



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, May 18, 2016

Day 30

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),  
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
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)  
Jansen, Sandra, Calgary-North West (PC)  
Jean, Brian Michael, QC, Fort McMurray-Conklin (W),  
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Kazim, Anam, Calgary-Glenmore (ND)  
Kleinsteuber, Jamie, Calgary-Northern Hills (ND)  
Larivee, Hon. Danielle, Lesser Slave Lake (ND)  
Littlewood, Jessica, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (ND)  
Loewen, Todd, Grande Prairie-Smoky (W)  
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (ND)  
Luff, Robyn, Calgary-East (ND)  
MacIntyre, Donald, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (W)  
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Mason, Hon. Brian, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (ND),  
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)  
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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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Notley, Hon. Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (ND),  
Premier  
Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (W)  
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)  
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (ND)  
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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Shannon Dean, Senior Parliamentary Counsel/Director of House Services	Nancy Robert, Research Officer	Gordon H. Munk, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
Stephanie LeBlanc, Parliamentary Counsel and Legal Research Officer	Brian G. Hodgson, Sergeant-at-Arms	Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>

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

**STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA**

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Dang	Taylor
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

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

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Carson	Jansen
Connolly	Panda
Coolahan	Piquette
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**Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee**

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Clark	Nixon
Connolly	Renaud
Cortes-Vargas	Starke
Cyr	Sucha
Drever	Swann
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Loyola	

**Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

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**Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

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Kazim	

**Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing**

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**Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

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Babcock	MacIntyre
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Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, May 18, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

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

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you. It is my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly my mother, Barb Phillips, and her partner, Mike McCague, seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker. They are visiting here from Lethbridge, and I ask all members of the Assembly to give them the traditional warm welcome of this House.

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

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly members of the Olde Towne Beverly Historical Society in my riding of Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. The Olde Towne Beverly Historical Society builds community spirit by collecting, sharing, and celebrating the stories of Beverly and its residents. The society preserves the community's historical documents, artifacts, and significant landmarks and also does an incredible job working with our schools to educate our young people on the history of Beverly. It's quite remarkable. Today we are joined by Dan Vriend, Alene Carter, Bill Pisarchuk, Bertha Pisarchuk, Harold Schlotter, Darlene Schlotter, Lee Speed, and Amanda Harriman-Gojtan. I'll ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.  
The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly the Pembina Hills public school board's board of trustees. I would ask that they please rise as I call their names: Jennifer Tuininga, board chair and trustee for Barrhead north; Sheri Watson, vice-chair and trustee for the town of Swan Hills; Annette Bokenfohr, trustee for Westlock south; Jackie Comeau, trustee, Westlock north; Jan Hoffart, trustee, town of Westlock; Judy Lefebvre, trustee for the town of Barrhead; Kim Webster, trustee for Barrhead south; and Colleen Symyrozum-Watt, superintendent. I would ask them to please receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.  
The Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

**Mr. S. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Taylor Stiles, Ryan O'Neill, and Ruth Plitt. Taylor, Ryan, and Ruth are members of the organizing committee for the 2016 Alberta Summer Games, taking place in the wonderful constituency of Leduc-Beaumont this summer, which I'll be speaking more about a little later today in my member's statement. Their hard work is essential to ensuring not only that the games will be a success but that Leduc-Beaumont will be ready to shine on the

world stage as well. I would like them to now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all of the members of the Assembly a group of people with a strong desire to step up and help their province by getting involved in the democratic process. All members know that we're able to stand in this place because of the incredible efforts of volunteers to organize and run constituency associations in all corners of the province. To that end, I would ask the following members of the Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville Wildrose Constituency Association to stand up and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly: Jerry and Melanie Semen, Ed Clarke, and Matt Kastendieck.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.  
Are there any other guests, hon. members? The Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to introduce to you and through you two members of our Health team who I convinced to sneak in and watch question period today, and those are Tracy Kully and Lisa-Marie Gaucher. Both have been fantastic additions to our office. They've worked in this building for many years serving many ministers, and I am very proud to have them on our team in Health. Thank you very much. Please rise, and we can give them a welcome.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

### Members' Statements

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

#### Bonnyville-Cold Lake Response to Wildfire

**Mr. Cyr:** Excellent, Mr. Speaker. Today I couldn't be more proud of my home, the province of Alberta. I know that when the troubled times are behind us, Alberta will still be in Canada's future, and Fort McMurray will still be in an integral role. Fort McMurray is now heavy in our hearts, and we need to remember those evacuees who've lost their homes and livelihoods and who are in a state of confusion right now. Their grief can be felt across Alberta, and that includes my riding, Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

It fills my heart with pride to say that during the initial stages of the evacuations I immediately received calls from across the riding from people looking to help. Whether it was the reeve, mayors, councillors, residents, businesses, or local societies, everybody was ready and willing to help. Cold Lake and Bonnyville were named reception centres, and later Bonnyville was upgraded to an evacuation centre. It's the hard work and long hours that volunteers and workers across the constituency put in that I will always remember. Alberta Works, the local FCSS, food banks, city and town staff, and many, many more: these people are on the front lines, and we need to recognize that they have contributed significantly. Their contributions added to getting the evacuees food, water, shelter, information, and comfort.

