



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Thursday afternoon, April 21, 2016

Day 19

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

**Party standings:**

New Democrat: 54      Wildrose: 22      Progressive Conservative: 9      Alberta Liberal: 1      Alberta Party: 1

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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

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**Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

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Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, April 21, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Good afternoon.

Let us reflect each in our own way. Today, hon. members, the Commonwealth is celebrating the 90th birthday of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. Let us recognize the Queen's dedication and service to our province and to our country and indeed to the Commonwealth. Her Majesty can be seen as a wise elder of the Commonwealth and an inspiration to all public servants, exemplifying the commitment to the greater good.

Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

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

**Dr. Starke:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly 32 students from my constituency – the jewel in the crown on this day of Queen Elizabeth's birthday – of east-central Alberta, and that is from St. Jerome's school in Vermilion. They are here with their leaders Mr. Ted Wheat, who was a former client of my clinic, as well as Brittany Partington and Jocelyn Fillier-Holmes. As an anecdotal note I will also point out to the Education and Infrastructure ministers that St. Jerome's school is one of the ones that is being renovated under the school build, and it's on time and on budget. I see that my guests have stood up, and I'd like all members of the Assembly to join in giving them the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Peace River.

**Ms Jabbour:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm really excited today to have a school group from my fabulous constituency of Peace River. They travelled by bus eight hours from La Crête to be here with us, and I'm excited to have them here. There is a group of about 40 students and parent helpers. They're from Ridgeview Central school. The teachers are Karie Becker and Jaclyn Cottrell, with parents helpers Twila Olson, Donna Reissner, Margie Driedger, Karen Wiebe, Eva Wiebe, Billy Martens, Steven Thiessen, and Ray Wiebe. I'd ask that they would all stand now and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

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

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my absolute pleasure to stand before you and introduce to you and through you from the very picturesque constituency of Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills students and parents from Ashmont elementary school with teachers Mrs. Jennine Poirier, Mrs. Carol Kam, Mrs. Sandy Podloski, and Mrs. Andrea Weinmeier. I'd like to congratulate the school on the announcement that they will be getting a new school, and we'll be watching that very closely to see if it comes in on budget and on time. So if they'd all please stand and accept the warm welcome of the House.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to introduce to you and through you four staff people from my constituency office in the fabulous, amazing, wonderful constituency of Edmonton-Strathcona. I have here my official constituency office manager, Rob Pearson, who's been working with the NDP caucus in one fashion or another since long before I was even elected – I'm seeing nine or eight years there, 10 years, a long time anyway – and we owe much to him. Along with him is Kayla Halliday, our placement student from Grant MacEwan; beside her is Jack Garnier, our constituency office comanager, whom I'm very pleased to have had start with us a few months ago; and then my constituency office caseworker, the fabulous Kirsten Goa. I'm hoping that all four of them can rise and that the Assembly can join me in welcoming them.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Infrastructure, Minister of Transportation, and Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly an old friend of mine. John Geiger was the *Edmonton Journal's* civic affairs columnist when I was first elected to Edmonton city council. He went on to editorial positions with the *National Post* and the *Globe and Mail*, and he is now the chief executive officer of the Royal Canadian Geographical Society. John is the bestselling author of *Franklin's Lost Ship: The Historic Discovery of H.M.S. Erebus* and six other books of nonfiction. John was a member of the University of Alberta team that discovered the Franklin ship. He is in Alberta bringing awareness to the project to transform the vacant building at 50 Sussex Drive into Canada's centre for geography and exploration. He's in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, and I would ask John now to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of our Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my sincere pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a very important group of agriculture stakeholders. The United Nations declared 2016 as the International Year of Pulses, which is why it's important that we highlight the work of the Alberta pulse growers. This group of growers are helping feed millions of people around the globe, people who rely on food packed with nutrients, grown in our province. As I say your names, please rise: Allison Ammeter, D'Arcy Hilgartner, Don Shepert, Leanne Fischbuch, Rachel Peterson, Nevin Rosaasen, Jenn Walker, and Jolene Watson. We also have representatives of a few value-added pulse manufacturers here with us today: Caryll and Norm Carruthers, owners of Mountain Meadows Food Processing, NoNuts Peabutter; Maureen Obrigewitch and son Davis from Souptacular; Vivian Johnson, retail account manager for Kinnikinnick Foods. Mr. Speaker, I would now ask my colleagues to give these pulse producers and processors the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

**Loyola:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all the members of this

Assembly a very good friend of mine, Giri Puligandla. He's the kind of friend who has your back when you need it most. Giri is the director of planning and research with Homeward Trust Edmonton. His areas of responsibility include service systems planning, stakeholder engagement, program design and evaluation, data management and analysis, and research. Prior to joining Homeward Trust in 2011, Giri held leadership and executive roles in several Edmonton-based nonprofit organizations, working in the areas of mental health, housing and homelessness, family caregiving, and community development. I'd ask him to rise now and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

1:40

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Seniors and Housing.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Alfred Nikolai and Oryssia Lennie from Habitat for Humanity Edmonton. Alfred Nikolai has been president and CEO since 2005, overseeing the growth of the Edmonton affiliate to be the largest in Canada. Oryssia Lennie has been with Habitat for Humanity Edmonton's board of directors since 2012 and is now serving as the chair of the board. I had the pleasure of joining Oryssia and Alfred at the sixth annual Habitat Day luncheon yesterday, celebrating Habitat for Humanity's work in the capital region and its partnership with the home builder community. This year marks the 25th anniversary of Habitat for Humanity Edmonton giving a hand up to hard-working families across northern Alberta. Thank you to the builder community, staff, and volunteers of Habitat for Humanity. Your generosity and dedication make a real difference in the lives of Albertans. I'd ask that Alfred Nikolai and Oryssia Lennie please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a special privilege for me today to introduce to you and through you to all members in the Assembly eight bright, political, dynamic, civic-minded, Liberal women, plus one husband. The group has for years regularly hosted the Liberal women's breakfasts. You can join them to discuss issues of the day just by contacting them. I'm pleased to welcome them on their first visit to the Legislature. If they would please rise when I introduce them: Irene Hunter; Liz Acheson; Rose Marie Tremblay; Joyce Assen; Dixie Mackintosh; Ruth Hunter; Sandi Hollas; Karen Sevcik, current president of the Alberta Liberal Party; and last but not least, John. Where are you, John? Let's give them a warm welcome.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure and indeed a great privilege to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly a strong supporter and advocate for Edmonton's vulnerable and homeless, Linda Dumont. Linda started *Edmonton Street News*, now *Alberta Street News*, in 2003 but has worked with street papers in Edmonton since 1993, when she began as a vendor and studied journalism as well. *Alberta Street News* provides a way for those unable to hold conventional jobs to make some money selling papers. Today Linda lives with her two

daughters and two grandchildren, volunteers with House of Refuge, and supports herself as a yoga instructor. She is a published poet and talented painter as well as an articulate antipoverty activist. I'd ask her to rise now and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

**Ms Babcock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to all members of this House Kurtis Ewanchuk. Kurtis is the head of the Aspen Centre for Integral Living, located in the Sturgeon watershed. He is an incredibly intelligent and passionate person, concerned with a truly staggering variety of subjects relevant to our region. Kurtis has been practising land-based applied ecology since his return to Alberta a decade ago, and he's a master gardener, permaculture designer, yoga teacher, and ISA arborist. The Aspen Centre for Integral Living will be hosting the 2016 Northern Alberta Permaculture Convergence in the fall. If I could ask Mr. Ewanchuk to please stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my privilege to introduce to you and through you to all members of this assembly Nick Dira. Nick was paralyzed last year, and while doctors said that he would never walk again, dedicated and intensive physiotherapy has resulted in his first steps just weeks ago. I ask that all members join me in congratulating him on his progress, his courage, and his strength and welcome him to this House. [Standing ovation]

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. members.

#### Point of Order

##### Allegations against a Member

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, yesterday during Oral Question Period the Official Opposition House Leader raised a point of order concerning certain comments made by the Premier in response to a question from the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat. Yesterday I heard the arguments from both the Deputy Government House Leader and the Official Opposition House Leader, and I chose to defer my ruling.

During the arguments raised, the Official Opposition House Leader took issue with the Premier's statement that the member had suggested certain activity was fraudulent. I would note that the *Hansard* transcripts from yesterday did not indicate the use of that term by members of the opposition. However, in an unrelated matter to Alberta Health Services it had been used at an earlier event. Although I do not find this to be a point of order but more a difference of opinion, I would ask members to be cautious in the language they use when they are characterizing statements of other members. Moreover, it is a long-standing tradition that statements by members respecting themselves and within their knowledge must be accepted.

Now that we have the explanations and we understand the events that brought us here, I will accept it and expect that members will avoid repeating that kind of language that led to this point of order.

Hon. members, I want to provide my ruling at this point in the proceedings so as to avoid a repeat of the exchange from yesterday and, in fact, the day before and would ask that you all keep it in mind as we proceed in the agenda today.

## Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

### International Year of Pulses

**Cortes-Vargas:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In November the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization launched the International Year of Pulses 2016. This is significant for our province and for our country because Canada is the world's largest producer and exporter of dry peas and lentils, shipping to more than 150 countries around the world.

Alberta pulse producers are helping feed millions of people around the globe. It is estimated that over 800 million people suffer from acute or chronic undernourishment. Experts say that the rising tide of health problems is linked to poor diet. The International Year of Pulses aims to demonstrate the integral role these nutrient-dense foods have in addressing global food security and malnutrition issues. By observing the International Year of Pulses, we are sharing the good news about pulses with more consumers, and as more consumers eat more pulses, Alberta farmers can reap the reward of increased market access.

Earlier today we had a group of producers and product developers who provided tasty samples in the lower rotunda. I hope you had time to sample and try the snacks that they brought to us and that you will help promote these Alberta-made products.

The Alberta Pulse Growers Commission is marking this important year with exciting activities, including food and product samplings. This commission represents over 5,000 growers of field peas, dry beans, lentils, chickpeas, fava beans, and soybeans in Alberta. The growers group has created an attractive series of activities to tell the stories of pulses. One of these activities is the pulse pledge. To take the pulse pledge one commits to eating pulses once a week for 10 weeks. Just so you know, eating pulses helps reduce your carbon footprint, and they are also great for your health. We should also congratulate the Alberta Pulse Growers Commission for their efforts to shine the light on pulses.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Hon. members, I would ask unanimous consent for other guests to be introduced.

[Unanimous consent denied]

1:50

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of the Official Opposition.

#### Minimum Wage

**Mr. Jean:** Albertans know that this NDP budget is only making things worse, especially when it comes to jobs and the economy. A dramatic increase to the minimum wage and a new carbon tax will hurt young and low-income Albertans and extremely limit businesses' ability to hire. Not-for-profits and charities are worried about their rising overhead costs during a time when over 100,000 Albertans are out of work. Why is the Premier so rigid on a 2018 timeline to implement a 50 per cent increase to minimum wage when it will just make life harder for Alberta families?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, the Alberta families that I'm thinking of are the ones who work full-time at very difficult jobs and which deserve the respect of everybody in this Assembly, who do that to raise their families and feed their families, and after working 40 or 50 or 60 hours a week still have to stop at the food bank on their way home to feed their families because right now our minimum wage does not come close to providing a living wage. Quite frankly, that's not the Alberta that I want to be a part of.

**Mr. Jean:** I thank the NDP for taking Wildrose's idea for a small-business tax cut, but then the NDP turned around and made things much, much worse with an expensive new carbon tax. The Edmonton and Calgary chambers of commerce are warning that the impact of this minimum wage hike will make it much harder to hire and for workers to join the workforce. Caring for our vulnerable is a core Alberta value, but creating higher unemployment simply doesn't help anybody. Can the Premier tell Albertans about any economic studies that show how a 50 per cent spike to minimum wage will create jobs?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, our Minister of Labour will be engaging in consultations in the weeks to come to talk about this. When they do, there will be additional information that is provided to speak to the very issue of the fact that when you put more money into the pockets of low-income people, it immediately recycles into the economy, and it actually creates jobs. It doesn't detract from them. You know what else doesn't detract from jobs? Getting rid of poverty and allowing people to support their families.

**Mr. Jean:** Since she wasn't prepared to answer, Mr. Speaker, I will answer. The only analysis on this minimum wage hike that we have seen came from this government's own experts, and they say that it will lead to, quote, significant job loss. End quote. That's not a jobs plan; that's making things worse for Alberta families. This hike, combined with the carbon tax and other tax increases, is doing significant damage to Alberta's economy. Over 100,000 Albertans are out of work, and they are tired of this NDP government's experiments. Premier: will you please consider and back down from these rushed and poorly thought out experiments, that will only hurt Alberta families?

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite would love for us to continue to grow the level of inequality in this province. They would love for us to walk by those people who are unable to feed their families, who are unable to pay their rent, who are unable to secure affordable housing. That's what they would like us to do, and they'd like us to make sure that we do that while we continue to get a D minus rating based on a record that they support, where we take no action to deal with climate change or greenhouse gas emissions. That's not good governance, and that is not what we're going to do.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member. Second main question.

#### Nonprofit Organizations and the Carbon Levy

**Mr. Jean:** Albertans are feeling that the social costs of rising unemployment and plummeting wages are the responsibility of this government. The NDP carbon tax will cost families \$1,000 per year. The cost of everything for everyone in Alberta will be more expensive. While the Premier is offering pennies back to some few

Albertans on every dollar taken, not-for-profits and charities aren't listed as getting any rebates or exemptions. They get no help as they see their overhead costs rise through the roof. Why is this Premier ramming through a carbon tax that hurts charities and not-for-profits when they're already struggling under this government's actions?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, I think it's pretty fair to say that the vast majority of charities and nonprofits would struggle if \$8 billion were taken out of our budget this year. That's what we're not going to do. I will not take advice from them about how to support charities and nonprofits.

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, charities and nonprofits need fuel and gas to run. They have to pay for expenses like food and shelter. Under the NDP all of this will be much more expensive for them. Here in Edmonton Hope Mission runs a 24/7 rescue van, that runs on fuel, to help those suffering on the streets. STARS and HALO ambulances require aviation fuel to provide crucial life-saving ambulance service to those in Alberta that need it most. This carbon tax looks like a new tax on charities. Why is the Premier punishing the not-for-profit charities, whose work supports vulnerable Albertans every day, when they need it the most, right now?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to supporting vulnerable Albertans every day. We are doing that by providing stability, by supporting public services, by providing those important front-line public services that those folks over there would have us cut by 20 per cent. You know, it's just a little rich coming from those people over there. We are going to move forward on responsible climate action in order to enhance our ability to get our products to market, to support economic diversification, and to do the right thing on the environment.

