount of economic research should have been done before drafting any policy that impacts our electricity sector? Millions of Albertans who depend on it are looking for that research and proof for your economic – economic – policies.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Mr. Bilous: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for his question. I'll throw a few numbers at him, and maybe that will satisfy him: the fact that we spend and will save our health care system more than \$300 million, as far as transitioning off coal, from the detrimental health effects that it has not only on our children and on our seniors but on our population as a whole. Transitioning and phasing out coal is not only the right thing to do; our government has a plan in place that we will have an orderly transition. We are moving toward renewable electricity along with the rest of the world.

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

Postsecondary Education and Employment Training

Mr. Rodney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's escalating unemployment rate of almost 8 per cent is one of the highest in the country, and it's the highest it's been in many decades. Over 100,000 job losses create huge ramifications, including increased enrolment as Albertans upgrade their skills for the new labour force or are staying in school longer because jobs they're seeking simply don't exist or have vanished. To the Minister of Advanced Education: as our economy is being shifted, how is your ministry specifically adapting to provide greater access for those seeking further educational opportunities?

The Speaker: The Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Our government has already done quite a bit to assist students. We've reinvested in postsecondary institutions by providing predictable, stable funding over the last year, and we expect to do so again this year. As well, we've provided a two-year tuition freeze, which will make education a lot more accessible and affordable for students who seek spaces in our postsecondary institutions.

Mr. Rodney: Given that close to 40 per cent of those who earn bachelor degrees or graduate from college do not find a job in their

chosen field and given that 30 per cent of those students pursue additional education, which means more debt burden for them and taxpayers who help fund our postsecondary educational system, to the same minister: what concrete actions are you taking to ensure that postsecondary education programs align with real job prospects?

The Speaker: The Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. We've already done a lot to make sure that education is more affordable. We've followed through on our promise of a tuition freeze, as I said. We've also introduced new awards for indigenous students, we doubled the low-income grant, and we made apprentices eligible for student aid. What we're not going to do is cut the budget to postsecondary institutions, as the opposition would have us do, and we're not going to hike tuition.

Mr. Rodney: I appreciate the review of what has been done. I am looking for things that are being done to meet the current needs, so we'll try this a different way. Given that the innovation portion of this ministry was moved to the new Economic Development and Trade portfolio last fall and given that innovation has naturally aligning and important ties with Advanced Education, can the minister please tell us: what specific processes has your department put in place to ensure that innovation maintains a critical connection with the Economic Development and Trade ministry to ensure collaboration between the two ministries, that are now separate?

The Speaker: The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for the question. A very good question. My ministry works very closely with the Ministry of Advanced Education. In moving innovation over to economic development, we are doing two things. We are going to preserve and ensure that we continue to invest in R and D, research and development, in our fields, as we've been doing. We're also going to ensure that there are supports for would-be entrepreneurs and businesses to get their ideas and commercialize it and get it into the market.

Thank you.

Dental Care Costs

Mr. Barnes: With the economic uncertainty in this province we know that money is tight for many Albertans and their families. That's why Wildrose has offered this government constructive solutions for rising dental costs. We've seen a lot of talk about reviews from the Health minister but no real actions that would bring improvement or relief. If the minister needs a hand, will she accept our recommendations on reducing the restrictions on advertising, increasing price transparency, and improving governance practices at the Dental Association and College?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you for the question, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, making sure that Albertans get fair value for their dollar when they're going to the dentist is a priority for this party and for this government. This is an issue right across Alberta, but I know that it's felt particularly in some of the smaller communities where there is less opportunity to maybe consider other options. We need to make sure that we're doing a thorough review in collaboration with the college and with our partners. We've been working on that, and I'll be happy to update the House in a timely fashion.

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, no answers; just more indecision and foot-dragging.

Given that about a hundred dentists are now alleging anticompetitive practices regarding advertising restrictions and given that this is a dental market that has been identified as crying out for price transparency for consumers, why won't you just adopt our common-sense proposals to drive prices down and help Albertans get the best value possible for their hard-earned money?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much for the question, Mr. Speaker. It seems that for the members opposite the only possible solution for any problem could be more privatization, more competition. Certainly, we know that some of the other provinces that have got greater control around some of the fees and are getting better return for their taxpayers have a fee schedule. That's one of the things that I think a responsible government can consider and look into and see if it would be a way to help prevent some of the price gouging that's happening right across Alberta. Certainly, we are working in partnership with the dentistry industry to make sure that we have a thoughtful plan as we move forward, not making rash, ideological judgments like the members opposite.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
Second supplemental.

Mr. Barnes: Albertans need real solutions, not more evasive answers and dithering. Given that the minister has received advice from the Official Opposition as well as many other sources like Calgary-Mountain View on reducing red tape in the dental market and seeing as price transparency is key to kick-starting competition and innovation in market economies, does the minister recognize these basic principles, and will she make a commitment to reducing onerous restrictions on dental providers?

2:30

Ms Hoffman: Depending on the procedure, Mr. Speaker, Albertans can pay substantially more than our neighbours in B.C. or Saskatchewan do. We take that seriously. We are certainly taking time to look at the evidence – evidence – to make sure that we come up with the right decision as we move forward. I think that rushing to rash decisions is what certainly has not been helpful for us, and I don't think it's been helpful for their party either. We're going to move forward in a thoughtful way.

Waste-water Treatment in Taber

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, municipalities all across Alberta face no shortage of worries. Taber, in my constituency, is indeed one of those communities. They're facing major industrial sewage lagoon problems. Most of the infrastructure of the lagoon is on its last legs. If it fails, it puts the community at risk, and the town could be fined by Environment. Taber can't carry the cost of upgrades alone, so now they are stuck between a rock and a hard place. Will this government commit to working with Taber for a reasonable solution?

The Speaker: The Minister of Infrastructure.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. Taber has made a couple of applications under our water/waste-water program. One of them is under consideration for the municipal section. Those decisions will be made shortly, and they should be hearing some time this spring. With respect to the other one he's referring to, it's an industrial type

of situation, which is not covered by the current program and cannot be funded.

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, I guess that's why they call it stuck between a rock and a hard place. We're in a situation here where they need to have this infrastructure fixed, or else it will cause problems, with them being charged by Environment. So what do they do about this? They don't have the money to be able to pay for it. It's going to cost them \$6 million to do it. All that they are asking, all the Taber mayor is asking, is to have them talk to him. This is what we're asking for. This is what the mayor is asking for. I'll ask again: will you meet with the mayor to discuss this issue?

Mr. Mason: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, I am excited to hear that answer. I would like to know: exactly when will the minister meet with the mayor?

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, next week I'm taking the opportunity to travel to southern Alberta to discuss with the mayors a number of issues, including our consultation around transit, rural bus service as well as to hear their concerns about the development of highway 3 through the region and important economic matters. If the mayor of Taber is there, I will certainly take the time to chat with him. Otherwise, we'll schedule it as soon as possible.

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

Agricultural and Forest Product Exports

Dr. Starke: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. In recent months we've seen the United States Senate repeal the mandatory country of origin labelling legislation, that was having a multibillion-dollar impact on Alberta and Canadian farmers. However, we have yet to see any progress made on the signing of a new softwood lumber agreement, and we've heard little to nothing from Alberta's representative in Washington or this government about how they're helping Alberta's forestry producers. So while this government continues to give lip service to the diversification of our agriculture and forestry sectors, can the minister explain specifically how they have advocated for increased market access for our forest industry?

The Speaker: The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Mr. Bilous: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll thank the member for the very timely question, and 35 seconds is not going to be enough to respond to him. The softwood lumber agreement, as the member knows, ran out last October. There have been numerous conversations going on between my ministry, the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, our counterparts across the province, and also with our counterparts in Ottawa. We recognize that we want a resolution that is going to be in the best interests of Alberta producers. We have spoken with and worked and are working with our forestry sector very closely to put forward a position that will benefit our producers moving forward.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. member. First supplemental.

Dr. Starke: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the answer. Given that the agriculture minister is busy hosting Bill 6 technical meetings in major cities during calving season and given that the only support to farmers that we've seen so far is a solar microgeneration project, which actually the previous government established, specifically what initiatives has this government launched over the last 10 months that will increase the value of

agricultural and agrifood products in Alberta and once again make this province a destination of agrifood investment?

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Bilous: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for the question. We recognize that agriculture is a very, very important business to Alberta. This is part of the reason – and the member will have to wait as we unroll our budget – that we are continuing to work with our agricultural producers not just in primary production but in secondary agriculture as well. There are real opportunities to expand on our value-added opportunities as well as looking at opportunities to expand our exports. As the members may know, I will be heading to Asia, and that is one of the things that I will be talking to our friends there . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Dr. Starke: Well, Mr. Speaker, perhaps when the minister is in Asia, he won't have to answer questions for other ministers on the front bench.

Given that global food demand is expected to double over the next 35 years, what specific supports to the agrifood sector has this government and, specifically, this minister provided that will look to increase the value of local products and allow Alberta and Canada to increase their export capacity and quantity?

The Speaker: The minister of agriculture.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Agriculture and forestry remain two of our most exciting industries in the province. While we see other industries taking a hit because of the price of oil and gas, I'm very optimistic that we can extend and broaden our markets world-wide, including here at home, with the value-added that we can do. There are some very exciting projects, and I'm very hopeful that we'll be able to announce them. The member over there and everyone else will have to wait until the budget.

Thank you.