This is also the time when we need to remember the local first responders, who ran towards the fire to lend a hand in saving one of our greatest cities in Alberta, Fort McMurray. These men and women took the ultimate risk to secure the safety of evacuees and

their homes. I would also like to take this time to extend my most sincere thanks to everyone who is still fighting the fires in northern Alberta. All of Alberta is truly with you. Although this fire continues to burn, it is no match for the strength of our people when we come together.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Islamic Month of Sha'ban

**Ms Kazim:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise today and recognize the month of Sha'ban according to the Islamic calendar. The word "Sha'ban" in Arabic is the combination of five words which translate as nobility, sublimity, piety, harmonious intimacy, and radiant light. Sha'ban precedes the month of Ramadan and is the eighth month of the Islamic lunar calendar. It is observed by Muslims as one of the blessed months, that hold mercy, compassion, and kindness of Allah.

This year May 8 was the first day of the month of Sha'ban. It is a month of celebration, catching up with friends, and practising compassion. The first celebrative occasion of this glorious month is on the third of Sha'ban, when the grandson and third descendant of Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, Husayn ibn Ali, was born. To mark this special date, Muslims gather together in their homes and mosques to share food, recite poems, and share thoughts and wisdom.

Next comes the 14th night of Sha'ban, a very blessed night, Mr. Speaker. In Persian it is called Laylatul-Bara'ah, and in Urdu, my mother tongue, it is called Shab-e-Baraat, meaning the night of salvation. On this night Muslims seek protection from calamities, acceptance of their repentance, and pledge to abstain from committing sins. All night long we recite prayers, keep fasts, and visit cemeteries to pray for the deceased. It is also said that on this night the departed souls of ancestors visit the houses of their friends and relatives.

**1:40**

The final Sha'ban celebration takes place on the 15th night. Shias celebrate the birthday of Muhammad ibn Hasan al-Mahdi as he was born on the 15th of Sha'ban. The birth of Mehdi is a grand celebration in the form of alms and prayers for his return; thus, Sha'ban is also known as the month of Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to wish all Muslims Sha'ban Mubarak. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I've been requested to seek unanimous consent to introduce some guests that have just arrived.

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Introduction of Guests

*(continued)*

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

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you some of the finest councillors from Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo as well as our assistant from our office up in Fort McMurray. If you could all please stand as I call your names: first off, Councillor Tyran Ault, Councillor Phil Meagher, Councillor Jane Stroud, Councillor Julia Cardinal, Councillor Claris Voyageur, and, of course, our assistant, Vaughn Jessome. If you could give them the warm welcome of this Assembly. [Standing ovation]

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to introduce two outstanding Albertans, Mr. David Yurdiga, the MP for Fort McMurray-Cold Lake, and his executive assistant, Angela Betts. I ask them to rise and receive the warm traditional welcome from both sides of the House.

### Members' Statements

*(continued)*

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

### Buller Mountain Summit Climb 2016

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In the past it's been an honour to be involved with expeditions which have raised awareness of those struggling with respiratory diseases and diabetes as well as those who are disabled here at home and students throughout the developing world through our Top of the World Society for Children.

Today I have a formal invitation for all Albertans to be part of an exciting event for an incredible cause right here in the Canadian Rockies, along with Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry Foundation and the Calgary Health Trust, who are Reaching the Summit for Mental Health and Wellness to heighten awareness and raise funds for veterans and their families who are suffering from the devastating consequences of depression, posttraumatic stress disorder, and other forms of mental illness.

On June 25, 25 climbers, including members of the military, will seek the summit of Mount Buller, and 50 hikers will scramble to the pass to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the death of Lieutenant Colonel Herbert Cecil Buller, who was killed in action leading the PPCLI. One group will be led by Laurie Skreslet, the first Canadian to climb Mount Everest, and it is my great honour to lead the other climbing team. To register or donate, please visit [calgaryhealthtrust.ca](http://calgaryhealthtrust.ca) and follow the links.