**Mr. Jean:** Ignoring the facts as usual.

Alberta charities are the people on the front lines assisting those impacted most by this economic crisis that the province is facing and that was brought on by the NDP government. Meals on Wheels provides home-delivered food services to those in need. Those wheels don't run on solar panels; they run on gas. And now those costs are going way up. When winter comes, homeless shelters will face higher heating costs to provide emergency relief to those in Alberta that are most vulnerable. The carbon tax will make life more difficult for these charities trying to help. Did the Premier not even consider how her plan would hurt these charities on the ground?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all, to be clear, the economic crisis that this province is facing is caused by the drop in the international price of oil. I appreciate that the folks over there like to sort of fudge things a little bit, but that's what's going on here in Alberta.

Secondly, let's talk a little bit about Meals on Wheels. Meals on Wheels receives funding from FCSS. FCSS got a significant increase in funding as a result of a decision made by this government. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members.

Third main question, hon. member.

**Mr. Jean:** Members of the government are wasting the only time we have during the day, Mr. Speaker, to hold this government accountable.

## W-18 Use

**Mr. Jean:** Yesterday we found out that almost nine pounds of the lethal compound W-18 were recently seized in the Edmonton area. W-18 is an opiate that is 100 times stronger than fentanyl, the drug that killed one Albertan almost every single day last year. If W-18 goes into circulation among Alberta's addicts, it could result in hundreds and hundreds of deaths. What steps is this government taking to educate young Albertans and make them aware that this is the most deadly drug that they will ever face?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Justice.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the hon. Official Opposition leader for the question. You know, we've been out on this a couple of times already, speaking about this drug to the public. We're taking steps to immediately address the fact that this drug is coming into our system. One of the things we have done in this budget is to increase funding to ALERT, who actually did that seizure of W-18, to make sure that those front-line workers are in place to take care of these sorts of problems.

Another step we've taken is to ensure that funding is in place for mental health services and for human services to ensure that vulnerable people aren't falling into these situations.

2:00

**Mr. Jean:** W-18 has no actual uses other than killing people. It is currently not illegal, but hopefully the federal government may soon act and make it so. The police stated that it is so deadly that if the bag that were found were to be launched into the middle of this room, all of us would probably die. This could be the most dangerous street drug that will ever hit Alberta. What steps is the government taking to make sure the drug dealers aren't turning this deadly compound into a street drug, and how will the government educate Albertans on this, which is so, so important to our young people?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, W-18 is very lethal; it's very toxic. That's one of the reasons why within just a few hours of finding out that it was actually seized in Alberta, by the federal testing, we sent a letter immediately to the federal Health minister to make sure that this does go on schedule.

I also want to assure everyone that both ministers in my ministry will be out talking to our communities, and I encourage all members during the constituency break to do the same. This is incredibly toxic and deadly, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

**Mr. Jean:** I'm very pleased to hear the government is aware of this.

This past Tuesday health officials wrote to their emergency department leaders saying that, quote: they may be seeing increasing numbers of overdoses and deaths linked to W-18. End quote. We know that the medical examiner's office is going through its files right now to make sure that it didn't miss any W-18 overdose deaths. Our health system is very concerned, though. Wildrose put out a 10-point plan to deal with fentanyl. Honestly, some of those proposals could work in this current situation. When will this government be announcing a detailed plan to prevent a W-18 crisis from developing any further in Alberta?

**Ms Hoffman:** Certainly, we are very concerned about any illicit opioid use. That's one of the reasons why in the mental health review there was a specific opioid reduction strategy that was

already under way. We also have a fentanyl response team that meets regularly with leaders from all across the province, both in health and in law enforcement, as well as community organizations, to make sure that we're getting this information out to our communities.

As well, as I'm sure members are aware, we've increased access to naloxone kits, which is the antidote to both fentanyl and, hopefully, W-18. The amount required might need to be even more significant because, again, this drug is just so toxic and lethal. It can also be cut into any narcotic, so please be careful.

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

### Government Policies

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Budget 2016 remains a big disappointment, and so are some of the answers given in QP this week. Let's review. Yesterday our Member for Calgary-West asked the Municipal Affairs minister about a petition from the people of Chestermere. The minister said that she respects their autonomy at the municipality and promised to send a note to the petitioners. What they really want to know is: once the petition is verified, will the minister launch an investigation and commit to making the results of that investigation public?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to clarify that what I said was that the process was that after reviewing all the signatures to the petition and determining whether the petition was sufficient or not, I would send a letter in response to the petition to the people who initiated it. At that point if it is indeed sufficient, then we will, you know, proceed with normal process and do the investigation upon request.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Finance minister in question period yesterday said in Hansard: "The three-year fiscal plan we talk about has an accumulated debt limit there." The same minister sponsored Bill 10, removing that debt limit. Let's give the minister a second chance to correct the record. Here's a chance to clear it up, Minister. Did you not know your file, or did you just plain give the wrong answer yesterday?

**The Speaker:** The Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Minister of Finance I can assure the hon. member that our Minister of Finance knows the files. He has produced one of the best budgets in some of the most difficult economic conditions we have ever seen. [interjections] We're very proud of the work that he's doing.

**The Speaker:** I don't know what he said. I couldn't hear it.

**Mr. McIver:** Wrong answer it is.

The environment minister yesterday said that a couple with children earning \$95,000 receives \$420 in carbon tax rebates. Page 95 of the budget says that rebates are only on natural gas and gasoline. Since \$95,000 yields \$50,000 in take-home pay, and gasoline and natural gas can only cost \$10,000 a year, then \$40,000 of that family's take-home pay is not protected by the rebate. Now that we know how little of a family's take-home pay is protected, how can the Premier say that she has anybody's back?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We'll just go back to basics on this one. I think we might need a little remedial budget time here. Putting a price on carbon pollution rewards Alberta families, businesses, and communities that make choices to reduce their emissions. Six in 10 Alberta households will receive a rebate that covers the average cost of the carbon levy they pay. Low-income consumers, including many seniors, typically use less energy than average, meaning their rebate could more than cover the carbon cost they pay, resulting in more money in their pockets. All Albertans who reduce their emissions will also reduce their actual costs below the average. Add that to the direct savings on . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
Calgary-Elbow.

### Postsecondary Board of Governor Appointments

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week the Minister of Advanced Education rose in this House to talk about the appointment of board of governor positions throughout the postsecondary sector. Now, while I agree diversity is very important, I also believe that most current board members are dedicated community servants working for little pay and offer deep experience that is of tremendous benefit to our province. Recently I was told that a letter was sent to the board of the University of Calgary informing them that none of the current board member appointments would be renewed when their terms end. To the minister: is that true?

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you to the Member for Calgary-Elbow for the question. It is, of course, true that we are looking at all of our appointments to our boards in postsecondaries across the sector. We have a very open and transparent process for receiving those applications and reviewing the board member applications, and we will make sure that the best people who represent the communities that they serve and have the right skills will be appointed to the board, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Clark:** I'll take that as a yes, Mr. Speaker.

The past government's track record may not have been perfect, but I believe that the vast, vast majority of appointments were merit based. Removing all board members means that Alberta's postsecondary institutions lose valuable institutional knowledge and the expertise and experience required to govern large and complex organizations. Again to the Minister of Advanced Education: if you thought the PCs populated the boards with their friends, by replacing all of those appointments, aren't you just populating the boards with your friends?

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, I can assure the member that if I only had my own friends to choose from, there would no board appointments that I'd be able to make.

It strikes me as odd, Mr. Speaker, that we talk about merit-based appointments, yet approximately 80 per cent of our board members on postsecondary education boards are men over the age of 65. It seems to me that if we're going to have people who reflect the communities that they serve, we would have more women and we would have people from ethnic communities. Those people need to be better represented on the boards.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Clark:** Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. I do absolutely agree that diversity is important.

I want to know if this purge is going on at all institutions or just the University of Calgary. Once more to the minister: have other postsecondary institutions been informed that their board of governors will not be renewed, and if so, which ones?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we are working with our boards and our postsecondary institutions across the province to make sure that we have board appointments made in a timely fashion. We are working together with administration in the existing boards to select candidates, and they are helping us out in that process. Our process is open and transparent. Anybody is welcome to apply, and we are reviewing them based on the criteria that are set out in the applications.

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

#### Alberta Law Enforcement Response Teams

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In our current fiscal times we know that departments within the government have had to make hard decisions. Given that we still need to reduce serious crime in Alberta and given our government's commitment to creating safer communities for all Albertans, to the Minister of Justice: can you talk about the increased funding for the Alberta law enforcement response teams and why our government is investing in this organization?

2:10

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Justice.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the very important question. Well, this government knows what valuable work ALERT does in ensuring that there's an integrated law enforcement team that can respond to issues in this province. One of the issues has been highlighted today, which is the emerging issue of W-18. Fentanyl is a similar issue, and they are doing fantastic work with that. We think that it's absolutely critical that we be investing in these front-line services. We've been hearing from stakeholders that they feel the same way, so we've made that investment.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that I've heard from my constituents about how much they value the work that ALERT does and given ALERT's specific integrated approach to serious crime, can the minister explain how ALERT's approach helps law enforcement connect across Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the critical question. Well, of course, we know that crime doesn't stop at the borders of cities, so that's why ALERT doesn't stop at the borders of cities either. It allows services to place members together in one unit so that they can be integrated, so that they can share information, so that we're sure that the intelligence is flowing to the right places so that they can combat and dismantle these complex organized crime institutions, that would otherwise prey on our vulnerable citizens.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that you have transferred 40 sheriffs from the safe communities and neighbourhoods units back under the Justice and Solicitor General department, can you explain the reason for this transfer and how this impacts the work ALERT does?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Justice.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. I want to stress that this will maintain the same number of front-line positions in ALERT, so the safer communities and neighbourhoods, or SCAN, organization and the surveillance sheriffs will continue to do their important work. They'll just do it directly under the Ministry of Justice and Solicitor General. The transfer of these positions will allow ALERT to use its budget to focus on its core mandate, which is dismantling organized crime. We think that this will work a little bit better for everyone going forward. I think the critical point here is to ensure that the same number of bodies will be on the front lines.

Thank you.

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

#### Tax Policy

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For Calgarians, living under this NDP government is anything but priceless. Thanks to the NDP, the typical Calgary family will be paying an extra \$136 for the increase in property taxes, a thousand for the carbon tax, \$200 for the gas tax. That means that just going about your daily life will cost you \$1,336 plus an extra \$2,000 for debt repayment. When will this government stop hurting Calgary families that are simply trying to deal with being unemployed?

**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. We need to clarify a couple of things here. First of all, our budget is moving Alberta forward. Our budget is investing in infrastructure, it's investing in families, it's investing in education, it's investing in health care, many of the things that the party over there would not invest in and, in fact, would cut, although we're not quite sure of their numbers yet because I think they're still working on a shadow budget. But one doesn't know.

**Mr. Panda:** Given that this government can't seem to help itself when it comes to throwing new taxes at everyday Albertans and given that the NDP government's budget is centred around making things worse for Alberta families, including Calgarians who are unemployed, I'm sure the NDP government will get tired of overtaxing Albertans with a carbon tax and move on to other sources of revenue on the backs of Calgary taxpayers. Will this government come clean and tell us their timeline for introducing the ND PST?

**Mr. Mason:** Mr. Speaker, we have said it before; we'll say it again for the hon. members opposite. There will be no PST during the term of this government.

You know, you would think that an Official Opposition worth its salt would be able to find some real issues instead of making them up, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Panda:** This NDP government did not campaign on a \$58 billion debt or a \$3 billion carbon tax. Given that the Premier has said that she won't rule out future talks on PST, saying that, quote, in the long term is this a conversation we need to have; I think it is,

how can Albertans trust this Premier? A tax is a tax is a tax. Will the NDP commit to not bringing any other tax, levy, assessment cess, or duty that hurts Albertans?

**Mr. Mason:** Mr. Speaker, this government is doing I think an excellent job with the budget in very, very challenging times. The hon. members opposite know – they know – that the price of oil has resulted in an enormous drop in the revenues of this government. We will not be bringing in a PST. We brought forward the budget. That's the direction we're taking. Had the previous government taken advice and diversified the economy, Alberta would not be in this position.

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

### Job Creation

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government has embraced Dr. Dodge's recommendations for economic stimulus. Infrastructure spends can be cost-effective and impactful if effectively implemented during a downturn. However, given the epic failure of the much-touted one-job plan and now the bill about nothing, it would appear this government is relying solely on deficit-funded infrastructure to create unsustainable, short-term employment. To the Minister of Infrastructure: specifically, how many of the 27,000 jobs promised to Albertans will be directly or indirectly created by the infrastructure plan?

**The Speaker:** The Infrastructure minister.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The current expenditures that are under discussion in the Assembly, relative to an increase of 15 per cent over the previous government's capital spending, will produce at least 10,000 new jobs. It will also preserve many more jobs that might otherwise be lost.

**Mr. Gotfried:** So 16,999 to go.

Mr. Speaker, given that agriculture, forestry, and tourism are key sectors that need your support in order to successfully expand and diversify the economy and given that development and implementation of concrete strategies and tactics are integral to maintaining and growing markets, to the minister of economic development: what specific initiatives, if any, are you currently – and I mean today – already driving forward in order to support and stimulate export growth and market expansion?

**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 important question. Just this morning I was in Calgary, actually at the Glenmore Fabricators facility, announcing our \$75 million capital investment tax credit, which, quite frankly, is going to result in thousands of jobs. We anticipate about \$700 million worth of investment coming in. This is going to have a significant impact on communities throughout the province, quite frankly. That is one initiative. Earlier this week I announced the investor tax credit. We have the Infrastructure minister with his \$34 billion ...

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that announcements and action are two separate things with this government.

Given that Alberta's nonenergy GDP, at \$271 billion, still ranks as Canada's third-largest economy and given that this government seems intent on purposefully damaging our key economic engine to

make the nonenergy slices of the pie appear artificially more successful, again to the same minister: what specific initiatives are you driving forward to diversify the economy, what indicators are you measuring, and where can Albertans view the results?

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

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Listen, there's one party in this House that made a whole bunch of announcements that they couldn't back up, and it's quite clear where that came from. Quite frankly, we're not only committing; we have an Alberta jobs plan, and we are acting.