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

Public Transit

Mr. Kleinsteuber: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My constituents have told me how important public transit is to the future of our community and the province. Increasing availability and access to public transit not only has massive benefits to the environment, but increasing public transit also has been shown to have a massive economic benefit as well. Construction of the green line in Calgary, for example, is a project that will create thousands of new jobs. To the Minister of Transportation: what are you doing to support public transit in Alberta and making sure that shovels get in the ground as soon as possible?

The Speaker: The Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Mason: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. Our government remains committed to expanding affordable, accessible transportation across the province. On February 25 I announced the third call for GreenTRIP funding applications, making \$415 million available to support sustainable, affordable, and environmentally sustainable projects. The GreenTRIP capital spending will create much-needed jobs, employing construction workers to build transit projects and transit operators and maintenance operators to keep it running.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
First supplemental.

Mr. Kleinsteuber: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that increased transportation options are not only important to the constituents of Calgary-Northern Hills but it is something that will greatly benefit all communities in Alberta, to the same minister: what are you doing to increase the availability of public transit in our rural communities?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much to the member for the question. Unlike the opposition, we like to remain green year-round, not just on St. Patrick's Day. Now, we're providing \$285 million in GreenTRIP funding for municipalities outside the Edmonton and Calgary regions. From hearing from municipalities, we've extended the deadline for those applications to August because some of them wanted more time. We're engaging with the public and the municipalities on public transportation to hear what they think the criteria should be for grant programs going forward. Improved rural bus service will provide Albertans living in smaller communities with reliable access to essential services like health care in larger centres.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Kleinsteuber: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the changing needs of transit throughout our province, be it to reduce congestion in major cities or to provide adequate public transportation in rural areas, again to the same minister: what is the government doing to engage with our municipalities and Albertans to ensure that future investments meet these needs?

2:40

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much for the question, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we're doing a great deal to consult with communities. We're consulting on the criteria to be used for future grant programs related to municipal transportation. We're consulting with them in terms of other programs as well. We want to talk to municipal leaders across the province about what these programs should look like, what can help those communities, what the criteria should be, what sort of programs or projects we should be supporting. We're consulting like crazy.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

The Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Premier's Calgary Office Employee Expenses

Mr. Nixon: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. The previous government did lots of things wrong, but one of the things they did right was to create an online database of government expenses. Now, they might have been working on the theory of hiding things in big piles in plain sight. However, we went looking into those big piles, and from that database we learned that Marcella Munro, the Premier's point person in Calgary, submitted 14 sets of expense claims in June and July of last year. The only problem is that it seems she only became an employee in August. How can someone who isn't an employee submit and get paid for employee expenses?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much for the question, Mr. Speaker. I'll certainly be happy to look into the matter and get back to the House and make sure that any expenses that were incurred were appropriate. If they weren't, we'll make sure that they're paid back.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that government policy makes it absolutely mandatory that employees have to submit receipts for travel, accommodation, and ground transportation in order to get paid, why is it that the Premier's point person in Calgary got her expenses paid when she wasn't an employee and didn't have to submit receipts?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, I've committed that I'll look into the matter. I need to make sure that we know whether or not we're talking about an employee or a contractor and what was involved. I'll certainly look into that. I'll look into the terms of either an employment agreement or a contract and will be happy to follow up with the member opposite.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, there are so many questions on this file that I could go on at length, but here is just another one that is curious to me. Given that the publicly posted contract for Ms Munro, the Premier's point person in Calgary, makes it clear that she started on the government payroll on August 10, why is it that her expenses and her online postings make it clear that she didn't actually start work until August 17? Did she get paid for a week that she didn't work?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, as is often the case with transitions or when individuals are being hired, sometimes they start on contract, sometimes they start as employees, and sometimes I think there's a combination. As I said previously, I'll be happy to look into the details of whether or not it was a contract or an employment agreement at that date and time and continue to follow up with the hon. member directly after we have a chance to look into the matter.

The Speaker: Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

National Bee Diagnostic Centre

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Grande Prairie Regional College National Bee Diagnostic Centre is an unqualified success. Since 2013 the number of diagnostic services provided has risen from 1,800 to 20,000 annually. This work provides beekeepers and researchers essential information about the health of honeybee populations and their contributing to the global food security as well as excellent research opportunities for students in northwest Alberta. To the minister of agriculture: how will Alberta Agriculture continue to support this important work?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Last October I had the opportunity to visit the National Bee Diagnostic Centre. It's important to know that that is the only bee diagnostic centre in Canada. Actually, before that, all samples had to go to the United States for testing. So it's important that it's here in Alberta. It's important to this government. It's important to me personally. I have many friends in the honeybee industry. It's important to keep supporting it as we can. Even though the price of honey has taken a drop in the past few years, it still remains a very important industry in Alberta.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the National Bee Diagnostic Centre has the support of the national advisory committee to deliver diagnostic services and given that the National Bee Diagnostic Centre has also demonstrated that national level research can and is being done in rural Alberta, to the minister: what specific plans does the government have to invest in rural Alberta to continue to grow and build these opportunities for rural Albertans?

The Speaker: The minister of agriculture.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and for the member's follow-up question. Another important thing to note is that Alberta remains one of the top 10 honey producers in the world. Even though the price of honey has taken a drop like oil and gas – as a matter of fact, it dropped about 35 per cent – we've still had a very robust industry. We should continue to support that world-wide. It's important. As people, you know, often view honey as a healthier version of sugar, it's an important commodity and is important not only for honey, obviously, but also for the pollination of crops.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that diversifying the economy is important to all Albertans and given that Alberta produces 44 per cent of Canadian honey and the Peace Country region in northwestern Alberta leads the province in honey production and given that the centre is an important piece of rural economic development attracting Canadian researchers to Alberta, to the minister: will investments in the diversification of the economy be made to support GPRC as well as our Alberta and Canadian honey producers?

The Speaker: The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Mr. Bilous: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, I'm quite excited about when the Finance minister rolls out the budget. There are a number of initiatives that my ministry is working on directly with the Minister of Energy, the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, the minister of environment, and the Minister of Culture and Tourism, looking at a number of initiatives that we're going to be working on with all regions of the province and working with existing regional economic development agencies. As well, we will be working with municipalities throughout the province. I ask the member to wait until the budget has been dropped by the Finance minister, and we'll see that we are working throughout the province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Online Registry Services

Mr. Nielsen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've been hearing from my constituents about the recently announced decision that we will be phasing out paper reminders for registration, licence, and identification card renewals. To the Minister of Service Alberta: what was the reason behind this decision being made now?

The Speaker: The minister.

Ms McLean: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. You know, it's evident to this House that Alberta is facing tough economic times. As such, this government is looking for efficiencies in our own house just as any Albertan is in theirs. This

is an initiative that will save Albertans \$3 million annually. It also helps us move into the 21st century as we'll be putting these renewal reminders online. This is just a smart way to save money for Albertans and also to move us into the future.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Nielsen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that I've heard from some constituents, particularly seniors who do not have access to a computer at home and are concerned about no longer receiving their paper notice and potentially missing their renewal, again to the same minister: what supports are available to ensure that people can renew on time?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McLean: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is absolutely important to our government to ensure that folks are renewing on time. It's important to Albertans as well that they're renewing on time. As such, seniors in particular will be receiving an extra renewal notice by paper that will let them know that they can contact their registry agents and let them know about this going online. So they will be notified, but additionally registry agents will be able to assist them with the reminder, and they can always check the back of their licence plates. As well, we're going to be ensuring that they continue to renew every . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
Second supplemental.

Mr. Nielsen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that many Albertans will be wanting greater access to online registry services as a whole, again to the same minister: what steps are you taking to make registry services more available to all Albertans?

Ms McLean: Thank you to the member for the question. I'm actually very excited about this initiative going under way with Service Alberta. We're looking at additional efficiencies and ways to ensure that Albertans are able to receive services from registries at their fingertips online into the future.

Thank you.

2:50 Members' Statements

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

Edward John Polanski

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour and indeed a great privilege to rise today to speak about some of the many accomplishments of the late Edward John Polanski, Alberta's communications pioneer. Mr. Polanski died earlier, in October 2015. Many of his family members are sitting in your gallery to help commemorate his achievements today.

Known as Ed to his family and friends, he is remembered as an exemplary entrepreneur who connected Alberta's communities through cable television. He was attracted to the world of electronics and telecommunications from a very young age, when he repaired radios at the rear of his father's hardware store after school in Thorhild. He was attracted to that world of electronics and telecommunications because of strong curiosity, and after graduating from Thorhild high school, he went to study electronic communications at Ryerson, in Toronto.

His mission in life was to bring private television viewing into every Albertan home. In the early 1950s he set up the first-ever cable television system in Thorhild. In the early 1960s advanced systems followed in Athabasca and St. Paul. During his time TV transmission was being broadcast simply to the borders of Edmonton and not beyond.

In 1970 Mr. Polanski incorporated Quality Cable Television, otherwise known as QCTV, which was licensed to provide half of the city of Edmonton with international television viewing. He campaigned to broadcast daily sittings of the Alberta Legislature and encouraged other provincial cable systems to do the same. Mr. Polanski is responsible for originating television broadcasting of proceedings of this Alberta Legislative Assembly and the House of Commons that we now watch today.