Mr. Speaker, alpine experiences may culminate in standing on top of the world, but they can also include risking your life to save another, treating horrendous injuries, getting there too late and carrying down the body of your mate, and dealing with the bottomless demands of a society that simply cannot relate to what you've gone through.

But that cannot compare, Mr. Speaker, with the experience of Corporal Ryan Forest, who writes:

When I returned [from Afghanistan], I came back a different man. I was withdrawn, paranoid, not sleeping, jumpy, depressed and the list [goes on]. It took a panic attack that seemed to last an entire night that led me to get help . . . [that] literally saved my life.

I encourage all Albertans to join us as we thank the men and women who literally put the lives . . .

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

The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

### Alberta Summer Games 2016

**Mr. S. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize a fantastic event soon to take place in my beautiful constituency of Leduc-Beaumont. For four days in July, from the 14th to the 17th, over 3,000 athletes, coaches, and officials from across Alberta will visit Leduc to compete, learn, and share experiences of a lifetime at the 2016 Alberta Summer Games. Young athletes representing 14

different sports will meet teammates and competitors from eight regional zones. Over 2,000 volunteers and 100-plus sponsors will pull together to make the 2016 Alberta Summer Games in Leduc the best-ever Alberta games.

Mr. Speaker, once upon a time I competed in discus and shot put in the BC Summer Games. It was an incredible experience that I still cherish to this day. I'm very much looking forward to these games as I know they will be a positive, life-changing event for many people.

I also have the pleasure of being the honorary board chair of the sustainability committee of these games. For these games in Leduc we are hoping to achieve 80 per cent waste diversion at the Leduc Recreation Centre, power the Leduc Recreation Centre with a hundred per cent clean energy, host a disposable water bottle free event – and I'll be donating water bottles to these games to help out – and educate thousands of visitors and residents about sustainability at the games.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, events like these don't happen overnight, so I would like to thank the volunteers and the board of directors, who have been working tirelessly to get us ready: John Bole, Dennis Nosyk, Darrell Huber, Fern Richardson, Darrell Melvie, Lynne Chalmers, Gary Kwasnecha, Megan Madden, Donna Tona, Doug Dungavell, Darren Demone, Bill Casey, Myron Keehn, Eugene Miller, and, of course, my guests that are here with me today.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage everyone to come visit Leduc, not only for the Summer Games but at any point and especially this July, and catch part of these best-ever games.

Thank you.

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

#### St. Clement School Human Rights Event

**Loyola:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an exciting time for the students in the International Baccalaureate world school program at St. Clement school in my beautiful constituency of Edmonton-Ellerslie. Later tonight students are hosting Inquiry into Human Rights on their school campus. This event will engage peers and parents to know more about social justice and human rights issues. This year's central idea is Choices and Decision, the two most important pillars that affect people's access to opportunities. The students will share their understanding of commonalities that connect humans around the world, people's perspectives on the rights and responsibilities of others, the way in which people respond to opportunities, and individual responsibilities to create peaceful action.

Mr. Speaker, it gives me great joy that students and teachers at St. Clement school are undertaking this process and are encouraged to look deeper into human rights and how as individuals and through their community they may take action. It fills me with pride and honour to see these students working so hard to promote awareness of human rights issues. It is by building awareness of freedoms as well as political and social rights defined in the United Nations declaration of human rights that we all will build a stronger province for all Albertans.

Thank you.

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

#### Minimum Wage

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today this government announced that they are doing alleged consultations on their ill-advised minimum wage hike. They're a little slow on the uptake, but better late than never. Now, as to the announcement, there was

no mention of how anyone can join these consultations, where they would take place, or even when they will take place. Under this current government's watch the number and percentage of Albertans earning the minimum wage has increased. When I put that question to this government earlier this week, the Minister of Labour dismissed it, saying that it is the natural result of an increased minimum wage. Minister, please stop reading from your speaking notes and think about the issue.

Mr. Speaker, let me give you the CliffsNotes of the argument presented by the minister. The NDP first raised the minimum wage in order to supposedly help the single moms with three young children, which at \$10.20 per hour was about 600 people in the province of Alberta. Then after raising the minimum wage a dollar, they said that more people are on minimum wage; therefore, more people need the minimum wage increase. That makes about as much sense as the Abbott and Costello skit *Who's On First*. If you haven't seen it, I recommend that you watch it. You will notice an unsettling comparison to the way this government has been performing.

Mr. Speaker, what the government should have announced today was that they are sorry that they have caused such undue uncertainty in the job market and that they are now willing to pivot, as the economic development minister likes to say, to a plan that actually helps Albertans, not causes more harm.

1:50

#### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Official Opposition House Leader.