To the member's question, he will be able to look at my ministry's website as far as tracking outcomes, but I can tell the member: not only are we investing in jobs and supporting our job creators here in the province, but we're also working at getting a pipeline both east and west, something that the previous government failed to do.

### Paramedics' Professional Governance

**Mr. Stier:** Mr. Speaker, the Alberta College of Paramedics is set to be imminently moved from being legislated under the Health Disciplines Act to the Health Professions Act. While this eventual move is appropriate, many paramedics are very worried about the approaching deadline, especially in light of recent issues facing the college. Paramedics have expressed concerns to me over such things as excessive membership fees and the difficulty that those with PTSD have in returning to work, serious issues that are still outstanding today. Has the minister also heard these concerns, and what steps is she taking to address them?

2:20

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much to the member for the important question. We have been working in partnership, since the day I got on the job, to make sure that we're moving forward with updating the Health Professions Act. Certainly, 28 years is far too long in an environment that's so dynamic, like health care, and where new professions are continuing to evolve. There will be changes being brought forward, both through the Assembly and through other means, to address not just paramedics but other health professionals, and certainly I meet regularly with their college as well as with the organizations that represent their members on the labour side as well.

Thank you.

**Mr. Stier:** Mr. Speaker, given that the role of the regulatory college is to protect safety and the interests of the public and given that the best practice is to keep regulatory functions of a college separate from the functions that are directed at the economic or social well-being of members of the profession, can the minister assure this House that she is committed to keeping the college and professional association clearly separated during their transition to the Health Professions Act?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In Alberta we have a number of different associations where the college and the association are actually in one, and I've learned a lot about that, specifically on the health side. Education has a similar set-up through the ATA as well. Certainly, there's no intention through changes in the HPA for us to be impacting the current model, and if we were ever thinking about making changes to the association

and the college side with any organization, we'd certainly have conversations with them and their members.

**Mr. Stier:** Well, Mr. Speaker, given that there are still outstanding issues surrounding the Alberta College of Paramedics, including formal complaints that are yet unresolved, and given that many of the college's membership are very, very concerned about the implications of this transition, will the minister consider conducting an independent review to resolve these concerns prior to moving them under the Health Professions Act?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. The work that's been happening around the Health Professions Act has been happening for years. Actually, in my very first meeting with the college I said, "Name your top two priorities," and number one was moving forward with changes to the Health Professions Act. I appreciate that there's a desire to resolve concerns around complaints. There's certainly a fair process for doing that. But I think that if we were to extend the time for the transition to the Health Professions Act, it would be disrespectful to both the college as well as to the professionals who want to be seen as part of that organization moving forward. Certainly, due process will be followed.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

#### Education Property Tax in Cold Lake

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Wood Buffalo-Cold Lake region has the highest unemployment rate in Alberta, at almost 10 per cent. It also has the highest vacancy rates, at 22.3 per cent. Many families have been worried about making ends meet for months already. Now Cold Lake residents are hearing that the province's part of the property tax will jump up 15 per cent this year. These higher taxes will make a bad situation worse. Cold Lake wants to know: how can the Premier justify hiking taxes on those bearing the brunt of this recession?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have to say that this government is tremendously concerned about the number of Albertans who are struggling due to the drop in the price of oil, and we certainly would not disrespect them by increasing that. Education property taxes have accounted for 32 per cent of education funding. It did in 2013, '14, '15, and will again in 2016. In fact, because Alberta has been growing and property values have gone up, we were actually able to reduce the mill rate for this year.

**Mr. Cyr:** Given that Cold Lake has seen school enrolment increase by only 1.9 per cent this year, not 15 per cent, and given that Cold Lake's mayor, Craig Copeland, and the rest of the city council know that times are tough this year and wanted to hold the line on municipal property taxes, why did the NDP choose to hike taxes and put families at risk of losing their homes instead of finding savings within the bloated government to cover the increase in the Education budget?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, it's a difficult circumstance in Cold Lake and many other areas in the province, but it's important to understand that, in fact, the rate in regard to education taxes has not changed, nor has it changed from 2013.

We're looking for ways by which we can help people. Certainly, the way that I can in Education is to make sure that we fund our schools properly, not making drastic cuts to teachers and to school boards and so forth. Certainly, school boards around the province have been very appreciate of that, as have parents and families and teachers and students.

**Mr. Cyr:** Given that this government has made zero effort to find efficiencies to avoid overtaxing Albertans and given that in spite of all the layoffs and closures and uncertainty that they're facing, the people in my riding are keeping their heads help up high, and since they all want to stop the increase in taxes, what steps will the government take to lower taxes for Cold Lake, which has seen double-digit increases to the education tax over the last five years?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, I want to state that there is no policy change here. There was no increase in this whatsoever. For every thousand dollars of assessed value that an individual has, last year an individual had to pay \$2.50 in education property tax, and this year they will pay \$2.48. We stand strong with the people of Alberta who are struggling. We care for them. We're doing our very best to get jobs to them, to get them back in action, to stimulate this. There's not a policy decision that would not be in their best interests.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
The Member for Calgary-Greenway.

#### Municipal Funding and Tax Collection

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Budget 2016 has raised many concerns across this province. One concern that affects all Albertans is this government's decision to cut funding to municipalities while also passing on forced tax increases, which are then passed on to local taxpayers. To the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs. The city of Edmonton alone will receive \$20 million less in MSI funding, which they are counting on for neighbourhood renewal. Why did you pull the rug out from underneath our capital city, Minister?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Our government certainly recognizes the importance of infrastructure to municipalities, which is what MSI is designed for, which is why we're moving forward with a \$34.5 billion capital plan, which Edmonton gets a substantial portion of. We are maintaining strong supports for municipalities despite a 20 per cent drop in the revenues, which we did not pass on to municipalities. We are very proud of the support we provide to our municipal leaders across the province and proud of our investments in Albertans.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this government has decided to end the practice of charging provincially owned buildings like postsecondary institutions their share of education tax and given that these facilities are located across this province from Olds to Lethbridge to Grande Prairie, to the Minister of Municipal Affairs: why are you increasing the taxes for business owners in any city with a provincially owned building at a time when they can least afford it?

**The Speaker:** The minister of seniors.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you. Our government is very proud of our relationship with municipalities and of the investments that we've made in their communities. The previous government made the decision to cut these taxes, and we were not able to reverse every cut that's been made previously. Certainly, the opposition, you know, that party, was the one who cut them, and we aren't able to reverse every one.

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you for not giving me an answer.

Mr. Speaker, given that municipalities operate buses, police cars, fire trucks, and other work vehicles and given that in the city of Calgary our Mayor Nenshi has stated that the carbon tax will cost the city \$2.7 million next year, then rising to \$6.5 million, to the Minister of Municipal Affairs: if Calgary alone will pay this much, how much money will the carbon tax cost other municipalities across this province?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, we were very clear in the budget papers that 6 in 10 Albertan households will of course receive a rebate of their carbon levy costs. However, the remainder of those investments will be made in municipalities, will be made in indigenous communities, will be made in small business and other undertakings, ensuring that we have robust investments in energy efficiency plus \$2.2 billion in green infrastructure like public transit.

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

## 2:30                      Transportation Alternatives

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last weekend I attended a conference on active transportation, and I was reminded of the importance of encouraging more Albertans to cycle, both for the benefits to their physical and mental health and because it can help them save money and achieve the goals of our climate leadership plan. However, if we want to increase the number of cyclists on the road, we need to modernize our policies and regulations related to cycling. To the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation: what is your department doing to increase the availability, accessibility, and safety of alternative transportation methods like cycling?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, hon. member, for the question. My department is in fact preparing a long-term transportation strategy for review. This will cover all forms of transportation, including active transportation modes. We're looking at a number of goals, including reducing emissions, which cycling certainly does, reducing congestion, and ensuring sustainability and affordability. The bicycle is an excellent vehicle to get to all of those goals.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, given that I was happy to hear that a steering committee has been appointed to help create an Alberta bicycle design guide to offer municipalities guidance and support in developing cycling infrastructure, again to the Minister of Transportation: will the public have an opportunity to provide input on these new policies that may help increase bicycle ridership?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, the purpose of the Alberta bicycle facility design guide will be to provide information, guidance, and engineering details to designers and city planners – [interjections] do I really have to be heckled about bicycles? – to promote uniformity in planning, design, and operation of cycling facilities. As the guide is developed, there will be direct consultation with stakeholders, including bicycle associations and municipalities.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, given that municipalities will be the ones that are tasked with implementing these policies and building local transportation infrastructure such as the bike lanes which will be passing by my office soon, again to the same minister: what supports are available to municipalities to help increase the development of these transportation networks throughout the province?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. Mason:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, support for transportation and transit options for Albertans allows them to choose ways so they can get to work, school, medical appointments, the grocery store, and so on. Our government is engaging with Albertans about future transit investments. We've just opened the third call for applications to GreenTRIP funding in February. There is \$130 million to fulfill the Calgary Regional Partnership's \$800 million allocation and \$285 million for other municipalities outside the capital region.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

## Seniors and the Carbon Levy

**Mr. Cooper:** Mr. Speaker, the Premier has been fairly clear that the purpose of her \$3 billion carbon tax is to alter the energy consumption behaviours of Albertans that she considers to be incorrect. In Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills we are home to a greater population of older folks than the average. As many of our seniors are on fixed incomes and cannot afford new cars or furnaces and don't want to go into debt to do it, can the minister of seniors please enlighten us with regard to what specific behaviours she considers to be incorrect, and how does she expect seniors to alter those behaviours?

**Ms Phillips:** Well, of course, Mr. Speaker, the climate leadership plan contains within it a rebate to 6 in 10 households, and certainly low-income seniors would fall within that rebate. All Albertans, regardless of where they live, if their net income is below a certain amount, will receive the rebate.

Now, the balance of the revenues will be invested in a whole bunch of undertakings that the Official Opposition opposes; for example, clean tech in oil and gas, new jobs in renewables and in efficiency, Mr. Speaker. Those are the economies of tomorrow that the Official Opposition . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Cooper:** Mr. Speaker, given that over the past week we've heard a lot about the wonders of the carbon tax rebate program and given that some of the government members would have you believe that this rebate covers 100 per cent of the increased costs – the rebate won't come close – did the minister of seniors conduct a

comprehensive economic analysis to determine the full cost to our seniors?

**Ms Phillips:** Well, you know, the approach that this government took in developing the climate leadership plan was to examine evidence from economists that is real, in addition to climate change being real, Mr. Speaker. You know, that's why we landed the rebates exactly where we did, based on average use, and the balance of the investments will be made in clean tech, in oil and gas, in diversification, and in other initiatives that we know work to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and diversify the economy.

**Mr. Cooper:** Mr. Speaker, given that the Rocky View handibus is a charity in Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills that transports seniors to important health care appointments and drives over 550,000 kilometres a year to do that and that this NDP carbon tax will increase the cost to that charity by \$6,000 per year in extra fuel alone, can the minister please update this House: why is she downloading the costs onto seniors and charities?

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. You know, first of all, we do have a robust rebate program in place. Certainly, 6 in 10 households will be receiving one regardless of whether one lives in a lodge or a nursing home or in an apartment or a townhouse or a single detached house. In addition, there will be \$645 million invested in various energy efficiency undertakings, not just for individuals but also for organizations, nonprofits, charities, and others. Those are investments that the Official Opposition rejects. Those are investments that would never be made under their sit on their hands and do nothing about climate change policy.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-North West.

#### Farm and Ranch Worker Regulation Consultation

**Ms Jansen:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. In March I raised a concern that rural Albertans were not being included in the conversation around Bill 6. I asked the agriculture minister why meetings weren't taking place in rural Alberta and why meetings were taking place while seeding and calving were occurring. The minister of agriculture promised me they would be going out and talking to Albertans. Well, we FOIPed the feedback on Bill 6, and it wasn't pretty. To the minister of agriculture: are you now ready to start listening?

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you for the question. I think it was a question. You know, information from the survey – there were a lot of options we looked at. We've landed on the option we think made the most sense, made the most sense for the industry, the most sense for the workers. Going forward, I'm looking forward to the consultation process getting started. We are listening to those producers and the workers, knowing that these are busy times. A lot are finishing up their calving season now, and a lot have already started the season because of the warm spring that we've had. I'm looking forward to the consultation process, making sure that we start them when most are available.

Thank you.

**Ms Jansen:** With respect, your listening skills aren't better here than they are out there.

Given that the concern of the farm and ranch workers is that they haven't been consulted at all by this government and given all their

worries about this legislation and the yet to be seen regulations, which they say will have a significant negative impact on their lives, again to the minister of agriculture, and I hope you're listening: what steps will you be taking to repair the relationship with Alberta farmers, that has been so damaged by this process?

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Madam Speaker and to the member for the question. I would disagree that the relationship has been so damaged. We've had very good conversations with producers. The producers themselves have formed an ag coalition, where I've had very robust conversations with them. I would like to remind the member that this legislation that we're looking forward to, the recommendations from producers, the legislation itself with the recommendations for the regulations, is to help workers. It's important to remember that the legislation is to help the workers and farmers and ranchers in co-operation with the farmers and ranchers themselves that were able to know the industry and able to get that important information.

Thank you.

**Ms Jansen:** Okay. Madam Speaker, given that in March I asked that question about the consultations that you were doing on Bill 6 and you had an opportunity to observe the process and see the farmers' and ranchers' feedback and the concern that rural Alberta has, it seems that your government has turned a deaf ear to their concerns. We have seen this in the FOIP documents. Again to the minister of agriculture: how are you going to incorporate the feedback from these concerned Albertans, and are you listening at all?

2:40

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Madam Speaker and to the member for the question. I'm going to assume that she's talking about the occupational health and safety recommendations that we're going to be looking at for the consultations that have yet to take place. I'm really looking forward to that input. We're going to have upwards of 72 different members – interested workers, experts in the industry, farmers and ranchers – on those technical working groups. I'm looking forward to the recommendations, recommendations that we're going to use to shape the actual legislation as we go forward.

Thank you.

#### Members' Statements

(continued)

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

#### Leninade

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Last weekend a new candy store opened up in my hometown. As I perused the shelves of colourful goodies, I came across a section of drinks. Instantly I knew exactly what I was going to buy. It was a bottle of Leninade, spelled after comrade Lenin, of course. Now, as I am always one for being cordial, I thought that this might make the perfect gift for our dear Premier. I picked up the bottle and read the front. The Drink for the Masses, it said, and A Taste Worth Standing in Line For. Seriously, how could I not taste-test this drink after such a proletariat description? After all, the members across the aisle have

been drinking a similar orange drink for years, and they're still grinning.