Like Ed I also am from Thorhild originally, and I'm proud to say that I had an opportunity to work as an intern at QCTV in the early 1980s as a master control operator. Mr. Polanski was a great mentor. He would walk through the television station and offices to inquire as to how things were going. He was always engaging, and he really deserves the accolades of this House and all Albertans for his accomplishments.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Government and Official Opposition Policies

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. No one wants to hear "I told you so," but sometimes there's just no better way to make the point. Time after time Wildrose has put good ideas on the table, and time after time this NDP government has ignored them out of spite, spite for our party and spite for our province.

We told them to make realistic oil projections. They didn't listen. Now we're facing a \$10 billion budget deficit. We told them to rein in spending or face a credit downgrade, that will cost Alberta taxpayers. They didn't listen. Now we've already seen one major credit downgrade and several major warnings. No doubt more downgrades are on the way. We asked them to hit the brakes on their royalty review or risk losing investment. They didn't listen. We've now lost billions of dollars in investment to our neighbours with stable royalty regimes east and west.

We recommended they support every possible pipeline project to get our oil to tidewater. They didn't listen. Instead, they put all their eggs in one basket and sat quietly on a fence while federal and provincial governments threw up roadblocks, that could cost us jobs and market access. We suggested that Bill 6 should start with consultation. They didn't listen. Instead, they made hasty amendments which didn't satisfy producers and forced farmers to protest on the steps of the Legislature month after month and even as recently as last week. We proposed a jobs action plan with good, solid ideas that all parties can get behind to kick-start the economy and get Albertans working again. Still nothing from the members opposite.

Albertans are worried. They're losing their jobs. Work is scarce. But if there is one message I could leave the government, it is this. When we in opposition come up with ideas and suggestions, it is out of a love for this province. So don't worry about the source; listen to the good ideas and work for Albertans. I don't want to say "I told you so" again.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

End-of-life Decision-making

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A recent Supreme Court ruling means that medical assistance in dying, often called assisted suicide, will be legal in Alberta this June. I agree with the ruling. Legally competent Albertans who suffer from grievous, irremediable illnesses should be able to choose when and how they die. Medical aid in dying should be legal, but it should also be rare.

Maintaining quality of life to the end of life is the goal of palliative care, a service provided by a dedicated few in our province and one that we should look to expand. Palliative care is about ensuring that patients and their families feel valued and cared for not only in their last days but in the weeks, months, and even years leading up to death.

Death is a part of life, something we will all experience, and when we do, we want to be treated with dignity and we want to be as comfortable as possible. We all want to maintain control of our medical care even when we cannot speak for ourselves. It's important to know that even where medical assistance in dying is available, choice in dying means allowing natural death to occur in comfort and on our own terms.

Communicating your choice is critical. It means telling your family and caregivers what quality of life means to you. I encourage all Albertans, starting with each and every member of this House, to have these conversations while you're still fit and healthy. This will help your family and your care providers know what your goals are when the time comes, whether that's aggressive medical intervention to prolong life or comfort care that allows natural death to occur.

These conversations can be challenging, so Alberta Health Services has developed a tool kit to help. By visiting conversationsmatter.ca, you can learn about advanced care planning, which helps you think about, talk about, and document wishes for health care in the event that you become incapable of communicating your wishes. You may never need your advanced care plan, but if you do, you'll be glad it's there and you'll be glad that you've had these conversations to make sure that your voice is heard.

Death is a natural part of life, and part of living a good life is having a good death. Palliative care and advanced care planning can ensure that you and your loved ones' choices are respected. Advanced care planning truly is a gift to your family.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

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

100% Skate Club

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On March 1 the city of Calgary opened two skateboard parks, including one at 64th Avenue and Centre Street NW, in Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill. The park is pretty popular. I've seen a lot of young men taking advantage of the park, and that made me stop and think: where are the women? I was fortunate to get connected with an organization called 100% Skate Club, a skateboarding club for girls and women that was established by Erica Jacobs, who was a semiprofessional snowboarder and competed nationally as a skateboarder. She started the club to encourage people to look at skateboarding differently and encourage girls to take it up.

The group started with a Facebook page just under a year ago and now has 45 members, girls and women from ages four to 53. Membership is free and promotes the idea that each member is a leader.

Skateboarding is relatively inexpensive as a sport, and it's available to virtually anyone. It promotes self-expression through healthy physical activity. Some of the projects that 100% Skate Club is spearheading right now are lessons for the Calgary Police Service as well as skateboarding lessons for women, which I'm seriously considering if I can find enough bubble wrap.

There is a vibrant skateboarding community in Calgary, including the Calgary Association of Skateboarding Enthusiasts, called CASE, who recently held a fundraiser to further their commitment to the growth of skateboarding in Calgary through consultation on future skateboard projects and providing opportunities to encourage skill development. Skateboarding is a thriving sport, and it's something that almost anyone can participate in.

I'm very happy to have 100% Skate Club and their commitment to encouraging girls and women to take up the sport and providing a community where we can feel safe and supported in trying it out. The club will be holding their season kickoff on March 30 at millennium skateboard park in Calgary at 6:30 p.m. I'd like to encourage all girls and women interested in skateboarding to come out.

Thank you, and Erin go bragh.

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two requests. First of all, I would request unanimous consent to waive Standing Order 7(7) to continue the daily Routine past 3 o'clock. Secondly, I would request unanimous consent to revert briefly to Introduction of Guests directly following the end of the Routine.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Speaker: The Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

3:00

Two Sergeants Brewing

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on St. Patrick's Day to talk about the wonder of craft beer. Budget 2015 saw the fulfillment of our government's commitment to small breweries who choose Alberta to brew their labours of love. Our government removed a barrier that previously capped production at 19,999 hectolitres because brewing any more, the tax per litre would more than double. This made it hard to grow. The new tax formula for breweries adjusted the per litre tax incrementally as production rises, making craft brewing more profitable at higher volume.

This brings me to a proud story that comes from Fort Saskatchewan, Alberta. In August 2014 Kevin Moore, a veteran of the Canadian military, and Keith Edwards, a veteran of the British Royal Airforce, sat in the garage and spoke of how they wished they had a real pub to go to. Four months later they brewed their first brew. With undivided support from their wives, Yolanda and Lynne, Two Sergeants Brewing opened last month, and they began brewing on their own premises last week.

It's not a place for dinner though they serve sausage on a bun and soft pretzels. It is a place to go with your friends and enjoy an Alberta craft brew. Whether it is the Bangalore Torpedo IPA, my favourite, ringing in at 7.4 per cent with citrus and pine bitterness; or their Passion'D Ale, a lightly hopped wheat ale with coriander and orange rind; or a brew with a cause, the Patrolman's ESB, an easy, classic bitter with hints of coffee and caramel, brewed in memory of fallen Edmonton Police Service Constable Daniel Woodall, with part of the proceeds going to the Woodall family fund.

I visit once a month with my Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville EDA with our big-tent policy. Their staff are not only world-class, but they treat us like long-lost friends. And we haven't been kicked out yet. Kevin lobbied me for an Alberta flag, that now proudly hangs in their establishment, and also hanging on the wall is a clock that is stopped at 5. I encourage all members of the House who enjoy a good adult beverage to visit Two Sergeants Brewing, where it is always 5 o'clock.

Salud, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Seven point four per cent.
Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

Government Policies

Mr. MacIntyre: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Nearly a year has passed since the provincial election, and Albertans are still struggling to understand exactly who or what this government is. They say that they're pro pipeline, pro energy, and pro Alberta. But the Member for Calgary-East used to call Alberta oil dirty oil, the environment minister wrote the foreword to a book called *An Action a Day Keeps Global Capitalism Away*, the Premier appointed a Soviet-era communist to serve as her deputy chief of staff, and the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie is a huge admirer of some of the worst leftist dictators.

This member recently said in the House: "I come from Latin America, where . . . we've had many experiments in democratic socialism." "I am and always will be a proud democratic socialist." So I ask: what exactly are these Latin American experiments in democratic socialism the member is proud of? Would they include the rule of Hugo Chávez, whose quasi-dictatorship rewrote the Venezuelan Constitution to allow him to stay on as President, whose policies drove Venezuela's economy into the ground and turned a once prosperous country into one that continually faces shortages of everything, especially freedom?

Did the Soviet-backed, communist Castro regime make that list, I wonder, a regime that repressed an entire nation, murdering and imprisoning dissidents, religious leaders, and minorities? You'll find the image of Che Guevara, Castro's most vicious lieutenant, on leftist T-shirts and even our Premier's watch.

We all know that members opposite need a lesson in economics, but apparently they need a lesson in history, too, unfortunately for this province. Wildrose is here to stand up for prosperity, freedom, and democracy, and we will proudly stand against this government's radical agenda each and every time it bubbles to the surface.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Can I remind each of you that you need to have respect for the entire House and be cautious about statements that might inflame the debate.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees

The Speaker: The Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The debate was just a little inflamed. I was very distracted.

As chair of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts I am pleased to table five copies of the committee's report on 2015 activities from January to March 2015, during the 28th Legislature.

I'm also pleased to table five copies of the committee's report on 2015 activities from June to December 2015, during the 29th Legislature.

These reports will be posted to external committee websites. Copies are also available through the committee offices.

Thank you.

Introduction of Bills

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

Bill 203

Fair Trading (Motor Vehicle Repair Pricing Protection for Consumers) Amendment Act, 2016

Mr. Carson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to request leave to introduce Bill 203, the Fair Trading (Motor Vehicle Repair Pricing Protection for Consumers) Amendment Act, 2016.