#### Fort McMurray Recovery

**Mr. Cooper:** Everyone knows of the importance of the oil sands to Fort McMurray. It's the beating heart of our economy. There's no doubt that the \$1 billion in lost production is having a financial impact. Like any town, Fort McMurray relies on its small businesses and entrepreneurs: the bankers, the butchers, and the mechanics. They all need capital to survive. To date the province has not announced any strategy to support local Fort McMurray businesses. When can we expect this announcement?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. Certainly, with this situation in Fort McMurray, everyone's hearts go out to the families and to the local business owners who are impacted. This is something that has been quite devastating. We're working collaboratively with the local businesses as well as with the municipality to make sure that we can return people safely and that they do get the supports they need. We'll have more to say in coming days about this specific matter.

**Mr. Cooper:** The fact is that the fire has kept businesses, both big and small, out of the city for over two weeks, with the timeline to return uncertain. The fire has removed any opportunity for income to be earned in the immediate or near future. The Fort McMurray Chamber of Commerce is warning that by the time the rebuild begins, it may be too late for many businesses to survive. They have asked for access to emergency bridge financing and access to government-backed loans. Will the Premier say yes or no to this request?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much to the member for the question and, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to address it. Of course, our

first priority must be ensuring the safety of all the people of Fort McMurray, and we will continue to ensure that this principle is first and foremost as we develop plans for re-entry. We are working with local businesses as well to ensure that they are there to support people when they do return home and that they themselves are supported. Right now our crews are hard at work assessing damage and repairing critical infrastructure, and that needs to be in place before people can return and before we can be able to move forward on additional remediation.

**Mr. Cooper:** After the Slave Lake fires one of the primary complaints from residents upon returning was not having an opportunity to be on their property and recover any personal items before any lots were bulldozed. For evacuees, families, and businesses looking to rebuild and restart their lives, there's nothing more important than proper closure and ensuring nothing more is lost. What guarantees can the government give evacuees that they will be able to be on their properties before the lots are torn down or cleaned up?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We did hear this as feedback from the remediation efforts that were done in Slave Lake, and we have made a commitment to ensure that when people do return, they have the ability to be there. They will be supported and escorted because, of course, these situations are not safe for people to be entering into unaccompanied, but we do understand that they want to be able to see their business, see their home, and if there is anything salvageable, have supports in making that possible, so we commit to that.

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

#### FireSmart Program

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Adopting practices under the FireSmart program was one of the key recommendations coming from the Slave Lake fire. These practices don't stop wildfires, but they go a long way to protect communities. If money isn't going out the door, the system is broken. But the forestry minister said yesterday that it's just a problem of encouragement and a lack of an education model. Millions of dollars available for grants sitting on the table shows a chronic problem throughout the system. Albertans want more than encouragement. They want this fixed. What will the minister do about it?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Certainly, we know it's important to move forward on FireSmart. Although this isn't a new program – it's been in place since 1997 – it has been ramped up in response to what happened five years ago in Slave Lake. While there are some applicants that didn't meet the criteria, we're certainly interested in working to make sure that people are applying for it, that the criteria are being met, and we'll be supporting communities in partnering with us to address as much in terms of prevention as possible.

**Mr. Yao:** Albertans want to make sure we're doing all we can to prevent and contain future fires. A new report today shows that since 2014 the Forest Resource Improvement Association of Alberta, or FRIAA, the group that administers provincial grants for the FireSmart program, has left \$12.4 million unspent. These dollars need to be flowing to communities and our neighbourhoods. The

program is either not working or needs a complete overhaul. This NDP government inherited a heavy bureaucracy and an inefficient system from the previous government. Will this government consider changes to this program, and if not, why not?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. While grants for 2016 are still forthcoming, we will be working with communities to help them with making sure that they can do vegetation management and educational programming, and we've allocated more than a million dollars to the Forest Resource Improvement Association of Alberta. Certainly, we want to make sure that people are accessing the funds that are available, and part of making that possible is ensuring that the public service, sometimes referred to as bureaucracy, can support applicants in doing that.

**Mr. Yao:** For firefighters, the National Fire Protection Association 1620 is a standard criteria to develop pre-incident plans and identify risks to help responders manage and alleviate these concerns. The support for fire departments in Alberta is the fire commissioner's office. When they have a bureaucratic grant program that leaves millions of dollars unspent, would the government consider replacing this broken FRIAA model by allowing the fire commissioner's office, the real fire experts, to manage this money?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Certainly, the Flat Top recommendations, including investment in FireSmart, are 20-year recommendations, and we will continue to invest in FireSmart to make communities safer. Right now, as I'm sure is everyone's priority, we need to make sure that we're addressing the wildfires that are burning today, and we'll continue to reflect on and consider ways that we can improve our programs moving forward.