My first sip revealed a smooth, bubbly, effervescent taste, almost saying, "I'm really trying hard to impress you," so I imbibed some more. However, halfway through the bottle I noticed a distinct, unpleasant aftertaste. I turned the bottle around and read, "Our 5-Year Plan: Drink a bottle a day for five years and become a Hero of Socialist Flavour." I thought: oh, I get it. It's an acquired taste. You have to drink the orange brew for a long time before you can actually appreciate the true value. Well, Madam Speaker, I am proud to say that I put that bottle down knowing full well that the second half was going to be about the same as the first, hard to stomach with a bitter aftertaste.

It doesn't take a Russian rocket scientist to realize that this NDP government has embarked on a scheme that is unsustainable and unpalatable, and not surprisingly Albertans are waking up to this realization of what the orange crush really means: high debt, loss of jobs, and loss of hope.

Madam Premier, I'm deeply sorry for drinking your drink, and I promise I'll never do it again. In fact, I plan on telling Albertans to stay away from your special brand of orange drink for the next three years.

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

#### Homelessness Initiatives

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Homelessness is a complex social problem that occurs at the intersection of systemic and personal challenges and is compounded by a lack of social supports delivered at the right time in the right place to the right person. I want to take this opportunity to advocate for the continued support of Alberta's 10-year plan to end homelessness. As the hon. Member for Calgary-North West talked about last week, despite what we agree is unfounded criticism of the plan's effectiveness, we know that the 10-year plan is working. Calgary has housed 7,000 people who would otherwise be homeless. Street homelessness in Edmonton has decreased 31 per cent since the start of their 10-year plan. But the plan is not complete, and it needs the support of this government and all members to see it through.

Ending homelessness is not about never ever seeing someone homeless again. Life is not fair. Destabilization due to the death of a loved one, job loss, mental health issues, addiction, or fleeing domestic violence, unfortunately, will happen. The purpose of the 10-year plan is to react quickly to homelessness when it does happen. This means valuing people and building a responsive system that gets people into safe, appropriate, and affordable housing with immediate supports and a secure place from which to start working on issues. This will make the experience of homelessness about days and weeks, not months and years. While I support this government's commitment to invest in housing, I urge the government to include permanent supportive housing as part of that plan.

Another important tool is data. Good data makes for good decisions. One of the biggest challenges facing the 10-year plan is creating a common set of data about who is homeless and what services they are accessing. I'm hoping this government will use their influence as a funder to compel common data collection across agencies serving at-risk populations. Simply put, data sharing should be a condition to receive funding.

A lot of great work is happening in our communities, and there is a tremendous amount of expertise within the organizations that

make up the 7 Cities on Housing and Homelessness. I encourage the government to listen closely to them as we work together to end homelessness.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

#### Red Deer-North Constituency Acknowledgement

**Mrs. Schreiner:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Fellow members, today marks day 353 since Albertans made the decision to end a tired, old government of 40-plus years. Collectively we have effected changes demonstrating fiscal responsibility, diversity, sustainability, and leadership that speak to the needs and resilience of Alberta.

Today I wish to speak to how our government has recognized the importance of my constituency of Red Deer-North. In June the Indigenous Relations ministry rekindled hope and connection by participating in Walking with Our Sisters in memory of murdered and missing aboriginal women. In September the Finance ministry consulted Red Deerian stakeholders regarding budget feedback. Doors were opened as well as eyes and ears. Thank you to Municipal Affairs for the funding supports that enhance the capacity of the Red Deer Airport, which is creating jobs and spurring economic development. Thank you to the Health ministry for the obstetrics expansion and the upgraded detox beds and to Advanced Education for a generous investment in Red Deer College. The Infrastructure ministry has made significant GreenTRIP investment, enhancing our transit groundwork and a \$100 million investment through the Alberta jobs plan for our Gaetz Avenue interchange.

Our government spoke to stimulating the economy and creating jobs by expanding infrastructure. I am proud to speak to these commitments kept. As Red Deer prepares to host the Canada Winter Games in 2019, this venture meets the immediate needs of Red Deerians during our challenging economic situation. It sustains future growth while enriching our tourism industry. On day 353 I am delighted by the progress I am able to speak to within Red Deer.

Thank you to the ministries for visiting my community, for acknowledging the opportunity it embodies, and for opening the doors to our needs. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

#### Aspen Centre Permaculture Demonstration Site

**Ms Babcock:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is my privilege today to rise and discuss an important and diverse enterprise in my constituency of Stony Plain. Kurtis Ewanchuk, whom I had the pleasure of introducing earlier, is the head of the Aspen Centre for Integral Living. The Aspen Centre for Integral Living is a permaculture demonstration site located in the Sturgeon watershed in the North Saskatchewan basin. The goal of the centre is to "contribute to our community and ecology through resilience building and permaculture education, demonstration and community development." The Aspen centre includes many members and participants from Stony Plain and Parkland county. This is a critical initiative for Albertans.

Permaculture is the conscious design and maintenance of agriculturally productive ecosystems which have the diversity, stability, and resilience of natural ecosystems. It is the harmonious integration of landscape and people providing their food, energy, shelter, and other material and nonmaterial needs in a sustainable way. This organization makes me very excited and proud about the

future of our ecology and the possibilities this approach offers. As the Aspen centre states, we are “solutions-oriented and [positivistic] about the challenges we are faced with as a society,” and we choose “to take that responsibility for ourselves and the needs of our community without delay.”

For nine years the Aspen Centre for Integral Living has been educating residents about sustainable living, reforestation, watershed preservation and restoration, and sustainable infrastructure in a hands-on, experiential way. In September the Aspen centre will be hosting the 2016 Northern Alberta Permaculture Convergence. This annual gathering provides an opportunity for experiential learning of sustainable living. It is not enough to know our ecology is at risk. We need to grow our knowledge and skills base of how to take care of our land and our people. This offers a path of regenerative ecological design, forward planning, and working with natural patterns instead of against them.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Airdrie.

#### Airdrie Home & Lifestyle Show

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to talk about the Airdrie Home & Lifestyle Show, happening this weekend. This annual event features over 200 exhibitors aimed at providing unique consumer products which are community, home, and lifestyle focused.

It is the perfect opportunity for families and friends to come together, to shop locally, and to see some of the amazing entrepreneurial ventures taking place in our community. This well-attended community event also features local not-for-profit community groups. It is a perfect occasion for you and your family to find out what programs are available in the Airdrie community for children, youth, families, and seniors and to learn about local volunteer opportunities.

This is not your typical trade show, Madam Speaker. There are so many fantastic events that families can come and enjoy. This year's 2016 Airdrie Home & Lifestyle Show offers science experiments, art exhibits, reptile shows, fashion shows, dance recitals, and a robotics demonstration.

2:50

Madam Speaker, this is an event I have attended almost every year since I was a child, and I encourage everyone who is in the area to come on out. The event is to be held at Genesis Place on East Lake Boulevard. Admission is only five bucks, and kids under 12 get in for free with an adult. You can find a link on my Facebook page with more details.

Madam Speaker, Airdrie is a fantastic place to live and raise a family. I want to thank the Airdrie Chamber of Commerce for what I'm sure will be another successful event. I hope you can make it out.

#### Notices of Motions

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Pursuant to Standing Order 34(3) I'm rising to advise the House that on Monday, May 2, written questions 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, 9, and 10 will be accepted, and written questions 1, 4, and 6 will be dealt with.

Also on Monday, May 2, motions for returns 1 to 17 as well as 19, 26, 27, 31, and 33 will be accepted, and motions for returns 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 28, 29, 30, and 32 will be dealt with.

#### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to table a press release from the city of Cold Lake showing that it's the fifth straight year of double-digit education levies for Cold Lake.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any other tablings? The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to table the requisite number of copies in response to an earlier question from the Member for Calgary-Elbow regarding the appointment of board members to the University of Calgary. This is a letter dated April 6, 2016, addressed to the chair of the board of governors at the University of Calgary, sent from me, in which I write, "I understand that there are many members seeking reappointment who have made significant contributions in their roles, and I would strongly encourage applicants seeking reappointment to apply."

#### Tablings to the Clerk

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the Assembly that the following document was deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of the hon. Ms Larivee, Minister of Municipal Affairs, pursuant to the Government Organization Act the Alberta Boilers Safety Association annual report 2015.

#### Orders of the Day

##### Government Motions

**The Clerk:** Government Motion 15.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I have, according to my business, Government Motion 14. Can we clarify that, please? I heard 15.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I also heard 15. It's 14?

**Mr. Mason:** It should be 14, yes.

**The Deputy Speaker:** It is 14, correct?

**The Clerk:** Well, then, Government Motion 14, hon. minister.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much.

#### Amendments to Standing Orders

14. Mr. Mason moved:  
Be it resolved that Standing Order 52.01(1) be amended as follows:
  - a) in clause (a) by striking out "Seniors" and substituting "Seniors and Housing",
  - b) in clause (b) by striking out "Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour" and substituting "Labour", and
  - c) in clause (c) by striking out "Aboriginal Relations" and substituting "Indigenous Relations".

**Mr. Mason:** Madam Speaker, this merely changes the Standing Orders to conform with the current titles of government departments.

**The Deputy Speaker:** This motion is debatable under Standing Order 18(1)(i). Are there any other hon. members wishing to speak to this?

[Government Motion 14 carried]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Government House Leader.

#### Meeting During Consideration of Main Estimates

15. Mr. Mason moved:

Be it resolved that the Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee be authorized to meet during the consideration of the 2016-17 main estimates.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. This is déjà vu all over again.

This is a very important committee. It wishes to continue its work during the break, and we would like to accommodate that. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to the motion?

[Government Motion 15 carried]

### Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

#### Bill 1

#### Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act

[Debate adjourned April 20: Mr. Cooper speaking]

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

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to speak at second reading of Bill 1, the government's flagship bill of this sitting, Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act. I'd like to first discuss this bill briefly in terms of what it actually looks like on paper, and then I'll move on to a frank discussion of what this bill truly does.

This is an eight-page bill, of which five pages are either blank or the cover page, so it only contains three pages of any substance. In terms of true content, even these three pages include a formatted title, a definition of what a minister is, and a page of preamble. It is important to note that the preamble is not technically part of the law. It is, quite simply, flowery political verbiage, which fits into the government of the day's ideological rhetoric.

Again, going back to the overview of its contents, the five sections of the job-creation plan all refer to the minister and take no real legislative action. The closest thing that they have to any reasonable measures is contained on page 2, section 2, which reads:

The Minister may establish programs that . . .

- (a) create partnerships that support entrepreneurship and a focus on innovation,
- (b) increase access to capital,
- (c) help businesses to grow and succeed,
- (d) help working people upgrade their skills and secure employment,
- (e) help communities and regions build on their economic strengths,
- (f) increase the development and adoption of Alberta innovations, and
- (g) support export development.

Unfortunately, even these politically charged buzz phrases are not entrenched. Section 2 in full passage states that "the Minister may

establish programs that focus on supporting working people and job creators, attracting investment and diversifying Alberta's economy," and so on and so on.

Madam Speaker, in essence the minister may implement programs that do any of those seven things but, then again, the minister may not. This type of rhetorical language is an extremely disappointing example of poor legislation, unless it is simply a means for the NDP to create legislation to help push their ideological agenda. This leads me to the next part of my discussion, which is the intent of this bill.

Madam Speaker, in essence, what we are debating here is a mandate letter, which does create one job, and that's the minister's. At a time when businesses, entire industries, and families alike are facing economic hardship and are worried about how to make ends meet, this government is focusing on who they think is most important: itself. This bill shows that the government is more interested in making its members feel important than creating real legislation that creates real jobs. If the NDP was really concerned about jobs, then it would not be taking more money from businesses and individuals during a recession to pay for their expensive political promises instead of trying to finance them through savings within a government that's one of the most expensive in this country. This government is continuing down a very risky spending path, one leading to higher taxes, government charges on everything, and a growing deficit. Madam Speaker, soon we'll be spending more than \$2 billion a year on interest payments to the banks instead of on schools, hospitals, and the roads that we need. To quote my hon. colleague from Strathmore-Brooks, "This isn't just bad financial management; this is morally repugnant."

3:00

The Premier claims to repudiate her own party's Communist Manifesto, that will kill jobs in the oil and gas sector during a time of major recession, but then she creates a bill that is aimed at helping Alberta through tough times but that ignores this important job-creating sector. It doesn't create a single job for Albertans who need it most.

Generally, Madam Speaker, past governments have used things such as mandate letters to achieve the exact same ends this bill does. Mandate letters are usually formally published documents from the Premier to the ministers which give them the general direction in which they are to operate. Effectively, this government is using Bill 1 as a mandate letter. This sets a precedent that I'm not sure this government wants to follow. Going forward, maybe the solution is to forward all mandate letters to the Legislature for review. In that way, we can help moderate this government's radical ideological agenda. Maybe this would give us enough opportunity to convince them to focus on bringing back the Alberta advantage instead of their job-killing carbon tax.

Madam Speaker, Albertans and this Official Opposition are deeply concerned by this empty shell of a bill. It does nothing to explain how the NDP will avoid creating another wasteful program like the failed job subsidy program, which they finally cancelled after it created zero jobs. Bill 1 doesn't do anything new or specific. Ministers can already create programs. This bill assigns no powers to the minister that he and other ministers don't already have, and it doesn't allow for much public accountability.

According to section 4 the minister must report on progress at least once a year to the Executive Council but then has no obligation to make those reports public. I will also note that the wording of section 4 puts a substantial obligation on not only the minister but directly ties the Premier to this bill. Section 4 presently reads: "The Minister must annually, and more frequently if the Premier directs, report to the Executive Council on the Minister's progress in

establishing and implementing any programs under section 2.” This places an onus on the Premier directly to ensure that this empty job bill translates into real jobs. A failure in this respect is a direct reflection on not only the minister and cabinet but directly on the Premier. I hope this government recognizes that. Albertans will, and the blame will be directed right to the top, to the Premier.

Albertans are already worried and anxious about the future. There is nothing in this bill to reassure them. Rather, it just underscores the fact that this government doesn’t have a real plan to promote job creation or diversify the economy. Albertans want a government that will fight for them in these difficult economic times, not one that will waste time and taxpayer dollars on this skeleton of a bill. Wildrose has released a 12-point jobs action plan that does propose solutions such as reducing small-business taxes and providing tax relief to families and stability for our energy sector.