Mr. Speaker, in these difficult economic times our government is committed to protecting Albertans from undue and unanticipated costs. As vehicles remain an important aspect of Albertan lives, it is my commitment to ensure everyone is protected against unforeseen financial stress. Bill 203 will establish guidelines that increase transparency, accountability, and peace of mind for both consumers and business owners.

I look forward to discussions and deliberation with my colleagues in the House as well as the broader community. Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 203 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the hon. Minister of Finance and President of the Treasury Board I have three tablings today. The first one is the required number of copies of a document entitled Alberta Growth Mandate. This document explains the mandate that was referenced in Budget 2015; namely, that up to 3 per cent of the heritage fund be allocated for investment in growth-oriented, Alberta-based companies. As the document shows, the Alberta growth mandate does not contradict the heritage fund's legislative mandate. As this document makes clear, it will be professionals with expertise in business development and investment, not politicians, who will make these decisions in the best interests of Albertans.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, I'm also pleased to table on behalf of the hon. Minister of Finance the required number of copies of the Alberta heritage savings trust fund third-quarter report. This report shows clearly the outcomes and success that the Alberta growth mandate has already achieved. Notably, AIMCo is implementing the Alberta growth mandate, having recently made a substantial investment in TransAlta Renewables.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, also on behalf of the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, I wish to table the appropriate number of copies of the Automobile Insurance Rate Board's 2015 annual report for the year ended December 31, 2015. The report was prepared under the board's direction in accordance with section 601(1) of the Insurance Act and must be tabled in accordance with section 601(2) of the act.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table a statement released yesterday from TransAlta responding to our government making good on its commitment by announcing a coal facilitator. TransAlta stated:

The appointment of Terry Boston, a credible and collaborative industry leader, is a major step forward in the renewables transition and will help to remove uncertainty in both the electricity sector and Alberta's broader economy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite number of copies of Statistics Canada Table 051-0017, which I referenced earlier today in debate on Bill 3, interprovincial migrants to and from Alberta showing that Alberta's interprovincial migration has in fact dropped as of the fourth quarter 2015.

Thank you.

3:10

The Speaker: Hon. members, I rise today to table five copies of the page biographies for the Second Session of the 29th Legislature, spring 2016. I know I speak for all of the House when I say that we very much appreciate these young people's learning in support to this Assembly.

Statement by the Speaker

Mr. Speaker's MLA for a Day Program

The Speaker: Fellow Members of the Legislative Assembly, as you know, the Legislative Assembly is hosting Mr. Speaker's MLA for a Day program, which will be held on May 1 to 3, 2016, at the Alberta Legislature. There is only one week left to apply for the program. This is an opportunity for high school students from all corners of this province, all of your constituencies, to learn about what we do here. Please remind your high schools that this three-day program is fully supported by your Legislative Assembly Office, so there's no cost to the students whatsoever. Transportation and accommodation details will be arranged by the visitor services office. The application form is available on the Assembly website. I urge you to support the MLA for a Day program by promoting students' participation from your constituencies and also through your personal involvement in this program. Need I say that this is an opportunity where we can allow the youth of our province to have first-hand experience at the practice of democracy.

Introduction of Guests

(continued)

The Speaker: There are some guests that we missed before. I would first of all recognize the Member for Peace River.

Ms Jabbour: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today we have in the public gallery 58 visitors with the Alberta Girls' Parliament. These young ladies have enjoyed the day today. They've met with the Premier and various other ministers and with the Speaker and myself earlier. We also enjoyed during this morning's session, when we were doing a standing vote, their lovely singing outside. So thank you for entertaining us. They are with their teachers and group leaders: Shannen Hoffiman, Deanna Michaels, Heather Robertson, Veronica Hoffman, Kathleen Robertson, Amanda Omelusik, Tracey Rogers, Laurie Robertson, and Imogen Pohl. Can we have the young ladies rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Hon. minister, do you have some introductions you'd like to make?

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly some members of my family and friends who are here today to hear my maiden speech. They're seated in the members' gallery this afternoon. I'll ask them to rise as I say their names: my mom, Dorothy Sigurdson; my eldest son, Maxwell Sigurdson-Scott; Carl Schouten, my middle son; my father, Barney Sigurdson, who is 86 years young; and my youngest son, Wade, is sick today, unfortunately, so he couldn't be with us. He's 14. Also two friends are here: Erica Bullwinkle – Erica was my campaign manager, and she's here today – as well as Brent Kelly, who's my ministerial assistant. I ask everyone to give them the warm, traditional welcome of the Assembly.

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.

[Adjourned debate March 16: Ms Drever]

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Bow. I think, hon. member, you have two minutes left. Do you have any other comments you'd like to make?

Ms Drever: No.

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

Mr. Yao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with great honour that I rise today to give my maiden speech to this Assembly. It is truly an honour to sit in this 29th Legislative Assembly as the MLA for the constituency of Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo. Though these are not the first words that I have spoken in this House, I am proud to say that the first words I spoke were to address the issue of seniors' supports in my home riding.

I stand here today to speak of my constituency, my community, my home: Fort McMurray, a region also known as Wood Buffalo. This area is the second-largest municipality in Canada, at over 66,000 square kilometres. It is a land of hot, long summer days and cold wintry nights. During the hottest days the sun barely dips below the horizon, and energy abounds in all people. In winter it's a land where the aurora borealis lights up the sky with a shimmering and awe-inspiring beauty, where the light of the moon is reflected in the snow.

It's a land settled by people from across Canada, from across the world, people who truly have the pioneering spirit, that same drive that encourages people to explore, to leave their homes and their families with the hope of succeeding and ultimately creating a better life for themselves and for their families. It is this same pioneering spirit that created Canada, the greatest country in the world.

When I was young, my community was diverse. The people were Dene, Cree, and Métis. There were those who hailed from

Newfoundland, New Brunswick, Quebec, and British Columbia. There was even a family from Ireland and another one from England. Today there are people from places such as India and Pakistan, the Philippines, China, Peru, Brazil, Somalia, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Sweden and Norway, Russia and Poland. Over 300 families moved to Fort McMurray from Venezuela after its socialist dictator, Chávez, found them to be no longer useful. It is an international community with a diversity that would rival any metropolis.

It's a land of natural beauty. The flora and fauna are as diverse as in any rainforest: jack pine, lodgepole pine, tamarack, white spruce, black spruce, balsam fir, willow trees, aspen, balsam poplar, birch trees, saskatoon berries in abundance, and especially the Alberta wild rose, thriving in Wood Buffalo.

This land is also home to an amazing variety of wildlife. This is the wildlife that was the original export of this region. Furs from these animals were the basis of trade. Today these animals flourish in this amazing habitat. Wood bison, moose, and caribou traverse this land. Wolves, coyotes, and black bears with muskrat, lynx, weasels, and red squirrels dot this region. Ducks, geese, whooping cranes, and swans nest in these wetlands. Bald eagles, hawks, and ravens fly overhead. Bats, nighthawks, and owls flutter through the wooded canopies of these forests. Grouse wander through the brush. It truly is an amazing ecosystem.

This land is the epitome of the Great White North. It has the world's largest dark-sky reserve and has the world's largest beaver dam. This area was first mapped by western peoples in 1778. In 1790 Alexander Mackenzie described the oil sands for the first time. By 1870 free enterprise thrived, with the Hudson's Bay and North West companies competing in this region. This region has a valued resource, a product upon which mankind so heavily relies, petroleum. The indigenous peoples of this area used this product to patch their canoes. This valuable resource has always been a controversial product. As it is expensive to wash sand of oil, so it is capital intensive. It is a product that Albertans have always known to be of great value, provided that oil was sold at a certain price point in the global market.

Dr. Karl Clark, a chemist and oil sands researcher, is best known for creating a process that separated the crude from the sand. It's interesting to note that his vision was that after an area had been mined, it would be reclaimed and used for farmland. Alas, this aspect is not prominent in the north. You would think that this new government, who desires to promote local food production, would recognize this interesting aspect of the developments.

Despite a footprint that is minuscule in relation to the region, with a vast expanse of boreal forest surrounding these plots of land that are being mined for this valuable resource, it is ridiculed and accused. It is made to be an environmentally unfriendly product, to be unethical oil, yet the hypocrisy around this abounds. Our energy sector has been a world leader in developing cutting-edge environmental technologies. We are proud of our history, proud of our industry, and proud of our stewardship of the land we love.

With their activist rhetoric, antipipeline scorn, the NDP has labelled Alberta's goods as not environmentally friendly, and sadly our Premier is leading the charge on this, labelling our province as Canada's embarrassing cousin. Instead of standing up for our beloved Alberta, this government continues to sympathize with regions that import unethical oil. By undermining our energy sector, this NDP government is damaging our competitive advantage.

Petrochemical developments in California or the Gulf of Mexico escape this criticism. Countries such as Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Algeria, and Angola, with their questionable policies regarding freedom and equality, let alone environmental policies, elude this scrutiny. It is

sad to see that there are Canadians that would prefer to support these regimes while discouraging developments that would create jobs and revenue for this country.

3:20

I entered this world of politics because I wanted to effect positive change. The old PC government ignored this region but greatly valued the money that it acquired for the products and the jobs that this region produced. That PC government had a culture of entitlement, questionable ethics, and cronyism, an incompetent government that refused to twin a highway despite the federal friends that my good friend from Fort McMurray-Conklin secured when he was in the federal government, a government that ignored the needs of this community to grow despite being landlocked by Crown land, only to sit back and watch as the real estate values rocketed and reacted to the basic economics of supply and demand, a government that tried to move a seniors' facility because the land where it was to be built was far too valuable.