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

#### Medical Laboratory Services

**Mr. Barnes:** The Health minister's insistence on blindly pursuing an ideological agenda is putting lab services at risk. The need for action on the lab situation has been well known for years. We know we need a new, state-of-the-art lab in Edmonton, we know the current situation is untenable, and we know from AHS's own analysis that the most effective and efficient way to go forward is with a public-private partnership, with the risks and best path forward clearly identified. Why has the minister sent us back to the drawing board?

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

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I wish I could say thank you for the question, but certainly it seems to be couched in a number of things that aren't true. What the Health Quality Council report indicated is that there wasn't consideration of all three models, including containing the current mix of public and private delivery, expanding private delivery, or expanding public delivery. There was a clear ideological drive that led to the outcome that was determined previously. The Health Quality Council has determined that the best way to move forward is collaboration with a working group, and that's what we're doing.

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, that Health Quality Council report has been sitting in the minister's office for nearly half a year.



Furthermore, the report does nothing to justify why the chosen RFP model was worth throwing out. It's clear that the Health minister had her mind made up first, then went searching for evidence to fit her agenda. Despite the urgency and importance of the situation and her mind being made up for months, the minister still hasn't figured out costs, a budget, or even a plan. Is the minister delaying because she's backed herself into an impossible choice?

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

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm incredibly proud of the thoughtful work that happened in the department, in the Health Quality Council, and that continues to happen as we move forward to ensure that everybody in Alberta – we're also looking at the Edmonton and north zones in particular – have the resources and the right lab services that they need moving forward. That's one of the reasons why, after being elected in May, I took the time to ask for the evidence to show that the model that was being proposed was exactly what was best needed for Albertans. When that evidence did not come forward, I put a halt to the project, and we asked that we reinvestigate this situation, how to best move forward. This is something that's going to be evidence based and that's going to be consistent for Alberta.

**Mr. Barnes:** The NDP insists on pursuing plans with no consideration to economic or practical realities as long as it fits their ideological agenda. Alberta Health Services documents even show it can't do the job, but this minister has also chosen to ignore health professionals, including the Edmonton Zone Medical Administrative Committee, who insist that there are significant gains to be had in access to capital, expertise, efficiency, and service by using a public-private model. Mr. Speaker, what does this minister have to say to Albertans, who just want health services done right?

**Ms Hoffman:** The first thing I need to say to Albertans is that when assertions are made by members opposite, be very careful about what they're asserting, and make sure you're actually looking at evidence. We are proud to be building a long-term public platform for lab services that will afford Albertans consistency and that it will be predictable moving forward. This is not to say that there won't be a role within the public platform for specific pieces to be delivered within the private sector. That's exactly why we struck a team of professionals to guide this work through firm footing and hard evidence. Be very cautious about what the members opposite are saying and whether or not you trust it.

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

2:00

### Coal Strategy

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, we know that the Environment and Energy ministers don't agree when it comes to emissions on coal-fired electricity. Yesterday the Energy minister said, "We care not what the source is but what the emissions are." Meanwhile the environment minister is committed to proceeding and refuses to be influenced by even science-based facts. To the Premier: who's got the power? Your Energy minister, who will consider updated, innovated technology, or the environment minister, who refuses to acknowledge any new information?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As was said yesterday by the Premier and that I'll say again today, our cabinet is committed, and we are united. Our caucus is united on the climate leadership

plan as we move forward. While the member opposite might be trying to find divisions, we are clearly united. We've put it in writing, and we've sent it out to the public. We're proud, and we're moving forward.

**Mr. McIver:** Decision made. Sorry, Energy minister; you're on the outside.

It's clear that this government's plan to phase out coal has more to do with environmentalist dogma than it does with actual emissions. The environment minister often quotes a 2012 federal government report regarding health care costs associated with coal, but the minister fails to admit that the calculations are based on all forms of air pollution, not just coal. To the environment minister: do you think it's wise to take away thousands of Alberta jobs based on statistics that you have selectively manipulated?

**Ms Phillips:** Well, Mr. Speaker, what we think is wise is to move forward with a plan that will diversify our economy and create jobs, that will invest in our economy, and that will ensure that we have new markets for our product and that we will have cleaner air and water, that we are doing the right thing, and that we are not, as the previous government was, stuck in the past.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you. The environment minister continues to ignore evidence.

Mr. Speaker, let's try the Energy minister though she's on the outside. This government has chosen natural gas as the fuel for the future, claiming it burns cleaner than coal. It may be true today, but as we know, industry is making advancements all the time. In situ oil sands technology proves that it's possible that the coal industry could find ways to reduce emissions to those lower than natural gas. To the Energy minister: will you keep fighting to work with evidence so that the coal industry has a chance to incorporate their research into the government's future plans?