Madam Speaker, highlights of the Wildrose jobs action plan include providing a 1 per cent cut to the small-business tax, which we’re glad to see our government take our advice on; reducing WCB premiums by 50 per cent for the first 100 employees in each business and eliminating premiums for new hires until the WCB’s assets are drawn down to 114 per cent of their liabilities; cutting red tape by 20 per cent by 2019 and implementing a one-for-one rule on the introduction of new regulations; cancelling the NDP’s \$3 billion carbon tax until a full economic impact analysis is conducted; and enhancing opportunities for apprentices to work on provincial builds so they can finish their training. If this bill was focused on proper principles, it would have included some of these points. They would have legislated change instead of flowery talking points that are merely insulting to the tens of thousands of Albertans who are out of work.

Madam Speaker, Bill 1, the minister’s mandate letter, represents a missed opportunity to propose constructive solutions. It contains no indication of what the NDP will actually do for Albertans, and for that reason I will not be supporting this bill.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Are there any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity to rise and address Bill 1, Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act. On the surface and by reading the title, Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act, you might think that this is a bill worthy of consideration. It would make you want to read on and see what this bill contains. It was really quite a short read, and I found this bill really lacks any real content or original ideas. In fact, I’d call it vacuous, and as of yet we haven’t heard the minister provide a compelling reason for it other than as a big talking point on jobs to distract from the government’s bad policies.

Madam Speaker, this bill, in my opinion, is quite unnecessary. Let me show you a few examples from the bill itself. On page 2, if you care to follow along, under the heading Establishment of Programs:

- (a) create partnerships that support entrepreneurship and a focus on innovation.

The Ministry of Economic Development and Trade looks after this already, or at least I hope they do.

- (b) increase access to capital.

Again, they already do this. I think they brag about doing it through the ATB, so why the bill?

- (c) help businesses to grow and succeed.

You know, I’m beginning to see a trend here. Guess who is already responsible for helping the businesses grow and succeed? Yes, it’s the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade.

Let me quickly skip to points (e) and (f).

- (e) help communities and regions build on their economic strengths,
- (f) increase the development and adoption of Alberta innovations.

Yes, folks, you guessed it. The Ministry of Economic Development and Trade is already empowered to do this on this front, too.

Let’s go back to (d).

- (d) help working people upgrade their skills and secure employment.

Yet again we have ministries that already look after this. In this case it’s looked after by different ministries – the Ministry of Human Services, the Ministry of Labour – so hopefully the sharing of responsibilities with a third ministry as well as the federal government won’t mean that too many cooks are in the kitchen to effectively get anything done.

Finally, we come to the last of the government’s points under Establishment of Programs. That would be

- (g) support export development.

The Premier herself would normally be looking after this as she’s the one who heads up the ministry of international and intergovernmental relations. It would be interesting to hear if international trade has entirely moved from the IIR department or if there’s a hybrid going on.

Madam Speaker, as I read through the document, I wondered if there was anyone consulting appropriate ministers and getting feedback from them on what they were already doing, but what would be even more interesting is if the Minister of Economic Development and Trade could provide some feedback to us on all these jobs that he’s already doing and he’s responsible for.

Let me give this government a little tip. Now that Albertans have had a chance to see how this government works, they’re becoming less and less convinced that this government has the right ideas to govern this province. Twice they tried to win a by-election in Calgary and twice failed. In fact, the vote count is getting worse, not better. Albertans want to see actions that create jobs, real jobs, not bills that really don’t mean anything.

This province is hurting, and Albertans are afraid. This bill, if you want to call it that, does nothing to alleviate their fears. I’ve gone out to my constituents, both at their homes and businesses, whether it be a farm, a tire shop, a restaurant, and so on, and I’ve gone to many of these constituency meetings – you know, they all have elected us – and they’re all very concerned. In fact, they are growing increasingly cynical of any bill that this government wants to put forward, especially a bill regarding jobs, jobs that seem to be bleeding out of this province each and every day. I hear almost every day someone tell me that they are looking at closing up shop and leaving for Saskatchewan or British Columbia. In fact, a fairly large player in the Provost area did just that. He’s had enough. He said – and I quote – that he couldn’t wait out another three years of this NDP government. Those were his words, not mine. He closed up shop and is in the process right now of moving out.

**3:10**

What I don’t think this government understands is that these are high-paying jobs for folks who hire high-paid workers. Now they cannot see any benefit in staying here in Alberta, so none of them will be staying here and paying taxes. Every time this happens, this government loses a portion of not just the tax base but the economic spinoffs of each and every job. These employers helped Alberta generate the highest per capita income and business tax in all of

Canada despite our low tax rates. All the workers that worked under them are now gone. Businesses have lost confidence in this government. Twenty per cent higher corporate taxes, a \$3 billion carbon tax, 50 per cent higher personal income tax: doesn't this government understand that there are consequences to their actions? If you tax people 50 per cent more and they leave, you don't have 50 per cent more; 50 per cent more of nothing is still nothing. So far what I'm seeing is not a job-creation program but a job-killing program.

Please take another look at our 12-point jobs plan and steal from us. I welcome you to do that. It's okay. Alberta needs good ideas, wherever they come from, and, you know, we're here to help.

**An Hon. Member:** Call it a tax.

**Mr. Taylor:** Call it a tax, yeah.

Where's the transparency in this bill; you know, the common-sense public reporting on jobs program? I ask this because if you look at page 3, section 4, reports, states: "The Minister must annually, and more frequently if the Premier directs, report to the Executive Council on the Minister's progress in establishing and implementing any programs under section 2." But where in this section of this bill does it say how this reporting will be done and how Albertans are supposed to find out about the results? There is no requirement for public reporting, and in fact the Executive Council is under no obligation to release these reports. Further to that, reporting, as I read it, could be done verbally to the Executive Council. Albertans don't want voice mode. Again I ask: where's the transparency and detail that Albertans expect?

My other concern is that with the passing of this skeleton of a bill, we'd be responsible for whatever meat the government now throws in with the bones regardless of how rancid it smells. This government has in the past, and very freshly in the minds of Albertans, hammered through bills without engaging Albertans, bills like Bill 6 last year, of course. Bill 6 was rammed through with time allocation, and the government went on to suggest to Albertans to trust them to fill in the details over the next 12 months or so. This bill has similarities in that it has accountability measures in it but to Executive Council and not to the stakeholders, Albertans, and, like with Bill 6, Albertans are expected to trust this government to fill in the details later.

I would strongly suggest that to improve this bill, the government needs to build in transparency. Reports to the Executive Council need to be publicly released and available on a quarterly basis so that Albertans know the status of each strategic area. That would at least put a little piece of significance in this bill. But, regardless, this minister and this government should feel pretty silly for rolling this out as their flagship bill.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)? Seeing none, I'll call on the hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to the bill while the reality is that I cannot support it. I have to ask the question: why do we create legislation in this House? We create legislation to fill the holes in our legal system, which really means to meet the real needs of society. We create legislation, for instance, to regulate aspects of our lives, to give authority to others. We create legislation to prescribe solutions to problems, to provide funds for necessary services. We legislate to sanction, to grant, to declare, to restrict. In these kinds of ways, we create real solutions to real problems.

Now, if we were to take a minute and look back to the very first session of this Legislature, in 1906, we would see 35 bills come

forward that do all of these things. We have laws for coroners, public service, sheriffs, police, clerks, firefighters, doctors, farmers, and the list goes on. These bills filled a hole, a real need. They satisfied that need for a new province. They provided real regulation for real problems. But this bill creates nothing, and it especially doesn't create real jobs.

I commend the first MLAs for the time and the effort they put into ensuring that our province prospered. I commend the first MLAs for ensuring that Albertans, for instance, can do their jobs because the law provides for and supports the basic institution of our province's needs. Many of those first 35 bills legislated departments. Alberta's first MLAs knew that our ministries needed to be well established so that they had the ability to do their jobs. Without those first bills, those ministries would not have been able to function. Those original bills defined the way our service industry works. They defined the respect that workers deserve so that they can have the authority to do their jobs. Just as our service industry was defined by those bills, so our ministries were defined and so were ministers given authority. They were actually groundbreaking rules.

Over one hundred years later the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade puts forward Bill 1, in 2016, and I have to ask: what does this bill do that was missing? What need does it meet? We have piles and piles of legislation that governs all of the ministries and the ministers and the civil servants and even our neighbours. It outlines the responsibilities, their duties, their abilities, their powers. This House is supposed to pass legislation that fills holes where legislation does not exist to meet real needs. This bill doesn't fill any hole. It doesn't meet any real needs. Necessary bills are ones that grant powers or otherwise empower a person or ministers.

Now, the 100-year anniversary of women's suffrage was celebrated this week. It was a celebration of a significant milestone in a long fight for universal suffrage. It was a celebration of respecting women as equals. Albertans' first MLAs passed legislation that commanded the respect of many people and was a historical moment in history. Bill 1 is not going to be remembered as a great moment in history. It will be forgotten immediately.

The governments that have occupied these seats have done great things in our past. They passed historic bills and made major changes. There have been bills that have changed our health care system and our education system and bills that govern our resources and provide for the care of vulnerable people.

What I can't quite understand is how Bill 1 fits into that category. Every other minister is able to do everything listed in this bill already. In fact, section 8(1) of the Government Organization Act reads: "A Minister may establish or operate any programs and services the Minister considers desirable in order to carry out matters under the Minister's administration." So why does the Minister of Economic Development and Trade believe he lacks this very ability, that is clearly given to him right there?

This truly is a verbiage bill, a vacuous verbiage bill. It doesn't meet any needs. It doesn't fill any holes in our system. It does not grant more respect to the minister. Mr. Speaker, I want the minister to know that the moment he was sworn into office, he already had the respect, the powers, the authorities, and the abilities listed in Bill 1. There is no reason for the minister to think that he doesn't have the respect he feels he is lacking in Bill 1. There is no reason for Bill 1. We, quite frankly, don't need it. We don't need legislation to fill holes in our system where holes don't exist. We do need legislation respecting the authority of this House that will further Alberta's proud history, from providing for women's suffrage to protecting the vulnerable to providing life-saving front-

line services. Now it's come to this, a job description in the form of legislation.

3:20

The members opposite have come to present bills that do absolutely nothing beneficial for anyone. This bill doesn't do anything beneficial for the minister, as has been proven by my colleagues. The minister already has every single power listed in this bill. This bill doesn't do anything beneficial for the people of Alberta since no new powers or mandates are granted by this bill. This bill does not show respect for the people that have come before us. A bill that respects the House and that respects Albertans would be one that is needed and that is necessary. This bill is neither. Therefore, it's not in the tradition of the great legislation of this House, and I cannot support it.

Thank you.

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

Seeing none, I will call on the hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

**Mr. Stier:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to get up this afternoon and talk about Bill 1. Good afternoon, everyone. As we sit in here and debate this matter today, I'm often reminded of the nice weather we have outside and sometimes why we sit in this Chamber to do the work that we do. I think this is an occasion when I wonder about that more than the average day on a Thursday afternoon. Bill 1 seems to be one, as some of my colleagues have noted, that is a bit redundant. It's a bit of a duplication of things that seem to be already permitted and already in order. It seems to be something that is totally unnecessary.

I'd just like to say that, you know, I was kind of interested to get a chance to speak about this. I wasn't sure if the government forgot it was still on the Order Paper, actually. It's been delayed for some time. In any case, here we are. Really, with such a bold, exciting name I was hoping to see something more valuable in this. It says: Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act. I mean, it seemed like something we could really get our grip on. Unfortunately, after looking at it, it became clear that it was just a bunch of, perhaps, creative writing. It's not a very substantive plan for employment or economic growth or a chance to help our jobs sector.

While the number of Albertans out of work continues to soar, at least the government could claim that this bill did create one job, I suppose, and it was that of my friend the economic development minister, who I've served with now for a few years. But when you get down to the meat of the bill, though, actually, we're talking about a bill that's long on ambition, from what I can see, and short on substance. As thin and vague and meaningless as this bill is when it comes to economic growth and job creation, I would argue that one thing the bill actually does set out to accomplish is that it outlines clearly the roles and duties of my friend of these years, the minister. But it's really completely pointless. I mean, in fact, the power supposedly invested in the minister by this bill already exists, as was clearly pointed out by the previous speakers. This adds nothing new and nothing he didn't already have before.

You know, one of the other speakers mentioned it, and it's already in the Government Organization Act, which reads, "A Minister may establish or operate any programs and services the Minister considers desirable in order to carry out matters under the Minister's administration." That's fairly clear, I think, what he can already do. It also goes on to say, "A Minister may institute inquiries into and collect information and statistics relating to any matter under the Minister's administration." Those are the things that the act already has in place, yet this bill talks about a lot of

things that I think we'll show you in a moment are redundant to what I've just read.

I mean, the first one is (a) in the provisions here: "create partnerships that support entrepreneurship and a focus on innovation." Well, that's already the responsibility of that ministry. "Increase access to capital." Again, it's already the responsibility of that ministry. "Help businesses to grow and succeed." Already, again, a responsibility of that ministry. "Help working people upgrade their skills and secure employment." That's actually already done through the Ministry of Human Services and the Ministry of Labour. "Help communities and regions build on their economic strengths." Again a responsibility of this ministry. "Increase the development and adoption of Alberta innovations." Again, already the same ministry, the same responsibility. "Support export development." Already the responsibility, actually, of the ministry of international and intergovernmental relations. So one has to wonder why this bill has been put into place.

Presumably, if there was something substantive and critically important in this bill, why wouldn't we have discussed it a week ago instead of letting it sit around on the Order Paper? If the minister needed it to authorize his standard work functions, then I'm not entirely sure what he's been doing up until now. I know he's had a wonderful trip overseas and has toured some fabulous countries, but I sincerely hope that the government's idea of job creation isn't that.

It's become clear that this NDP government is more committed to optics, really, than results, from what I've seen so far. It's more important for them to be seen to be acting than it is to actually act and, even more importantly, to achieve success.

The reality is that since this government has taken charge, they've only made a bad situation worse as economic conditions seem to decline. With a host of new tax and spending measures, that we've all been debating about, this decline has only been made more steep, more pronounced, more severe. Government measures have discouraged investments and choked our economic growth. In short, government actions have gone completely against the high-minded rhetoric that this bill seems to present. Perhaps it's for that reason that the government has seemed to decline putting any firm accountability metrics into this legislation. The reporting requirements are flimsy where they exist at all. Results do not have to be reported to the public but only internally. One would think that if this were truly the bill to accomplish all that they've claimed, they'd be very open and transparent with the results and performance measuring.