It was a government that I encountered in my previous life with the fire department in 2006 at an accident along that treacherous highway that would take so many lives. Despite the attempts by two of their own esteemed members to draw attention to this highway, despite them encountering an accident where we were rescuing a person, no action was taken by that government. Their incompetence continued until 2015, when the people finally stood up and said: no more. Today I see a party who's lost its voice, whose only desire is to jockey for Senate seats in the federal Liberal government.

The people of Alberta have spoken but did not know this newly invigorated Wildrose. They were so disillusioned by the old government that they blindly supported a socialist party. This new government is made up of people who until recently picketed and marched and said: "No more tar sands. No pipelines. No more development in the north." This is a government made up of idealists with a naiveté unbecoming of a governing party, an attitude and position that they quickly learned was not in line with Albertans. The little support that they have shown is countered by them supporting groups in other provinces who continue to fight our ability to get our product to the world. They point to the birds that died due to the oil sands development but ignore the birds killed by wind turbines. It is a hypocrisy that is difficult to comprehend.

Let the people of my home know that they have a voice in our Legislature and that my good friends and I of the Wildrose will continue to fight for all Albertans. As the MLA for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo I will continue to respect our citizens, community organizations, and industry. I will support this government when they operate on common-sense values to the benefit of our region as well as all Albertans. I will advocate for jobs, health care, our seniors, and the economy. I will bring value-added ideas and engage with residents to also bring theirs. I will support and promote the Alberta advantage. I will represent.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Are there any questions under 29(2)(a)?

Hearing none, I would recognize the hon. Minister of Seniors and Housing.

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for this opportunity to tell you about the wonderful constituency I represent and also to share the story of what led me to this new job I have as Member of the Legislative Assembly for Edmonton-Riverview. I am honoured that the citizens of Edmonton-Riverview chose me as their representative. My deep-felt gratitude goes out to them. The 2015 provincial

election was not my first time running. I also ran in 2012. Although I was not successful, we did make significant gains and laid the foundation for our later success.

As each MLA will attest to, my riding is the best. Edmonton-Riverview straddles the North Saskatchewan River and reaches from Whitemud Drive in the south to Stony Plain Road in the north and from 109th Street in the east all the way over to 170th Street in the west. The magnificent river valley parks provide a welcome connection to nature for all. Just a few of the parks that line the river valley include Sir Wilfrid Laurier, Hawrelak, Emily Murphy, and Whitemud. These parks provide an opportunity for city dwellers to find calm and peace amongst the trees and grass or snow, depending on the season. Right in the heart of Edmonton, this natural beauty is preserved.

Besides a network of trails for hikers, cyclists, skiers, snowshoers, and other person-powered transportation, Edmonton-Riverview is made up of walkable mature neighbourhoods. It is home to more than 40,000 Albertans living in active communities, including Windsor Park, McKernan, Parkallen, Lendrum, Malmo, Lansdowne, Grandview, Belgravia, Crestwood, Parkview, Laurier, Lynnwood, Jasper Park, West Jasper Place, Meadowlark, and Elmwood.

The community league system we have in Edmonton supports many activities, and the dedication of volunteers in Edmonton-Riverview provides opportunities to connect with neighbours, advocate for community initiatives, and develop our community together.

The communities of Edmonton-Riverview are also bustling with small businesses. The famous Bon Ton Bakery, Valleyview IGA, the Parkallen and Piccolino restaurants are just a few of the long-serving establishments. People from all over Edmonton come to enjoy their goods and services.

If this wasn't enough, the University of Alberta is also situated in Edmonton-Riverview. This world-class institution provides education to over 30,000 undergraduate students, nearly 10,000 graduate students, and employs thousands of academic and nonacademic staff. The University of Alberta farm is also on the east side of the riding. Not many urban representatives can say that they have a farm in their riding.

A good number of significant institutions are connected to the University of Alberta, including the University of Alberta hospital, the Mazankowski Heart Institute, the National Institute for Nanotechnology, the Stollery children's hospital, the Cross Cancer Institute, and the Canadian Blood Services clinic.

Another unique organization in my riding is the Whitemud Equine Learning Centre, where you can ride horses in the heart of Edmonton.

Now that I've told you a bit about my riding, I'd like to tell you a bit about myself. I was born in Winnipeg, Manitoba, which is where a lot of Icelanders with the name Sigurdson come from. My dad was Icelandic, but since he married an English gal from Holden, Alberta, they were always planning to move to Alberta. My mom was a teacher, and my dad had his journeyman sheet metal ticket. They figured that wherever mom could find a teaching job and there was no sheet metal shop so dad could set up shop with no competition, we would live. This turned out to be Valleyview, a small town in the Peace River country. A short aside, the riding I represent has an area known as Valleyview, and what a fun coincidence.

The Valleyview I moved to when I was seven years old was markedly different than the one in Edmonton-Riverview. It was an oil town surrounded by farms and, to the west, the Sturgeon Lake Indian band reserve. My mother taught elementary at St. Stephen's Catholic school, and my father started a small business, Valleyview

Sheet Metal. Together my parents worked hard to provide for their three children.

Although my mother began teaching as soon as we moved into town, she did not have her teaching degree. She'd only completed the first year. But my mom was determined to complete her bachelor of education, and she took evening and weekend courses in Valleyview and Grande Prairie. After several years of burning the candle at both ends, she finally finished her degree. My mom did everything. She was a student. She was a worker. She was a mother.

My father started a business from nothing. This took guts and creativity. When I look back on this, I see my parents' tremendous courage as they built a new life together in an unknown community. Needless to say, they are both inspirations to me when I have experienced challenges in my own life. Their example helps me find my way through.

Besides being courageous, industrious, and perhaps a bit unconventional, my parents are also champions for fairness and justice. It was in their home that I began to understand inequality and the responsibility of governments to support all citizens. In Valleyview I witnessed the discrimination indigenous people experienced. When I was in grade 6, my best friend lived at Sturgeon Lake. When grade 7 began, I looked for her at Hillside high school. She never came. I never saw her again. I always wondered what happened to her.

My parents were stalwart New Democrats, which was extraordinary in my hometown. All my friends thought we were weird because we were NDP. Having different political views wasn't always bad, though, because sometimes when I came home from school, Grant Notley would be sitting at my parents' kitchen table. Despite my family being different from others in town, I was confident in our values. Then as now our values of inclusion and equality hold true for us.

3:30

I moved to Edmonton immediately after finishing grade 12. I studied political science at the University of Alberta, and I wasn't sure what I wanted to do, but my education confirmed what my parents had taught me, that I was a social democrat. With my bachelor of arts completed, I needed to find work, and I was hired as a STEP student for the MLA for Edmonton-Norwood, Ray Martin. That experience, now more than 30 years ago, deepened my passion for politics. My connection with Ray and his wife, Cheryl, opened up a new world for me. Their support and guidance helped me get to where I am today. Thank you to Ray and Cheryl.

Throughout my 20s I looked for that career job that felt right for me. I struggled to find my feet, but looking back, I could see that there was a pattern. No matter what job I had, I was always drawn towards helping people. In my late 20s I decided I needed to go back to school again to become a social worker. This was challenging for me as I was also a single mom. Regardless, I was determined to do it. I went on to complete my bachelor and master of social work degrees at the University of Calgary. From then on I knew what my purpose was. I never questioned if I had made the right choice in going back to school and taking on a significant amount of debt to become a social worker. I knew I had made the right choice.

Being a social worker is truly a calling for me. In my 25-year career I have worked in many fields of practice. Whether it's supporting families involved in the child welfare system, treating children with mental health issues, serving those challenged by family violence, developing community initiatives, or teaching students enrolled at faculties of social work, it's all been a tremendous privilege. But through all of this I couldn't help but feel

that there was a piece missing. My social work career occurred during a time of retrenchment in social services. Every year we learned of new program cuts. Every year it was more and more difficult to serve vulnerable Albertans. Every year we had to figure out how to creatively serve our clients with less.

Social workers are taught to look at situations through a person-in-environment lens. Our work supports individuals to make healthy choices for themselves and their families, but we also look at the environment in which they live, the society. As we examine the society in which we conduct our work, we often need to ask questions such as: does everyone have the opportunity to be included socially and economically? What if an individual has a physical disability or a learning disability? Are there supports for people experiencing family violence? Are there programs to remove and minimize barriers to those with mental health issues? As I went about my work, increasingly I saw that vulnerable Albertans were being left behind by government decisions. I knew this had to stop, and I wanted to help make change, so I became even more involved in politics.

When I decided to run as a candidate in the 2012 provincial election, I must admit that it was a challenging decision for me, even with my frustration regarding the lack of progressive policies. This was due in large part to my personal circumstances. For 10 years I had been married and had two more children. Sadly, however, my marriage ended in divorce. I was again a single mom, but this time a single mother of three sons. It seemed ridiculous to think that I could run since I was already maxed out with a full-time job, teaching part-time at the university, and being a mother to three boys.

But our Premier, who back then was just MLA Rachel Notley, didn't seem to care that I was too busy to take on running in an election. Despite my firm no, she kept at it. She deconstructed all of my arguments against running, like the excellent lawyer that she is. She also looked at the situation through a gender lens, which for me was the most powerful. Needless to say, she didn't take no for an answer, and certainly her successful lobbying is a big part of the reason why I'm standing here today. Thank you, Premier.