**Ms Phillips:** Well, Mr. Speaker, you know, the fact of the matter is that the province is going to be phasing out plants that would have gone past 2030. This is consistent with what is happening throughout North America and indeed throughout the industrialized world. We are ensuring that we are cleaning up our air. We are ensuring that we are open to new investment, which the previous government was not, with respect to renewables. We're ensuring that we're diversifying the economy and creating jobs.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-South West.

### Opioid Use Prevention

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know that illicit fentanyl is being used by Albertans of all different ages and from all walks of life. From our inner cities to our suburban communities it does not discriminate. In the first three months of 2016 there have been 69 deaths due to fentanyl overdose. To the Associate Minister of Health: what is being done to protect Albertans from the dangers of this highly toxic drug?

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

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Certainly, the abuse of illicit fentanyl is putting Albertans in life-and-death situations, and because of that, we want to make it as easy as possible for at-risk Albertans to get access to take-home naloxone kits. As a result our government has tripled the province's supply of kits, from 3,000 to 9,000, and has made take-

home kits available without a prescription at over 650 pharmacies across Alberta. By working with our partners in the College of Pharmacists, we are able to add more pharmacies each week.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that many users of drugs in Alberta may be afraid to discuss their use or identify as a user of illicit drugs and are therefore forgoing accessing those take-home naloxone kits, to the same minister: how is this government ensuring that family members and friends can actually protect their loved ones from the dangers of fentanyl?

**The Speaker:** The associate minister.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and again to the member for the question. We certainly understand that there can be a stigma behind drug use that can be a concern for users, which is a big part of why we worked so hard to get naloxone available without a prescription. And thanks to our co-operation with the College of Pharmacists we were able to make it so that not only at-risk individuals can access those take-home naloxone kits, but kits can also be picked up without prescription by Albertans who have a family member or a loved one who they are concerned about.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that many at-risk Albertans are put in life-and-death situations due to opioid dependency and given that there has been a surge of fentanyl abuse since 2014, to the same minister: will the minister commit to a plan that assists at-risk individuals by providing funding to increase treatment spaces for Albertans seeking opioid addiction treatment?

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

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Certainly, our government recognizes the need to increase treatment spaces for individuals struggling with addiction. We are opening nearly 50 detox beds for adults in Lethbridge, Red Deer, and Medicine Hat, and three new beds for youth in Calgary opened last month. More than 240 Albertans will have access to methadone and suboxone treatments over the coming year because of our government's \$3 million grant to AHS to expand access to these treatments. This will include a new suboxone clinic in Cardston to help address the high need in that area.

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

### Oil and Gas Transportation

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The National Energy Board, an independent arm's-length body, has been reviewing the Trans Mountain expansion for nearly three years. Now, with the recommendations set to come out tomorrow, the federal government has added an extra layer of bureaucratic roadblocks. These seem to be following the motto of Why Use One Review When You Can Have Two or Three or More. To the minister: will the NDP government stand up for Albertan interests and vocally reject the federal government's unnecessary additional review when we need this pipeline built now?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Energy.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. As I've said many times, we support the process of the

National Energy Board plus our province in making sure that we support the companies and making sure that communities are consulted with and that pipelines that are built are environmentally responsible as we get our product to market.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you. Well, forgive me if I have a hard time believing that the NDP government has suddenly changed the song card that they're singing from on pipelines. Given that saying something and doing so are two very different things and the NDP rhetoric of supporting pipelines is getting a little tiresome without any real action and given that the Energy minister voted in favour of the Wildrose motion urging the federal government to lift its B.C. north coast proposed tanker ban but seems embarrassed to acknowledge so, will the Energy minister do her job in support of the motion and commit to writing to the federal Transport minister, laying out plainly that Alberta opposes this proposed tanker ban?

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

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you for the question, Mr. Speaker. We continue to do things in a new way because we know that the last way did not work. If you don't believe us, listen to what Murray Edwards and Brian Ferguson from the *Globe and Mail* said:

It's time for a new conversation about building pipelines in this country... about how Canada can get full value for its oil production while also addressing environmental concerns, including climate change. This dialogue needs to take place with the type of constructive, interest-based, problem-solving approach that Canadians expect.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you. This conversation is only new to you. The insinuation by the Energy minister that Wildrose wants to see pipelines fail...

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, no preamble. Remember: we're past question 5.