One might think that this government more than anyone, actually, would be happy to shout their successes from the roof of this building or clap like they did the other day, several times, during their budget process. But as we've seen so far too often, when the results aren't expected, accountability measures seem to get stripped. We've heard scant little about expected economic growth, frankly, Madam Speaker. We've heard nothing about fiscal multipliers and the value these massive new spending measures and subsidies will actually provide. The government won't quantify what they deem to be a success beyond boasts of yet more spending.

What will all this accomplish? A small piece of paper passed in this House is not what Alberta needs and deserves. I remember having that bill. I don't have it with me here today. It's very thin. It only has a few pages. We actually need something more substantive. We need a government to keep its eye on fiscal sustainability and long-term stability. Both of these things have been undermined by misguided taxation policy and an agenda centred around destabilizing deficit and debt. This is not how you create employment and job growth, people. Not even the puffed-up language of Bill 1 can compensate for the very real damage that

massive new taxes, credit downgrades, ballooning interest payments, and economic instability have brought.

Here's the bill someone just passed me, and I note that we have one, two, three, and a blank set of pages in the back. So it's actually only three pages, Madam Speaker. Only three pages. All the things that I've already talked about in my previous conversation with regard to all of these things existing in the ministry make up most of this. There's nothing more.

Anyway, as I said earlier, I congratulate the minister for sitting down and writing himself up a nice set of guidelines and his own mandate, I suppose. Since there's very little substance here, we on this side of the House will be happy to offer up a bit of advice on how you could do it well. Nonetheless, as we've seen what we've seen here today and heard what we've heard from all the other speakers on the duplicity of what's in this document, it's our opinion that this is a total waste of time, a total waste of debate time, a total waste of procedure. It already exists. For that reason, I myself and my caucus will not be supporting this unnecessary bill.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any questions or comments?

Seeing none, I will call on the hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

3:30

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to share my concerns on Bill 1 with the Assembly. I think my colleagues have done an excellent job of showcasing how unnecessary this bill is. It seems to me that this Assembly's time could have been put towards purposes that actually help Albertans if the Premier had simply written a mandate letter for this minister. It's quite clear that the Minister of Economic Development and Trade already has the ability to do all the things that are outlined in this bill, not only because it's clearly outlined in the Government Organization Act but because the minister already has dedicated taxpayer dollars to various corporate welfare schemes. We've seen solar subsidies and tech fund investments already, without this bill.

Today I'd like to go a step beyond some of these valid criticisms and talk about the ideas around government-driven economic diversification. It isn't exactly clear that this government actually understands what economic diversification really looks like in the real world beyond its use as a buzzword, Madam Speaker, or a talking point for this government. There have been some interesting numbers released over the past few weeks about the levels of diversity in Alberta's economy, and if any of the hon. members on the other side had taken the opportunity to study these numbers, they may have had cause to do some soul-searching because these numbers show that what the government has been saying about Alberta's economy is simply false.

Now, I know that my colleagues across the aisle would never purposely try to mislead Albertans, so I'd like to take a moment to explain just how successfully our economy has already been able to diversify without government interference. Between 1985, Madam Speaker, and 2014 our beloved province saw significant changes in the distribution of gross domestic product sources. To be clear, this is what measures economic diversity in our province. Let's keep in mind that the energy industry was in a slump in 1985 and had record activity in 2014, so these totals will be even more impressive in 2016.

As Alberta's total GDP grew from \$67.6 billion in 1985 to \$364.5 billion in 2014, there was a shift in the percentages of economic distribution between industries. In 1985 energy accounted for 31.6 per cent of Alberta's GDP, when we were at the lower end, and then by 2014, with oil at \$100 a barrel, it accounted for only 25.5 per

cent of our province's GDP. That's more than a 10 per cent drop in the reliance on our energy industry. Between these years there was significant growth in industries like construction, retail and wholesale, tourism and consumer services, finance and real estate, business and consumer services, and manufacturing.

The increase in economic diversity didn't happen because governments handed out grants and subsidies and chose winners and losers. In fact, many of the former government's attempts to manufacture diversification in the '80s failed. I have in the past walked this House through a series of failed economic diversification projects, but let's have a refresher. Madam Speaker, failed government-driven economic diversification projects from the era include NovAtel, the Swan Hills Treatment Centre, Lloydminster biprovincial upgrader, Millar Western Pulp Ltd., Gainers, magnesium company of Canada, Prince Rupert Grain terminal, Alberta-Pacific Forest Industries, Chembiomed, Canadian Commercial Bank, Northern Lite Canola, and General Systems Research.

The fact is that history shows that diversification happens most effectively when the government stops trying to force it. It was strong, broad-based economic incentives like low taxes, an openness to investors, and a philosophy of self-reliance that made room for the industrious spirit of Albertans to thrive in all sectors. We owe the level of economic diversification and the significant amounts of growth that we've seen in Alberta over the last few decades to the hard-working economic drivers in the private sector. The previous government didn't diversify. They got out of the way, though, so that Albertans could do the business of diversifying.

The problem is that this government can't seem to grasp the fact that diversification can happen without government. The truth is that when the members over there claim that our economy hasn't diversified, do you understand that in recent decades you're more than wrong? You're discrediting every single Albertan who had vision and foresight and the Albertans who took risks in order to help our economy and make significant progress in diversifying. Frankly, I don't think that the Albertans who worked so hard and took such massive risks to get us here deserve this government's disdain.

Now, there's no question that there is more room for more diversity in our economy. The NDP government, however, fails to understand how economic diversity is successfully achieved and what factors must coincide with diversification in order for diversity to actually benefit Albertans. It's not enough to see the economy diversify; we need to see the economy grow as well – right? – like we did in 1985, despite the fact that oil prices were low, and in 2014.

Punishing the oil and gas industry by taxing it, by threatening to hike royalties, then taxing it again, and then increasing the regulatory burden: all of this forces industry to shrink and forces businesses to cut jobs, leaving Albertans out of work. This government's actions are certainly causing the energy industry to shrink relative to the rest of Alberta's economy. On paper the other segments of the economy look relatively large as a result, but it's important to note that attacking one industry, Madam Speaker, does not automatically make other ones stronger. In fact, on the contrary, many other industries are spinoffs of these industries that rely on business from oil and gas and those who work in it. At the end of the day even though other industries look relatively larger, they're operating in weaker economic development.

One of the most important things for the welfare of our society is a strong, growing GDP. The source of the growth is less important than the growth itself. All Albertans are better off when the economy is stronger – I think we can all agree on that – and when economic activity is high.

Recently this government made the catastrophic decision to punish our primary industry, oil and gas, with an unnecessary royalty review, which was followed by the Premier telling reporters that now was not the time to raise royalties. Unfortunately, that kind of open-ended answer is cold comfort to would-be investors in Alberta. That kind of answer signals that changes may still be on the table down the road and that the current regulatory system could really change at any time.

This government also decided to increase the oil and gas industry's regulatory burden and costs with its infamous climate action plan. It made it harder for junior companies to attract capital investment, by raising corporate and personal taxes. That's not how to diversify an economy.

A government can best aid in economic diversification through introducing measures and maintaining systems that allow the economy as a whole to grow in whatever direction the market forces attract investors. If we are truly dedicated to economic diversification, we cannot be punishing some sectors and growing others. Alberta needs broad-based macroeconomic policies that stimulate economy-wide growth. If we provide Albertans with a strong fiscal framework that recognizes that we're not just competing with the rest of Canada but with the world, Alberta entrepreneurs will move forward to diversify the economy as they always have. Unfortunately, the government is mismanaging the economy so badly that private investors are nervous.

There are advantages, from the perspective of a private investor, to Alberta's current market. If it weren't for the risky economic experiments and high-tax agenda, this would actually be a good time to make long-term investments in Alberta. The province's factors of production inputs are more competitive now with the rest of Canada than they've generally been. We have access to capital that has been made easier. Interest rates are low, and they encourage borrowing. Construction costs are lower as the labour market has more hard-working Albertans available. We have an immense amount of technical expertise in this province just waiting. Energy prices are low for now.

3:40

The reason that we're not seeing a significant level of private investment in the province right now is because no producer believes that this government has a plan for stable, long-term economic success. Investors know, Madam Speaker, that the policy that the NDP is now pursuing will result in Alberta being a weaker financial jurisdiction in the long run and that significant tax increases will be required to manage the massive amount of debt that the province is projecting. And to take on this kind of interest – the interest rates are going to rise. They inevitably do. The government is not creating the economic conditions to allow job-creating industries to thrive. These policies aren't just harming private investment; they'll eventually even harm the companies that are now receiving the handouts.

Prices need to fall in a recession so families and businesses are able to maintain their purchasing power. This government's tax increases are keeping the cost of raising a family and of running a business artificially high. Investors are nervous because of policies like the coal phase-out, changes to the SGR, which led to the mass PPA cancellations, and 30 per cent commitment to the renewables that will inevitably drive up the price of power. Why build a factory in a jurisdiction that is moments away from a huge increase in the cost of electricity?

Look at what happened in Ontario after a severely mismanaged green revolution. Industry fled en masse, and the businesses were forced to close because they couldn't afford their power bills. Why would any private investor build in a jurisdiction where that is about

to happen? How is any industry, Madam Speaker, expected to survive this disaster, that will raise costs for absolutely everyone in this province, especially our job-creating industries?

So as we consider Bill 1, which claims to promote job creation and diversification and acts as part of this government's misguided plan to forcibly diversify our economy, I urge my fellow members to keep in mind that the best step forward for this government would be a change in their ideological anti-industry and anti-investment economic policies. Only when the government stops making things worse with forced economic diversification, an empty jobs bill, will things start to get better.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Questions and comments under 29(2)(a)? Go ahead, hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, Madam Speaker, the hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View had to know this was coming when she includes the Lloydminster biprovincial upgrader in her list of failed projects or projects that demonstrate that economic diversification that is catalyzed by government is a failure. I guess my question to the hon. member is: could she quote the socioeconomic study or the wraparound fiscal study that indicates that indeed when one considers the entire economic stimulation to Lloydminster and area and all forms of taxation revenue that have been generated by the upgrader – how does she, then, conclude that the Husky upgrader is a failure?

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you for the question. As we move forward at this point, if you look at the history of it, Alberta's initial investment in this was \$305 million, which would have come from the Alberta investment division of the heritage fund, which the province would receive at some point 24 per cent in participating interest. Then they spent \$404 million on capital costs and then spent a further \$19.3 million in operating costs, not seeing the losses associated with this. I think eventually they received \$32 million four years later. Saskatchewan sold its shares to Husky for \$310 million, thus recouping the province's investment.

**An Hon. Member:** How much did we collect in taxes when the jobs were created?

**Mrs. Aheer:** Taxes? In jobs that we're creating right now? That's a very good question.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, through the chair, please.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Go ahead, Vermilion-Lloydminster.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, thanks. Not on 29(2)(a). I'd actually like to speak on this bill.

**The Deputy Speaker:** We still have a few minutes on 29(2)(a), so are there any other questions or comments?

Seeing none, then I will recognize the hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, Madam Speaker, thank you. I actually hadn't intended on speaking today, and perhaps the members opposite and perhaps some of the members in the Official Opposition will be dismayed to learn that I have decided to speak on this. This is debate that we have here in the Chamber, and I think from time to time it is important that we actually listen to each other and respond to comments that are made by other hon. members.

I do have to respond because I'm going to suggest, with great respect to my honourable colleague from Chestermere-Rocky View, that while she makes commentary about the Lloydminster upgrader and no doubt quotes from Dr. Morton's paper, which is flawed in many ways, the Lloydminster upgrader – and I can say this with a great deal of confidence because I was there. I was on city council in 1988 when Premier Getty and Premier Devine and Bill McKnight and Don Mazankowski and Bob Blair from Husky announced the Lloydminster biprovincial upgrader. And I will tell you that that is a day that transformed the city of Lloydminster.

Prior to 1986 and especially, it was noted, in 1986, Lloydminster was largely dependent on agriculture and oil, but the heavy oil that was being produced in Lloydminster was simply heavy oil and did not get any upgrading whatsoever. It was shipped, or it was transformed into road-building asphalt. We had a very large asphalt plant, and actually Lloydminster asphalt went all over the place, as did shingles. We had a Dominion tar and paper shingle factory in Lloydminster as well, and we produced a lot of shingles.

Now, in 1988, our MPs Bill McKnight and Don Mazankowski as well as the Premiers that I mentioned, Grant Devine and Don Getty, whatever else you may think of the legacy of these four leaders, had the courage to put together a plan and a partnership with Husky to build an upgrader on the Alberta-Saskatchewan border. Actually, technically speaking, it's just on the Saskatchewan side. This upgrader transformed Lloydminster, because what it did is it meant that we were not as susceptible to the boom-and-bust cycles that happened within our society.

I'm not a real big fan necessarily of government involvement in a lot of things, but I will tell you that the upgrader is a good example of places where judicious expenditure and judicious investment by government are the smart things to do. I will tell you, having been in business in Lloydminster since 1983 – and Lloydminster is still my home town – that if you were to ask people on the streets of Lloydminster, "Is the upgrader a good thing for Lloydminster or a bad thing?" resoundingly you will get the answer that the upgrader is a good thing for Lloydminster. Resoundingly.

The hon. member made the comment about what the province of Alberta got when it sold its roughly 25 per cent share in the upgrader compared to the province of Saskatchewan. This will delight my friends on the other side, but I would like to say that that would be an example of what I would call knee-jerk government policy reaction. That was that in the '90s a decision was made that the government should not be in the business of being in business, which I actually agree with, but the decision on when to get out of the business was: immediately. We basically sold our share of the upgrader at a fire-sale price. The province of Saskatchewan hung on for a little while longer, and they got a much better price. So on that part of it – and I'll be fully critical of the government of the time, which was a Progressive Conservative government – we didn't always get it right.

But I will tell you, Madam Speaker, that for all of the criticism – for all of the criticism – of the folks here who would like to know what the burden of governing is like but, hopefully, will never find out, Lloydminster is a very different place because of decisions that were made in 1988.

In 1992 the upgrader was completed. In addition, in 1990, thanks again to a forward-thinking and progressive government, Lakeland College, which had always been centred in the town of Vermilion, opened a second campus in the city of Lloydminster. And as a result of that – and I remember the day of that opening very well because whenever I look over at the Minister of Service Alberta, I think of it. She often brings her young son Patrick into the Chamber, and I had my one-week old son in a Snuggly at the grand opening of

Lakeland College's Lloydminster campus on the 10th of May, 1990. So I don't have any trouble remembering that date.