Another amazing woman who greatly influenced my success is Erica Bullwinkle. Erica was my campaign manager in both the 2012 and 2015 elections. Erica has dedicated her life to ensuring that progressive women are elected to represent constituents. Her credentials are stellar. Back in 2008 Erica helped to get the campaign office of our now Premier up and running. In addition, Erica was the campaign manager for Edmonton Strathcona Member of Parliament Linda Duncan. When she was elected as an MP for the first time, it was an extraordinary accomplishment. MP Duncan has been the sole Alberta representative from any party other than the Conservatives for three consecutive federal elections. I know that this is in large part due to Erica's tremendous political acumen, dedication, and, most importantly, unreasonable hopefulness in the face of what others would say were insurmountable odds. Therefore, when Erica agreed to be my campaign manager, I knew she was the right woman for the job. Thank you, Erica.

I'd like to acknowledge another member of my family who could not be here today, my sister Karen Sigurdson. Now retired, Karen was a dedicated Alberta public servant for 30 years. She began in the role of communications but was eventually promoted to the executive director level. Karen's communication expertise was generously shared with me during both of my campaigns, but even more importantly, she was and is always someone I can rely on to give me the straight goods. In the political world this is invaluable. Thank you, Karen.

Before I close, I want to acknowledge my sons, Maxwell, Carl, and Wade. Now, as all members of the Assembly know, our

families sacrifice so that we may do what needs to be done to get elected and to then serve the citizens of Alberta. Too many times to mention, my sons figured things out for themselves or got one of their brothers to help them.

I want to thank my eldest son, Maxwell, for supporting his little brothers, making supper for them, helping them with their homework, and being a loving listener to their stories. Maxwell is also a tremendous support to me. He inspired me to pursue my dreams. At an earlier time I struggled with my own self-worth, but being a mother to Maxwell reminded me that I was important. I was important because I was his mother. He reminded me of this every day, and even though the challenges at times were overwhelming, he and I together overcame them. Maxwell is currently studying at the University of Alberta in the Faculty of Education, just like his grandma.

My middle son, Carl, is also here today. As any parent knows, witnessing our children grow is remarkable. Carl from a young age had a calm disposition, which I must say is welcome to a mother of three boys. Athletic star, soccer and hockey player, and an honours student, as Maxwell did before him, Carl inspired me and supported me to accomplish my goal.

Wade is my youngest son – and he's sick today, so he couldn't be here – or, as I prefer to call him, my baby. At 14 years Wade has a generous heart and unwavering determination when he sets his mind to something. Wade is also an honours student, currently in grade 9. He's perhaps the least enamoured with my new job. Last fall, at a time when I was away from home more than I was there, he declared: I don't like your new job. Things have calmed somewhat since then, and I'm able to be home more often now. But as we know, things can change quickly. Wade reminds me of what is really important, our connections with one another.

Thank you, Maxwell, Carl, and Wade, for understanding and, indeed, supporting my work and accepting my big dream. I love you.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Are there any comments or questions under 29(2)(a) for the minister?

Hearing none, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It sure is an honour to rise today and speak in response to the Speech from the Throne. The throne speech is a wonderful tradition that helps the public understand what the government has planned for them in the upcoming session. As well, it communicates the government's vision for the future of our province; at least, it usually does.

Now, I would like to go through some of the items brought up during this throne speech and fact-check them against how this government has performed so far. As we learned earlier today, it's vital to understand what decisions have gotten us to where we are so that we can know which direction we are going. I'm going to begin with a subject that is of great importance to me, Mr. Speaker, a topic that affects the lives of all Albertans now and in the future, and that would be the state of our democracy. In the speech there was a brief mention of democratic renewal, and I'm glad to see that this is something that is on the government's radar. After 44 years of one-party rule there is a need to assess the state of our democracy and see if there's anything we can do to improve upon our system of representation. Making a more open, accountable, and transparent system of governance is attainable and is fundamental for a prosperous Alberta.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Now, in the throne speech it states: “[My] government is looking forward to the report of this Legislature’s all-party Special Committee on Ethics and Accountability.” I have to say, Madam Speaker, that I, too, am looking forward to seeing what this committee has to report, especially since this committee has only met five times since it was first struck last June. Not surprisingly, meeting for a couple of hours every couple of months has not yielded a great deal of results, and the committee is still working on the first of the three pieces of legislation that it has to review. So maybe I should correct myself. I am more curious than I am looking forward to what, if anything, this committee has to report.

3:40

On top of reporting, I am also curious as to when this government actually intends to publish its report. The public has been getting mixed messages on this as well, Madam Speaker. On February 2 the government announced that the committee would be reporting this upcoming June rather than in September, which was the original promised date during the committee’s first meeting. The minister of democratic renewal, who was the chair of the committee at the time, is on record as committing to that fact. Now we learn through the throne speech that the Ethics and Accountability Committee has reverted to the original reporting date. I hope that the first order of business for the minister responsible for democratic renewal is to correct this misinformation coming out government.

Madam Speaker, as a sitting member of the committee I can tell you that there is much work to be done. I am sincerely relieved to hear that we will now be reporting in September instead of June, but I still have skepticism. At the rate that the current committee is working, will there be any meaningful and thorough review of all three pieces of legislation? The provincial elections legislation, the Conflicts of Interest Act, and the public interest disclosure act are all laws that alter the very nature of our democracy. These are not to be taken lightly, and they are not to be glossed over, either.

We need to get this committee back to work, and I strongly encourage the minister to do so and to encourage the chair to bring it back to work, unlike the jobs plan that the government is doing, and to actually commit to producing some results and getting this committee back on track.

Thanks, Madam Speaker. With that said, I would like to now move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 4

An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Labour.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I’m honoured to rise and move Bill 4, An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services.

Currently in Alberta there are several pieces of legislation that govern public-sector workers. They include the Labour Relations Code and the Public Service Employee Relations Act. Both of these acts prohibit strikes by unionized employees as well as lockouts by employers. Last year, however, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that the right to strike is a fundamental right for unionized workers. A subsequent ruling by Alberta’s Court of Queen’s Bench made the same point. The courts declared that certain sections of the Labour

Relations Code and the Public Service Employee Relations Act are invalid because they prohibit strikes.

Madam Speaker, Bill 4 amends these pieces of legislation to reflect the courts’ rulings. Alberta’s labour laws have not changed significantly, some in over a decade, and must now be modernized to protect public-sector employees’ Charter rights. Last year our government conducted extensive consultations with Alberta’s public-sector employers and unions regarding an essential services approach. The public also participated in this process. The legislation presented here is fair to employees, employers, and all Albertans, ensuring access to essential services in the event of a work stoppage.

The health and safety of the public is our primary consideration, and, Madam Speaker, Albertans can be assured that critical public services will be maintained during any labour dispute. With this legislation collective bargaining will now take on an even greater role than it does. That is because there will be less use of compulsory arbitration to settle labour disputes, the process used when workers are not allowed to strike. Employers and unions will be required to negotiate in advance of any work stoppage to determine which areas of their work are considered essential services.

Madam Speaker, the proposed legislation will put greater responsibility into the hands of employers and unions to negotiate essential services agreements that will give employees the right to strike while ensuring the availability of essential services. Each situation will be slightly different, so it is critical that the parties work co-operatively to set up an agreement that meets the spirit of the law that allows workers the right to strike and protects the public by ensuring that essential services are not unduly disrupted. I want to be very clear, Madam Speaker, that some unionized public workers such as police and firefighters will not be allowed to strike because of their essential roles. Our aim is to update Alberta’s labour relations legislation in keeping with the direction of the courts while ensuring stability for critical public services.

This legislation is similar to the laws in other provinces and is intended to balance the interests of employers and employees while protecting public health and safety. Madam Speaker, I encourage all of my colleagues in the Legislature to support this bill.

Thank you very much.

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

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I want to preface my comments by saying that it is the position of the Official Opposition to implement reforms that ensure that those employed in essential services are treated fairly. We want to make sure that any determination as to what constitutes an essential service is done fairly as a great number of Albertans will be affected by this decision.

Also, as we stated many times before, it is our position that the best practice is to refer bills like this to committee, where expert witnesses can provide us with the pros and cons of passing this bill. Given the size of the bill and the technical nature I would recommend that committee is the place to send this bill.

With those caveats I will start. This decision not only pertains to government of Alberta employees but also impacts employees of Alberta’s health care system, including continuing care facilities amongst others. There are vital services that Albertans depend on, quite literally for their lives, that are affected by the essential services agreement in those areas.

Now, we do recognize that the government here is responding to a Supreme Court ruling from 2015 and that they are working on a timeline established by a consent order that occurred under the

previous government. The Official Opposition accepts this and that the legislation needs to be drafted, but we have concerns. We hope to hear from the minister about whether some of our concerns are indeed problems with the bill. If so, we hope that she and the rest of the MLAs in the House will work with us so that measured and thoughtful amendments will occur because I know that nobody here wants to get this bill wrong.

We are consulting with our constituents and subject experts in this field with regard to this legislation over the upcoming constituency week and look forward to discussing the details of the bill with all MLAs when we get back to the Assembly. As I said earlier, let's have this bill sent to committee for further scrutiny. Let's take the time to get it right.