**Mrs. Aheer:** ... is, frankly, ridiculous. Given that the Wildrose has been consistent in our support for pipeline projects, unlike the members across the aisle, who have transitioned from radical anti-oil activists to government, and given that the Energy East, Trans Mountain, and Northern Gateway are still on the table and all still need vocal support, not failed soft diplomacy of this government, will the Energy minister acknowledge that they need to change their tack, or is she just in over her head?

2:10

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you for the question, Mr. Speaker. As I said yesterday, I find it odd that an opposition who claims they like pipelines and want to work with us spend hours trying to see us fail in order to address their political ambitions.

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

### Coal-fired Electric Power Plant Retirement

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government made a good hire in selecting Terry Boston to guide them through what might become an ill-fated accelerated phase-out of coal. We know that he will be negotiating compensation for stranded electricity generation capital, likely to cost Albertans billions of dollars in freshly minted debt. However, the full scope of his work will not be

known until this cabinet receives a report later this year. To the Minister of Energy: will Mr. Boston be involved with the strategy or process around negotiating with municipalities and local businesses on their stranded physical and human capital?

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

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for the question. You know, first and foremost, we went and found the best in the business, Terry Boston, who has transitioned over 26,000 megawatts of coal-fired electricity in the United States. We have the best in the business. We have Alberta's back. We are also working with communities that are affected throughout the province. That is one of my priorities. We've told communities and workers and their families that we will engage with them and that we will work with them, and that's exactly what we're going to do.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Minister, given that the communities of Hanna, Hinton, and Forestburg rely on coal mining as a major source of employment and given that the accelerated phase-out of coal jeopardizes the very sustainability of these communities, to the minister of economic development: can you outline for the House an economic transition plan for just one of these communities, perhaps by giving an example of how you might support the creation of even 100 jobs?

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

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll take a moment to remind the House that federal regulations are causing 12 of our 18 coal-fired facilities to close early. Our government, through our climate leadership, is working with the six that our leadership plan will have phased out by 2030. We're doing this because it's the right thing to do. We know the negative effects that coal has on our health, especially on children and the vulnerable in our communities. I can assure the member that we are working with all of the communities, and we'll be going out and consulting with them to look at supports that we can lend to help workers transition.

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

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It sounds like One Job might become a fitting middle name.

Given that the communities I mentioned will likely be driven into the ground by this government's policy decisions and given that the minister of tourism fired a council of experts because he feels he knows better, to the minister of tourism: is your new tourism initiative based on creating a new tourist attraction, the ghost towns of Alberta, by driving coal communities into extinction?

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

**Miranda:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the member for the question. Culture and tourism in this province is one of the bright spots in the economy these days. This government is going to continue supporting the tourism industry. We're going to continue supporting attractions throughout the province, and we're going to be supporting education and health care in this province as well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

## Job Creation

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, 100,000 jobs have been lost in the energy sector since this government came to power. The NDP said that it plans on creating 100,000 jobs in this year's budget, but Albertans are wondering. Is the minister planning on recovering the 100,000 jobs that have already been lost under the weight of low oil prices and this government's risky policies, or is the minister planning on creating 100,000 new jobs – that means 200,000 jobs in total – using the divine powers he granted himself through Bill 1?

**Mr. Mason:** Mr. Speaker, point of order.

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

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the Official Opposition for finally recognizing . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. minister, is there a point of order?

**Mr. Mason:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, there is.

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

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to begin from the top here. I'll begin by thanking the member for finally acknowledging that it is the international price of oil that is having a massive impact on Alberta families, on workers, on our budget. But, unlike the opposition, our government isn't about to make matters worse. Our Alberta jobs budget is investing in Albertans. We're investing in small and medium-sized businesses. We've made monies available. We have two tax credits, that we're rolling out, and a series of initiatives.

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, I have been trying to get answers for Albertans about when and where exactly these 100,000 jobs will be created. Given that the Labour minister told us to ask the Infrastructure minister, who told us to ask the Finance minister, who, like the trade minister, doesn't have any real answers for me, to the Premier. The buck stops with you. When and where will these 100,000 jobs be created? Albertans want to know the specific details.

**The Speaker:** The minister of economic development.

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll try to outline it yet again for the hon. member. First of all, we have the 100,000 jobs over three years. We're investing \$34 billion in infrastructure over five years. We have the \$500 million petrochemicals diversification program. We have \$10 million to restore the STEP program, that the former government cut. We have \$165 million in an investor tax credit and a capital investment tax credit. We have \$25 million in new funding for the Alberta Enterprise Corporation, that's going to be investing in Alberta-based companies. We have \$35 million to attract and support new businesses through regional economic development models and a series of . . .