**An Hon. Member:** Aw.

**Dr. Starke:** Aw. Yeah.

I will tell you, Madam Speaker, that between the upgrader providing stability to our oil economy – and I will tell you that our service sector is taking a dramatic hit, and it's hugely important to Lloydminster, so all I can say is: thank God we've got the upgrader there, and thank God that the stable jobs are there for many citizens of Lloydminster. We've gone from a facility that upgrades heavy oil and 46,000 barrels a day to synthetic crude oil and over 110,000 barrels a day.

**3:50**

The upgrader has been good for Lloydminster. Lakeland College has been very good for Lloydminster. Because of those strategic investments Lloydminster today is so much more than it was in 1983, when I first came there. Lloydminster has more than doubled in size. Lloydminster has a strong and robust economy. Lloydminster has one of the highest per capita and average incomes, one of the highest average education levels. It is regularly in the top-10 list of communities in terms of entrepreneurial activity and in terms of friendliness to new business start-ups. Somewhat curiously and embarrassingly, it was the number two city for Ashley Madison clients, when that was released. I have no idea if there's any correlation there whatsoever, Madam Speaker. Hopefully not.

I will tell you, Madam Speaker, that I am very proud of our city. I consider the upgrader to be an integral cog in that development.

Now, speaking perhaps somewhat more specifically to my hon. friend across the way, to his bill, the flagship bill, as it's stated, I do have to agree with my colleague from Chestermere-Rocky View that this is largely a bill that is a job description. It is very disappointing to consider that this is a Bill 1. I mean, I will definitely agree that the Bill 1 flowing out from the last throne speech, the act that changed how we do election financing in this province, was a much more weighty bill and, I think, created a much more profound change in our province. I will tell you that this one doesn't quite measure up to that standard.

I would also point out, because my hon. friend is so fond of saying it so frequently, about the failure to economically diversify our province. The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View did an excellent job of explaining how our GDP has become more diversified. Dr. Trevor Tombe of the University of Calgary has pointed out that in terms of employment and workforce Alberta has the most diversified economy in Canada. There are different measurements that you can use.

We can always tell when the government has run out of things to say – and it happens often – because they immediately resort to: because the previous government failed to diversify the economy. So when you hear that, folks, it means that they can't think of anything else to say and they're falling back on their talking points. It's probably tab one in your minister's binder, and it's probably on the insert as well. When you run out of all other things to say, there may be a teleprompter running it over there.

In point of fact, Madam Speaker, there is one thing that is true, and that is that in terms of diversification we are too dependent on oil and gas, nonrenewable resource revenue – I would agree with that – and we do have to work to develop other streams of revenue for government. That's different from saying that your economy isn't sufficiently diversified. Our economy is diversified.

I definitely agree with the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View when she says – and I've said this to the hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade – that it is insulting to Albertans who have worked in the sectors like tourism, like construction, like service sectors that have grown much faster than the oil and gas sector over that period of time. My worry is that his definition of diversification will be that the rest of the pie looks like it's getting bigger. But that's only because the wedge that is oil and gas is in fact getting smaller. Minister, that's not diversification; that is simply redistribution of economic activity within our economy, and that is not what, hopefully, you're trying to accomplish in your ministry.

This bill is largely useless. This bill does not need to even be introduced. The hon. minister can already do pretty much everything that is outlined and mandated in this bill, or we would think so if we actually had mandate letters, which the Premier promised us back last June and we have yet to see. So, Madam Speaker, I'm against Bill 1. I had to set the record straight on my city of Lloydminster.

I thank you for your attention.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a), Chestermere Rocky View.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you. I would like to thank the hon. member for standing up. I just wanted to suggest also that the jobs and what's going on in Lloydminster right now – and I'm so grateful that the people of this area, their jobs are secure and that they're doing well. Congratulations on being considered the second-best in the province. That's fantastic.

**Dr. Starke:** Country.

**Mrs. Aheer:** In the country. I'm sorry. I apologize.

What we're wanting to acknowledge here is not so much what's happening now, because we've had private investment come in, and we've had a lot of changes that have happened that have helped to incorporate the situation, to bring it to where you are at this point presently. So it's wonderful to see that the private sector has helped to see this process succeed.

The whole point of bringing up the past was to help this government understand the problems of the past, not to stay there but to understand so that when you're moving forward, you don't fall into similar problems. It's not about blaming what has happened in the past – we've moved beyond that – but if you continue as a government to create and go forward with decisions that are going to create problems similar to what has happened in the past, that's why these things need to be brought up and perhaps reiterated. It brings up a lot of emotion for people that have been here in the past. I understand that.

You're right. I haven't governed before, and I actually do hope that I get the opportunity to do that one day. Having said that, I hope also on behalf of myself and my caucus that we'll actually learn from the past and create better decisions as a result of the mistakes in the past and not redo the things that have been done in the past.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Did you wish to comment, hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster?

**Dr. Starke:** Well, Madam Speaker, just very briefly. I appreciate the hon. member's comments. I think they are certainly well taken. I would agree.

You know, I'll say one thing, and this is perhaps a cautionary tale for all of us. Governments are made of people, and people are human, and humans make mistakes. You can't show me a government anywhere that has been in government for 11 months,

for four years, eight years, 12 years, or 40 years that hasn't made mistakes along the way. You know, I think that one of the things that we should all do as human beings is to acknowledge that we are imperfect and that there are things that we do with the best of intentions that don't work out well. We are not gifted with clairvoyance. We are not gifted with the ability to know what's going to happen in the future. We do things with the best of intentions, and sometimes they don't work out well. Without defending some of the decisions of the past which clearly in hindsight have been shown to be mistakes, I think that what we need to do always is to draw on the lessons of the past – I agree – but always be looking forward and always be looking for what is the potential.

You know, I'll just give you one example. The government in the 1970s made significant investment in developing our oil sands, investment through AOSTRA, investment in developing the technologies that would allow for the extraction of bitumen from our massive oil sands reserves. That was a strategic and costly investment, made at a time where the extraction costs were extremely high and the returns were extremely low. I will suggest – friends may not agree – that without government that doesn't happen. That doesn't happen. If you leave it up strictly to the private sector, it probably doesn't happen.

I know that the laissez-faire, right-wing, hands off everything folks don't want to believe that, but there is a role. It's hard sometimes to judge what that role should be, and that's perhaps where you have the nuanced differences between the different political thoughts and ideologies. But I will say that for myself personally I do believe that there is a role for government to play. Certainly, I think that there is a role for government to play in terms of the delivery of critical, essential services in our society. I've never said otherwise.

I think that, you know, in doing that and going forward, we do acknowledge that we as human beings are imperfect, that we do make mistakes but that overall we try to do the best we can. I think that we try to do the best we can today. I believe that they tried to do the best they could over the last 110 years in this province, and I certainly hope that we try to do the best we can for the years going forward.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** You've got 15 seconds. Go ahead.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you again to the member. I would thank you for calling me the right people. I sure appreciate that. That was very, very kind of you. I would also like to reiterate – and the last time I spoke about this, I actually did speak to the successes as well. You are correct; there have been successes as well. That's not what this is about, and I couldn't agree with you more that this is about moving forward and not laying blame in the past and, hopefully, learning in the future about where dollars need to be spent, how they're to be spent, and about the future of the province and all of the people, including our great-grandchildren one day, who will hopefully benefit from programs and from what we do right now in this space.

4:00

I would like to reiterate from my past speech where I was quite distinctive in also speaking about the successes. This province is all of ours, and there's no way that you can build on anything only ever reiterating the failures.

Thank you so much.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I had the hon. Member for Little Bow next.

**Mr. Schneider:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise today and speak to the government's Bill 1, the alleged job creation and diversification act. Now, this government professes a concern on Alberta's job situation, and they're right to. When my caucus colleagues and I hear from Albertans about the economy, here's what we hear.

We hear that Albertans are struggling to make ends meet. You know, I'm not just talking about the Albertans that may have lost their jobs in the oil and gas industry, which has seen probably some of the biggest amounts of layoffs in a generation. I'm talking about qualified, well-trained Albertans who for months upon months have been unable to find work. They're concerned about their mortgage payments. They're concerned about their car payments. They're concerned about providing for their families. In the cities there's an increase in office space vacancy and a decrease in jobs available. In rural Alberta jobs are very hard to come by.

I'm not saying that this government has caused the downturn, but the actions they have taken since coming into office are not making things regarding jobs and the creation of jobs any better. And these problems are entirely not helped by this proposed legislation because the legislation, as has been said by most of the members on this side of the House today, does nothing. All it does is reaffirm abilities that the minister already had under the Government Organization Act.

If I were the minister or any member of the government benches, I'd be embarrassed to tell my constituents that this is what their government is doing for job creation. As history has shown us, some governments run away from their record, but I don't think there's a previous precedent for a newly elected government running away from their own Bill 1.

Since introducing this empty shell of a bill, this government has let it sit on the Order Paper and wither. Nine other government bills were introduced after this one. Some of them have already gone through the process and are now a matter of law. But this bill sat at first reading like an abandoned car in a farmer's back 40. Finally, for a brief, rare moment in time, yesterday they opened it up for debate, only to quickly move to adjourn debate and move on to Bill 10.

From the government only the minister of economic development has stood to give a speech on this bill. He said: "Bill 1, Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act, will give the government additional tools to carry out its Alberta jobs plan to do just that." Good grief, Madam Speaker. Has the minister read the bill? Since being appointed to this portfolio, has anyone adequately conveyed to him what his existing responsibilities are? That was his one substantive comment referring to the actual contents of the bill, and frankly it wasn't an accurate assessment.

Section 2 of the bill gives him the ability to establish programs. Section 3 of the bill gives him the ability to establish regulations for those programs. Frankly, that's about it. These are existing ministerial powers. It is disingenuous to keep pretending that this bill is helping to create jobs. It is insulting to struggling Albertans to say that this government is taking action.

Imagine the time and the effort that had to be put into this bill. Don't get me wrong; the document doesn't really contain an overabundance of verbiage. It's not a very wordy document. I think we've all heard in speeches given here in this House today about the lack of info in this document. But how many people did it take to actually write this bill? I honestly don't know, but there must have been assistants and deputy ministers of ministries that have to direct staff. Parliamentary Counsel had to have had something to do with it, I'm sure. Just how much money would it take to get this tiny document to this House if we were to follow it from the idea stage to where it is today, all to get a bill here when ministries on the

government side already have a mandate to move forward with its intent?

This bill is positioned as doing something on job creation, but that's all it does, just like the series of job plans that this government has put forward. Regrettably, when you cut down past this government's hollow assurances in question period and their communications exercises, you end up with no action on job creation.

Over the course of one year in office all this government has done for the job situation is to tell Albertans that they should apply for employment insurance. One year in office, and that's all they've really done. Of course, the principal aim of Canada's employment insurance is that it's there for Canadians when they're out of work and when they're looking for work, but that's not a job strategy.

This morning Statistics Canada released new employment insurance numbers for February. In Alberta there were 65,100 employment insurance beneficiaries in February, a 2.4 per cent increase from January. It's the continuation of an upward trend that began in 2014: more EI recipients in Calgary, more employment insurance recipients in Edmonton, more EI recipients across the entire province. In the 12 months leading up to February, the number of Albertans receiving EI benefits increased by nearly 80 per cent. That's an astonishing statistic, Madam Speaker. And all the while it seems that the government is only making it harder for small businesses to create jobs.

The government's new carbon tax makes everything more expensive, including the cost of doing business. The government's continued minimum wage hike, an evidence-free excursion pushed only by ideology and borrowed from the American left, will likely further hurt job creation. In fact, it eliminates training wages and makes it even harder for young Albertans to enter the labour force.

Worse, this government is determined to copy Ontario's knee-jerk shutdown of coal-fired plants, which has led to exorbitant increases in electricity costs for that province. Just last year the Ontario Chamber of Commerce released a devastating report entitled Empowering Ontario, showing that one in 20 Ontario businesses expect to shut their doors by 2020 because of escalating electricity costs while 40 per cent say that they've already delayed or outright cancelled business decisions as the result of electrical costs. In copying that Ontario model, this government is inviting those same negative effects to come on over. You don't ease pain by putting salt in an open wound.

Now, from February to March there was a slight increase in Alberta's employment numbers. A lot of that increase was employment in the wholesale sector, but the wholesale numbers for Alberta, released by StatsCan yesterday, show clouds on the horizon for the area as well. Looking at yesterday's number, ATB economist Nick Ford wrote: "Unfortunately, it's likely that wholesalers in our province could experience another period of decline this year."

#### 4:10

The reality is that Bill 1 is only the latest government action that actually does nothing to help businesses create jobs. Some Albertans have been without jobs for several months. The government's inability to move forward on job creation is troubling. They put forward their job-creation plan in the last budget, introduced here just this past autumn. At \$178 million over two years it was the only job-creation measure in the first budget. It seems that the government never bothered to do any proper study as to whether this would actually create jobs. At least, they certainly never released one.

Just recently, after almost a year, they conceded that that jobs plan won't work. For one year they've been leading Albertans on,

and now they've presented a new jobs plan. In one way the new package of items under the new jobs plan is startlingly similar to the last jobs plan. There's no indication or any study showing how this will actually create jobs.

Sadly, these measures don't even start any time soon. One of them, the capital investment tax credit, for which details were announced today, is to come into effect in 2017. Tough luck for someone who's already been unemployed for six months. Same with the Alberta investor tax credit. Applications will begin being accepted in January 2017. If you're already unemployed, that's quite a wait.

Madam Speaker, given the economic uncertainty and given what so many Albertans have been going through for months, this government's inaction could be considered shameful. They're not cutting red tape for business. They're increasing red tape for business. They're not knocking down barriers to job creation. It appears that they're putting them up. Bill 1 – let's be honest – does nothing.

Yesterday, speaking to Bill 1, the minister of economic development said: "Our government's number one priority is to help Alberta get through this downturn and position the province for future prosperity." Well, for one year now words haven't been good enough.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. minister under 29(2)(a).

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, thank you very much. I appreciate the member's comments. I think many of them are misinformed. However, I do have a question for the member. He talked about cutting red tape. You know, you talk about buzzwords, and the other side loves to attack us on using buzzwords. However, I'm in favour of streamlining, making doing business easier in Alberta, and helping our companies. So I would love to ask the member if he could name one or two pieces of red tape or regulations that are interfering or affecting businesses or inhibiting them from doing business in our province?