First, I want to address an important point regarding the scope of this bill. The title of the bill, *An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services*, does speak to the impetus for why this legislation was needed, but this legislation overreaches the Supreme Court ruling. For instance, the legislation includes a prohibition on the use of temporary workers while those bargaining for a new agreement are on strike or lockout. That's not required anywhere in the Supreme Court decision. Madam Speaker, may the record show that we want to have that discussion. We want to have that debate and give due assessment to such a legislative change.

The Supreme Court ruling stemmed from two particular findings within legislation in Saskatchewan. First, the court took issue with an employer's ability to unilaterally decide what is an essential service. Second, they took issue with the absence of an adequate, impartial, alternate mechanism for bargaining. The impact of these two factors taken together and the assessment that striking is a Charter right led to the current legislative onus upon Alberta. In no way does it derive from this that a public-sector employer cannot hire temporary workers to compensate for lack of labour during a strike. To wedge such a restriction into *An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services* when that particular provision is not actually being required in the wake of the Supreme Court ruling is, quite simply, disingenuous.

3:50

We understand the convenience of being able to do a swath of labour changes in one go as opposed to multiple pieces of legislation, but there is a fundamental difference between what the Supreme Court decision requests and what the government here would like to implement. A fundamental difference, Madam Speaker. Again, we want to debate that particular labour provision, but we want to study it first. It's unfair to put it forward under the guise of a Supreme Court requirement where there is a tight timeline to review and implement legislation. Does such a restriction on the hiring of temporary workers diminish the government's bargaining position when there are ongoing negotiations? Again, these are taxpayer dollars being bargained, so we need to be particularly prudent.

What's more problematic is that this gives bargaining unions a monopoly on labour and workers, thereby constraining the government's hand in negotiations. The government's role in these negotiations should be to stand up for taxpayers and how their dollars are negotiated. This is an area for study, and frankly it does not even seem like it needs to be part of the essential services discussion here today. If the government actually believes this provision to be relevant to the Supreme Court decision, I invite them to table before us any assessments showing that. Otherwise, perhaps the minister can consider leaving this as something to be negotiated on a case-by-case basis rather than legislating it for everyone.

But let's get back to the heart of the bill: proposing a framework where we can allow public-sector strikes while preserving essential services. The Supreme Court recognized the right to strike in their ruling. Specifically they found it to be a fundamental right guaranteed under section 2 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The statistics across Canada show that when wage negotiations commence for a service that can't legally strike, it's a bargaining advantage.

A 2011 Fraser Institute study found that government employees in Alberta were already earning 10 per cent more than private-sector counterparts, that they also retired two years earlier on average and enjoyed better pensions, that 81.4 per cent of public-sector workers were covered by a registered pension compared to merely 21.5 per cent of private-sector workers, all in addition to better job security. As we have recently seen, they have enjoyed virtual immunity to downturns in the economy. Of course, Alberta had a prohibition on strikes and lockouts for workers in the public sector, so a lot of agreements may have compensated for that lost right.

We don't take issue with workers striking – that's their right – so long as there are safeguards in place so that Albertans can still access critical services regardless of whether or not there is an ongoing strike action. This legislation fundamentally changes a certain aspect of Alberta's labour relations regime. The bill does seem to want to limit service disruptions by trying to clearly establish what does and what does not constitute an essential service. We support this principle. But a scenario where some public-sector workers are deemed essential and stay on the job while perhaps many of the very people they work with are not deemed as essential and can thus engage in a strike or partial strike is a new experience for Alberta.

It is possible that the first essential services agreement missed some details. Perhaps we discover that a certain occupation at Alberta Health Services should have been classified as essential when the agreement was made but was not, and there are serious consequences in a strike situation. Let's face it; governments don't always get things right the first time. The mechanism described in the proposed legislation does not seem to allow for a quick fix should there be an emergency situation. Essentially, it requires the same process of the two sides to sit down and go through the negotiating process all over in order to amend the agreement.

I would remind those in attendance that ministers are responsible for the services their departments provide. That's also the case in a strike situation or emergency situation regardless of agreements in place. It is our hope that the government has assessed this scenario fully and can address the obvious concern. What if important essential services are not being adequately covered after the first week of a strike? What's the remedy? Can we be sure a minister can fulfill their duties to the public? Given how new this is, it is not unreasonable to consider a sunset provision of five years or so that forces a review of this legislation so that it can be improved if the experience shows that changes are warranted.

One of our major concerns pertains to the role of the commissioner as outlined in this legislation. There's an extraordinary amount of authority, where essential services agreements are concerned, all concentrated in the hands of one person.

As per section 95.3(2) of the proposed legislation the commissioner has the ability to determine whether . . .

- (d) an essential services agreement has been entered into, amended or terminated,
- (e) a person is bound by an essential services agreement,
- (f) a person is a party to an essential services agreement,
- (g) an essential services agreement is in effect, and
- (h) a service is an essential service

and the Commissioner's decision is final and binding.

“Final and binding,” Madam Speaker. The position is by government appointment. It would be profoundly problematic if this appointment were to go to someone who is not a fair-minded Albertan. Ideally, it should go to someone with a background of expertise on labour matters who does not have a history of being on one particular side or the other. With the recent appointment of a top AUPE negotiator, who will not be named, as the government’s chief labour negotiator, we are less than sure that the government will get this one right for all Albertans. An appointment could yield profound consequences for several years and lead to precedents and impacts that will last much longer.

There is a valid debate to be had over who should be making these decisions. Perhaps the Labour Relations Board more broadly, not reduced to a single commissioner; perhaps another body. The concern is whether there are enough checks and balances on the commissioner to properly serve all Albertans’ interests. To have this concentration of responsibilities in one individual on a matter as impactful as essential services is troubling, Madam Speaker. I say this, in particular, because this bill also gives the commissioner the power to sit alone and hear and decide a question and to have that decision be considered that of the Labour Relations Board. It’s difficult to convey how absolutely impartial a commissioner needs to be with these sorts of powers and how problematic it would be to have a partial commissioner.

The ability to amend an agreement consented to by both parties is no small role or responsibility. It is my hope that in the course of this debate this government can give a clear reason as to why they feel the need to empower this position so much. Perhaps the minister and the officials that crafted the legislation and advised her have valid case studies and examples for why a role with such a concentration of responsibilities is needed. It would be very helpful for us as lawmakers to have the minister table these studies.

Another item of concern is under section 95.41(1), specifying what should be contained in an essential services agreement. As worded, this bill allows for this section to be vastly expanded through regulations. In fact, subsection (g) specifically invites that scenario. Defining the required contents of an essential services agreement is perhaps one of the most important parts of this legislation. It’s important that both sides have a clear legislative scope for what should and should not be included. This leaves room for cabinet to usher in a series of changes to what is required of employers or bargaining units, for that matter, without undergoing the scrutiny that accompanies a proposed formal legislative change.

As outlined here, Madam Speaker, we have concerns with this legislation, serious concerns. These range from the overarching powers of the commissioner to significant details left to regulations. Also troubling is that this bill goes a little above and beyond what the Supreme Court asked. But considering how involved the government party is with labour groups, I will commend them on their overall restraint and reiterate that I am very open to supporting this bill, depending upon where the discussion and perhaps amendments go during debate.

We do recognize that the government needed to put this legislation forward in part because of the consent order made by the previous government, but the bill is barely 48 hours old, so we are consulting with subject matter experts to ensure that this bill as presented will not yield negative consequences to Alberta. Also, as I have earlier said, we will be discussing it with constituents over the upcoming constituency break. We hope we can work with the government on some measured and thoughtful amendments should they be determined necessary to ensure a fair process for all Albertans impacted by this important legislation.

Seeing as today is St. Patrick’s Day and I am of Irish descent, maybe we will get lucky and have this government consent to this bill being passed on to committee.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

4:00

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

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I’m pleased to make comments on second reading of Bill 4, which proposes to amend the Public Service Employee Relations Act and the Labour Relations Code to make them compliant with the recent Supreme Court decision upholding public-sector workers’ fundamental right to strike. The legislation guarantees public-sector workers the right to strike with the caveat that unions and employers must agree on a contingency plan in the event of a labour disruption.

As far as the outcome of this bill: unions and employers will be required to have an essential services agreement in place before proceeding to collective bargaining. Such pacts will determine which workers are needed to maintain vital services and therefore must stay on the job during a strike or lockout. In the case of nurses, for example, their agreement would likely detail how many employees are required to keep basic hospital services running.

The use of replacement workers will be banned for groups covered by an essential services agreement. In cases where the parties are struggling to reach an agreement, they can bring in umpires to adjudicate the dispute. These umpires will be required to settle quarrels about existing agreements and, in the case of health workers, for example, would be people familiar with hospital scheduling and issues related to safety.

It’s important to remember that Alberta is unique, apart from Prince Edward Island, the only two jurisdictions that do not have legislation to allow essential public workers to strike. Bill 4 covers about 150,000 unionized workers under 77 collective agreements, including most health workers, government employees, and nonacademic staff at postsecondary institutions.

Bill 4 is a sea change in Alberta, Madam Speaker, from the former PC administration, which tried to legislate away freedom of association, which is guaranteed by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and imposing, as it tried, wage settlements. On the whole the bill is a fair and balanced response, in our view, to rulings by the Court of Queen’s Bench and the Supreme Court which declared it unconstitutional for governments to impose a blanket ban on strikes.