**Mr. Schneider:** How about one? Environmental applications take months and months and . . .

**An Hon. Member:** Waste-water projects.

**Mr. Schneider:** Oh, my goodness, yes. Waste-water projects: there's another good one.

You should reduce this by 20 per cent. I'm just going to read the Wildrose 12 points. I'm not going to read the 12 points. I'm going to read the red-tape one.

Excessive regulation is an obstacle to growth in all industries, and costs small businesses four times more than larger businesses.

During an economic downturn, it becomes increasingly important to remove [the] red tape . . .

Is it that hard to believe that that's a fact?

The NDP government is one of the only governments in Canada . . .

Actually, it's the only government in Canada now.

. . . that never mentions red tape as a concern.

Is there no red tape? Like, I need to be informed. If there isn't any, tell me that there isn't.

Its platform and statements only talk about adding new regulations to Alberta businesses. This ideological stance in favour of government having ever more control over business, rather than letting business begin and create more business, has to end.

**An Hon. Member:** Are you going to table that?

**Mr. Schneider:** You bet.

Signaling that Alberta will be a business-friendly place is critical to attracting private sector investment and jobs.

That's the best I can do, Madam Speaker.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Madam Speaker, I represent a lot of farmers in the Strathmore-Brooks area. A lot of the feedlots, especially in the Strathmore area, have come to me and talked about the implementation of Bill 6 and the mountains of red tape that it is going to mean for farmers and ranchers in my area. Now, I know that the Member for Little Bow is a proud farmer from a next-door, neighbouring constituency. He was even sowing fields during the campaign. I was actually very angry at him for not being out campaigning when he was planting, but he's a proud farmer. I've heard all sorts of complaints about the extreme red tape that is burdening the farmers and ranchers in my constituency around feedlots, around support to agriculture, and around the huge paper burden that's being placed on farmers in my constituency and across rural Alberta. As a proud farmer I'm hoping that maybe the Member for Little Bow can talk about the heavy burdens that farmers and ranchers are facing with red tape in this province.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Schneider:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you for the question. There's an organization – and most people on that side won't have ever heard of it – called the NRCB, which is the Natural Resources Conservation Board, that actually steps in when there is any discussion about confined feedlots, feeding of any description. The red tape there is what I would call spectacular. If we were measuring red tape in something that would shoot rockets off, it's spectacular.

I'll give you some more here. We should save government and business time and money by streamlining our business reporting requirements so businesses only have to report changes to government and don't have to process the same thing year after year. We should follow through on good initiatives already begun like extending the one-business, one-number principle government-wide instead of just in Service Alberta.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any further questions or comments?

Seeing none, I'll recognize the hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm honoured to speak today to Bill 1, the minister's job description. I'm not sure why we have to talk about this bill, an act to give the minister instructions that he had to make public his mandate letter, which the Premier promised to disclose but has thus far failed to do.

It's an interesting bill. Bill 1 is normally symbolic, as the government put it, a flagship bill. You want to really put some meat on the bones. I was proud of Bill 1 in the spring Legislature, where the government, the Official Opposition, the fourth party, and the fifth party all supported banning corporate and union donations in the province. That was a bill with some real meat on the bones. That was a flagship bill that actually meant something. This is a bill that really just gives the minister a job description. You know, it's his one-job plan. It is a minister who's only managed to create a single job, and that is his job, a job lacking security, I might say.

Madam Speaker, I don't know why this is being put forward in the form of legislation. This could come forward in the form of a motion. This really is little more than a motion to do nice things. Everybody likes economic diversification, everybody likes economic development, and that's all this bill is. It's saying that we

like these things, that the minister should do these things. That should come forward in the form of a motion, not a piece of legislation.

You know why? Because I think we have enough laws in this province. Every time we pass a law, we're making our books bigger and bigger and bigger. Sometimes these are good laws, but sometimes we get into a nasty habit in this place, Madam Speaker, when we pass laws just to act like we're doing something but are not actually doing something. You know, it's like when something goes wrong and someone says: there should be a law about this. We would like a more diversified economy; therefore, there should be a law saying that we want a more diversified economy. We get into a lot of trouble when we do this, when we think that we are so all-powerful, that the government is so competent and capable that we can wave our magic wand and just diversify the economy because we passed a bill saying that it shall be so. "On the eighth day he commanded that the economy shall be diversified, and it was so, and voters looked at it and said that this was good." Can I get an amen from the government? [interjections] O mercy, Madam Speaker. O mercy for the poor taxpayers of this province.

4:20

Madam Speaker, I'll say this much. This bill does nothing, which is better than most of the laws we've passed so far. As much of a waste of time as this piece of legislation is, it is possibly one of the least harmful pieces of legislation we've debated, and I thank the hon. members on the government side for making sure that we're not actually making it worse. This is a bill that just discusses nice things, that waves our magic wand and by fiat – by fiat – coaxes economic development out of the sky like manna from the diversification gods. This bill is talking about nice things, but it does nothing, and because it does nothing, it's actually probably one of the better bills that they've put forward.

Let's talk about economic diversification. Everybody wants to diversify the economy. Let's look at the lessons of history, Madam Speaker. In the mid-1980s both Alberta and Newfoundland and Labrador were in a relatively similar case. We had economies that were largely reliant upon a single resource industry for our GDP, for our economic development, and both the Alberta government and the government of Newfoundland and Labrador were looking at ways to diversify revenue streams. At that time, the mid-1990s, if I'm not mistaken, it was the Brian Peckford government. I think they were PCs. They came forward with a plan, actually brought to them by a Calgary businessman at the time, to diversify the Newfoundland economy away from the cod fishery, which they were overreliant on. They decided that Newfoundland would diversify their economy. They would become the cucumber capital of Canada. Newfoundland would diversify its economy and its revenue stream, and they would make cucumbers.

There were a few problems with this plan, Madam Speaker. As the Member for Little Bow, who is a farmer, knows, to grow things, you require sunshine and soil. Newfoundland has neither. But only politicians on the eighth day could pronounce: so it shall be so. And that's what the politicians, with good intentions of trying to diversify the economy in Newfoundland, commanded, that it shall be so. They said: we're going to make cucumbers, and we don't care what the circumstances are. So they entered into a giant corporate welfare scheme to build big, monstrous greenhouses across Newfoundland.

Problem one was sunshine; problem two was soil. Through science they thought they could try to get around it with greenhouses. They tried. But it was a government-supported business. The cucumbers came out a little bit sickly, so they had to try again, and they got bailed out with even more taxpayers' money.

They were determined, against the nature of the cucumber, to force it to grow. They would force this cucumber to grow against its will and instincts in Newfoundland. Eventually they overcame nature. They grew cucumbers in Newfoundland.

Then they came to their ultimate problem. People in Newfoundland don't really like to eat cucumbers. But governments that think they know better than the market decided that they could create a market. They would force Newfoundlanders to eat cucumbers. So they had to subsidize them. They had to subsidize them well below market prices, Madam Speaker. They still didn't want to eat them. Newfoundlanders are a rather carnivorous people, if you've ever met one.

They refused to eat these government cucumbers, so the government of Newfoundland started dumping them into other maritime provinces, where cucumbers were more acceptable to the local tastes. What happened? Well, the local cucumber markets . . . [interjections] I'm sure that I'm giving the members of the NDP bad ideas. I'm not sure that I should continue to talk about cucumbers, Madam Speaker. I am terrified that the NDP are now going to start a government cauliflower business, because that's the boom business, isn't it?

Madam Speaker, the government of Newfoundland started dumping these cucumbers into the other maritime provinces, and they got into a cucumber trade war, further devaluing the price of cucumbers on the market. What happened? The government went bust. At the end of the day, all of the cucumbers they produced cost the taxpayers, approximating from memory here, about \$25 million in 1980s dollars, a huge sum for a province with a relatively small population. That worked out to about \$25 to \$28 of taxpayers' dollars per cucumber.

**An Hon. Member:** It was quite a pickle.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** I appreciate the contribution from the other side, Madam Speaker. It put taxpayers in quite a pickle.

At the same time as this was going on in Newfoundland, the government of Alberta was similarly engaging in corporate welfare practices, believing that politicians here could engage in economic experiments to force things against market conditions, in mostly slightly less amusing circumstances than forcing cucumbers to grow against their will. So we ended up doing this. We wasted billions of dollars in taxpayer-funded schemes in the economy here at a total loss to the taxpayer.

What did we do? Well, one of Alberta's great Premiers, Ralph Klein, got the government out of the business of business. We sold off our money-losing government enterprises. Instead, what did we do? We created the Alberta advantage in its place. We balanced the budget, we paid off the debt, we cut business taxes, we cut income taxes, and we made Alberta the most diversified economy in Canada. This is what made us the most prosperous place in North America, and that is why I am so proud to be the only party in this House that still defends the Alberta advantage, Madam Speaker.

In 1985 about 35 per cent of our much smaller GDP was based on the oil and gas sector. Around 2014 25 per cent of our economy was reliant on oil and gas, and that was in a massively expanded economy, a much larger economy, a bigger pie, a much bigger pie. Now, when the government talks about diversifying, what they're talking about is having a smaller slice of that pie be oil and gas. Now, if you want to have a smaller slice of it, it's okay if you're growing the overall pie, as long as that slice as an absolute share of GDP is not shrinking. But their actions are trying to diversify the economy by shrinking that slice of the pie, by killing our oil and gas industry with an unnecessary royalty review, with an

unnecessary carbon tax, that has done nothing to advance the oil and gas industry in this province.

As the oil and gas part of this pie gets smaller, other parts are going to get bigger, probably government, with the government directly intervening into the economy to pick winners and losers. Well, we tried that in the 1980s in Alberta, Madam Speaker, and it didn't work very well. Newfoundland and Labrador tried it in the 1980s, and it didn't work very well. I am terrified that the NDP will begin the department of cucumbers and Brussels sprouts soon in this government.

The NDP are very confident in themselves that they have the business acumen to make investments with people's money. Well, I'll tell you this, Madam Speaker: nobody can direct capital more effectively, to its best possible outcome, than the people whose money it actually is. As much as the one-job minister across from me thinks that he has the business acumen, the sheer will to make businesses do things that they do not want to do, against market

conditions, by subsidizing them or coaxing them, as much as he may want to do these things, he can never do them as well as the people who put their money on the line with real skin in the game.

Madam Speaker, we've seen this before. We have lessons that we thought we learned. We thought we learned these lessons from the 1980s. We thought that politicians got the message. There was a point in this province when all the parties in this House agreed that government should not be in the business of business, and one by one . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, as fascinating as the discussion has been, but clearly we need a break. Pursuant to Standing Order 4(2) the Assembly stands adjourned until Monday, May 2.

[The Assembly adjourned at 4:30 p.m. to Monday, May 2, at 1:30 p.m.]

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

**Activity to April 21, 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)

Second Reading -- 732-36 (Apr. 20, 2016 aft.), 685-91 (Apr. 20, 2016 morn.), 749-60 (Apr. 21, 2016 aft., adjourned)

### **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)

Royal Assent -- (Mar. 23, 2016 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force Mar. 23, 2016; SA 2016 c1]

### **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)

Royal Assent -- (Mar. 23, 2016 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force Mar. 23, 2016; SA 2016 c2]

### **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.), 349-66 (Apr. 5, 2016 aft., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 399-409 (Apr. 6, 2016 aft.), 378-84 (Apr. 6, 2016 morn.), 415-28 (Apr. 7, 2016 morn., passed with amendments)

Third Reading -- 450-55 (Apr. 7, 2016 aft., passed), 428-33 (Apr. 7, 2016 morn.)

### **5 Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act (Sigurdson)**

First Reading -- 398 (Apr. 6, 2016 aft.)

Second Reading -- 455-56 (Apr. 7, 2016 aft.), 532-38 (Apr. 12, 2016 aft., passed), 491-505 (Apr. 12, 2016 morn.)

Committee of the Whole -- 570-77 (Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed), 539-56 (Apr. 13, 2016 morn.)

Third Reading -- 577-83 (Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed)

### **6 Securities Amendment Act, 2016 (Ceci)**

First Reading -- 447 (Apr. 7, 2016 aft., passed), 447 (Apr. 7, 2016 aft.)

Second Reading -- 519-27 (Apr. 12, 2016 aft., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 527-32 (Apr. 12, 2016 aft., passed)

Third Reading -- 583-85 (Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed)

### **7 Electoral Boundaries Commission Amendment Act, 2016 (Ganley)**

First Reading -- 518 (Apr. 12, 2016 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 585-86 (Apr. 13, 2016 aft.), 682-84 (Apr. 19, 2016 aft., passed), 649-51 (Apr. 19, 2016 morn.)

### **8 Fair Trading Amendment Act, 2016 (McLean)**

First Reading -- 568 (Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 669-71 (Apr. 19, 2016 aft.), 684 (Apr. 19, 2016 aft., passed)

- 9        An Act to Modernize Enforcement of Provincial Offences (Ganley)**  
First Reading -- 568 (Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 640-49 (Apr. 19, 2016 morn.), 728-30 (Apr. 20, 2016 aft., passed)
- 10       Fiscal Statutes Amendment Act, 2016 (Ceci)**  
First Reading -- 599 (Apr. 14, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 671-82 (Apr. 19, 2016 aft.), 730-32 (Apr. 20, 2016 aft., passed on division), 691-703 (Apr. 20, 2016 morn.)
- 201      Election Recall Act (Smith)**  
First Reading -- 92 (Mar. 10, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 119-32 (Mar. 14, 2016 aft.), 303-304 (Apr. 4, 2016 aft., defeated on division)
- 202      Alberta Affordable Housing Review Committee Act (Luff)**  
First Reading -- 92 (Mar. 10, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 305-16 (Apr. 4, 2016 aft.), 470-73 (Apr. 11, 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)  
Second Reading -- 481-83 (Apr. 11, 2016 aft., referred to Standing Committee on Families and Communities), 473-81 (Apr. 11, 2016 aft.)
- 204      Alberta Tourism Week Act (Dang)**  
First Reading -- 468 (Apr. 11, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 616-30 (Apr. 18, 2016 aft., passed)
- 205      Pharmacy and Drug (Pharmaceutical Equipment Control) Amendment Act, 2016 (Ellis)**  
First Reading -- 707 (Apr. 20, 2016 aft.)
- Pr1      Bow Valley Community Foundation Repeal Act (Westhead)**  
First Reading -- 447 (Apr. 7, 2016 aft., passed)

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