Bill 4 effectively guarantees public-sector workers the right to strike while still ensuring access to public services in the event of a labour disruption. Perhaps the most striking thing about Bill 4 is that organized labour supports it, which is a far cry from the diametric opposition that PC bills 45 and 46 created in the last five years. This speaks, I think, volumes about what’s possible if we can get labour peace and fairness perceived on both sides.

Many on the political right will decry the so-called judicial activism in relation to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, yet this issue is a perfect example of how the courts can intercede when governments are running roughshod over fundamental rights. The reason people go out on wildcat strikes is precisely because they’re desperate. They cannot find any other way to communicate with their employer, in this case the government, to get a point across.

They absolutely must have that option. All of us will benefit. Bill 4 provides that with a reasonable caveat. Under bills 45 and 46 of the previous PC administration, it left workers no option and no bargaining opportunity. The ability to go on strike is really the only

card that workers hold as a tool to ensure some element of accountability and fairness.

Madam Speaker, pending a more detailed examination, I appreciate the leadership taken by the minister, and I look forward to hearing more of the elements of the debate that need to come out, the details around the commissioner and his or her role and how we may ensure that both sides, both the public and the union members, get a balanced approach, which is, I think, what the role of government is, to try and provide a balance of rights and freedoms on both sides to ensure that the public interest is being served long term.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)? Then I'll call on the hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

Mr. Westhead: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm honoured to rise today and speak in support of Bill 4, An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services. Currently in Alberta the relationship between public-sector workers and their employers is governed by several pieces of legislation. Before being elected last May, in my former role as a front-line registered nurse and elected workplace representative I watched the case of the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour make it through the Supreme Court with keen interest. I knew that the labour legislation in Alberta would be put to the test as a result of the court's ruling. These include the Labour Relations Code and the Public Service Employee Relations Act.

In their current form both of these acts prohibit strikes by unionized employees and lockouts by employers. Last year, however, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that the right to strike is a fundamental right for unionized workers. A subsequent ruling by Alberta's Court of Queen's Bench reached the same conclusion. The courts declared certain sections of the Labour Relations Code and the Public Service Employee Relations Act invalid because they prohibit strikes.

In their ruling the Supreme Court justices indicated that freedom of association granted by the Charter protects the right to autonomy and the dignity of vulnerable people. They went on to say, "This collective action [of a strike] at the moment of impasse is an affirmation of the dignity and autonomy of employees in their working lives." More specifically, Justice Abella said that the right to strike is essential in evening the playing field between workers and employers. Justice Abella noted that there had been a long-standing "fundamental power imbalance [between employers and employees] which the entire history of modern labour legislation has been scrupulously devoted to rectifying." Bill 4 works towards a more even playing field between workers and their employers.

The Supreme Court ruling came as a result of the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour's challenge of a 2008 law passed by the Saskatchewan government. That law limited the right to strike by workers deemed by the government to be in essential services such as jail guards. The law gave the Saskatchewan government the unilateral right to decide which workers were essential, and it denied them access to effective alternatives for resolving labour disputes, Justice Abella said.

In response to the Supreme Court ruling striking down Saskatchewan's unconstitutional law, University of British Columbia law professor Joel Bakan remarked that the view of the courts has changed as governments have become more hostile to unions. Mr. Bakan wrote:

Since the 1980s, organized labour has lost ground as a result of unsympathetic government policies and laws, not to mention economic changes, such as globalization. The court recognizes

that as workers' freedom of association is eroded by economic shifts and hostile governments, the judiciary becomes more essential for protecting this fundamental right. It's a classic case – like segregation in the U.S. South, or abortion or sexual orientation equality in Canada – where governments cannot be relied upon to respect constitutional rights and freedoms, so the courts step in.

Well, I can tell you, Madam Speaker, that unlike the previous government, this government can be relied on to respect workers' constitutional rights and freedoms. We are doing just that with Bill 4, and I say: it's about time. Bill 4 amends Alberta's labour legislation invalidated by Supreme Court rulings. Alberta's labour laws have not changed significantly for almost 30 years and must now be modernized to protect the Charter rights of public-sector employees. Modernizing our labour laws also works towards repairing the relationship the government has with its public-sector workers after the vicious attacks by the former PC government.

On the other hand, our government has achieved broad consensus with employees and employers alike. We conducted extensive consultations with Alberta's public-sector employees and labour groups. We are taking an approach towards essential services based on a negotiation and adjudication model. The public has also participated in the process. This legislation is fair to employees, employers, and all Albertans, ensuring access to essential services in the event of a work stoppage.

4:10

As always, the health and safety of our public is our primary consideration. Madam Speaker, Albertans can be assured that critical public services will be maintained during any labour disruptions. As a former front-line public-sector worker I know with certainty that when professionals like registered nurses and all other public-sector workers, for that matter, sit down to negotiate an essential services agreement with their employers, they will keep the safety of Albertans front of mind.

With this legislation, collective bargaining will be more meaningful and will take on an even greater role than it has before. The Minister of Labour mentioned this previously, but I believe it bears repeating. There will be less use of compulsory arbitration to settle labour disputes. Employers and unions will have the ability to negotiate in advance of any work stoppage to determine which areas of their work are considered essential services.

Under the model proposed by Bill 4, Madam Speaker, greater responsibility will be put into the hands of employers and unions to negotiate essential services agreements while ensuring the availability of essential services to protect the public. Each situation will be slightly different, and Bill 4 provides that flexibility. The parties will work co-operatively to set up an agreement that meets the spirit of the law, that allows workers the right to strike, and that protects the public by ensuring that essential services are not unduly disrupted.

I want to be very clear, Madam Speaker, that some unionized public-sector workers such as police and firefighters will not be allowed to strike at all because of their essential roles. Our aim is to update Alberta's labour relations legislation in keeping with the direction of the courts while ensuring stability of critical public services. This legislation is similar to laws in other provinces and is intended to balance the interests of employers and employees while protecting public health and safety.

Madam Speaker, I encourage all of my colleagues in the Legislature to support this bill. With that being said, I move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Well, I believe that we have had a wonderful, productive two weeks of session, where we heard from a great many of our MLAs on both sides of the House on matters of very significant importance and on matters that have a direct bearing on their experiences as new MLAs.

That being said, I believe that we've conducted as much business as we can for the time being, and I would move that we adjourn until 1:30 on April 4. Thank you.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 4:13 p.m. to Monday, April 4, at 1:30 p.m.]

Bill Status Report for the 29th Legislature - 2nd Session (2016)

Activity to March 17, 2016

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

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

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

- 1 Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act (Bilous)**
First Reading -- 5 (Mar. 8, 2016 aft., passed)
- 2 Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2016 (\$) (Ceci)**
First Reading -- 96 (Mar. 10, 2016 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 162-67 (Mar. 15, 2016 morn., passed on division)
Committee of the Whole -- 239-49 (Mar. 16, 2016 aft., passed)
Third Reading -- 251-59 (Mar. 17, 2016 morn., passed on division)
- 3 Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2016 (\$) (Ceci)**
First Reading -- 156 (Mar. 14, 2016 eve., passed)
Second Reading -- 201 (Mar. 15, 2016 aft., passed), 157-62 (Mar. 15, 2016 morn.)
Committee of the Whole -- 239-49 (Mar. 16, 2016 aft., passed)
Third Reading -- 259-66 (Mar. 17, 2016 morn., passed)
- 4 An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services (Gray)**
First Reading -- 180 (Mar. 15, 2016 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 285-88 (Mar. 17, 2016 aft., adjourned)
- 201 Election Recall Act (Smith)**
First Reading -- 92 (Mar. 10, 2016 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 119-132 (Mar. 14, 2016 aft., adjourned)
- 202 Alberta Affordable Housing Review Committee Act (Luff)**
First Reading -- 92 (Mar. 10, 2016 aft., passed)
- 203 Fair Trading (Motor Vehicle Repair Pricing Protection for Consumers) Amendment Act, 2016 (Carson)**
First Reading -- 280 (Mar. 17, 2016 aft., passed)

Table of Contents

Introduction of Guests	267, 281
Ministerial Statements	
Leilani O'Malley Muir	269
Oral Question Period	
Government Policies	270, 272
Oil Tanker Transportation on the West Coast	271
Coal-fired Electric Power Plant Retirement.....	271, 273
Emergency Medical Services	272
Athabasca University.....	273
Postsecondary Education and Employment Training	274
Dental Care Costs.....	274
Waste-water Treatment in Taber	275
Agricultural and Forest Product Exports	275
Public Transit	276
Premier's Calgary Office Employee Expenses.....	276
National Bee Diagnostic Centre	277
Online Registry Services	277
Members' Statements	
Edward John Polanski	278
Government and Official Opposition Policies	278
End-of-life Decision-making	279
100% Skate Club.....	279
Two Sergeants Brewing.....	279
Government Policies	280
Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees	280
Introduction of Bills	
Bill 203 Fair Trading (Motor Vehicle Repair Pricing Protection for Consumers) Amendment Act, 2016	280
Tabling Returns and Reports	280
Statement by the Speaker	
Mr. Speaker's MLA for a Day Program	281
Orders of the Day	281
Consideration of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor's Speech	281
Government Bills and Orders	
Second Reading	
Bill 4 An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services	285

Alberta Hansard is available online at www.assembly.ab.ca

For inquiries contact:

Managing Editor

Alberta Hansard

3rd Floor, 9820 – 107 St

EDMONTON, AB T5K 1E7

Telephone: 780.427.1875