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

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, I didn't get the answer, but here is a common-sense plan that doesn't cost any public dollars. There are three shovel-ready pipeline projects ready to go that would create tens of thousands of jobs for Albertans. The NDP has finally started to support the Wildrose position on pipelines in every direction, but talk is cheap, and actions speak louder than words. What has the

government specifically done to get the construction of these pipeline projects under way and get the people back to work?

**The Speaker:** The minister of economic development.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While the Official Opposition talks, our government is doing. I can tell you that through our robust climate leadership plan we have already been making headway as far as getting pipeline approvals. I will remind the House that the Premier and the Minister of Energy have been champions of getting pipelines both east and west. As opposed to jumping up and down and trying to play politics between the government of Alberta and the government of Canada, we choose to work collaboratively with them. I can tell you that we've already made more progress than the previous government did in 40 years in getting a pipeline to tidewater.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

**Mr. Fraser:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In 2013 Alberta Energy started . . .

**The Speaker:** My apologies, hon. member. I jumped ahead.  
The Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

### Minimum Wage

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today the NDP government announced plans "to consult on the minimum wage." For businesses, youth, and families worried about what a 50 per cent increase to the minimum wage would mean for their jobs, these meetings will be nothing but come-and-be-told meetings. As stated by their own members: we will consult when, not if. In fact, the government's own studies show that this minimum wage hike could lead to, quote, a significant job loss. End quote. If the minister is serious about consulting, why won't she scrap this plan until a full economic impact study is completed?

2:20

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Labour.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government has promised to make work more fair by improving the income of those who make a minimum wage. As part of that we are initiating the consultations with some of the key stakeholders, including the employers who employ low-income Albertans, including low-income Albertans themselves, from whom I really want to hear the impact that the increase to the minimum wage had on their lives, and social services agencies. We'll be sitting down to talk to them about the size and pace of the next increase so that we can move to the \$15 per hour minimum wage.

**Mr. Hunter:** Mr. Speaker, you heard it. She said that she wanted to make sure she got to \$15. That's not consultation. Albertans just can't afford experiments that will put the health of our economy any more at risk.

Given that every chamber of commerce across the province has warned about the dangers of a minimum wage hike to jobs and given that every small-business group I have talked to has warned about the damage a 50 per cent hike in the minimum wage will have on jobs, what, pray tell, does the minister expect to hear from our job creator experts on her come-and-be-told tour?

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have also been speaking with some of the chambers. We've heard some of those concerns. At this consultation we are also going to be hearing from low-income

Albertans – 300,000 Albertans who currently earn \$15 or less, 33,000 single parents who earn \$15 or less – and hearing about potential mitigation strategies as well as the best size and pace to implement our \$15 per hour minimum wage.

**Mr. Hunter:** Every time you raise the minimum wage, that number is going to go up. It's circular reasoning.

Given that the minister's claims aren't grounded in fact because the evidence shows that a minimum wage hurts the economy and kills jobs for those who need them the most and given that an analysis from CFIB shows that this wage increase will result in a minimum of 50,000 lost jobs and given that the *Journal of Labor Research* concluded that "job losses are disproportionately concentrated on the poor," why is the current government willfully ignoring the evidence in favour of ill-conceived campaign promises?

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very happy to talk about the facts and the evidence: 1 in 3 food bank users is someone who works for a living; 300,000 people make \$15 per hour or less; 33,000 of them are single parents, 100,000 are parents, and 60 per cent are women; 194,000 women make under \$15 per hour. These are facts and evidence from Statistics Canada, that I'm happy to talk about.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

### Value-added Energy Industries

**Mr. Fraser:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In 2013 Alberta Energy started developing a program that looked to increase and strengthen the value chain and production of methane and propane products in Alberta to continue diversifying our economy. This is known to all members in this House as the petrochemicals diversification program, and I'm appreciative that this government has continued the good work of the previous Progressive Conservative administration. To the Energy minister. In estimates we pointed out that the application date closed two months and four days after it opened in early February. Can you confirm why that application period was so short for such a vital program?

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, that deadline was actually extended a couple of weeks due to some circumstances with some of the applicants. We did intend last week to do an announcement of the number of applicants and progress on that, but because of the Fort McMurray fires that has been delayed. There will be an announcement coming out shortly.

**Mr. Fraser:** Given that during Energy estimates the minister was unable to provide the committee with the names of any applicants because of legal commitments – and I appreciate that – can the minister instead provide the members of this House with the number of applications she's received and if she's deemed the application period long enough to see a wide range of business models? Can the minister also confirm that there's enough demand for these products to support healthy business models?

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thanks for the question. As I mentioned, we will be having an announcement come out, I believe, sometime next week where we will have more details about all the things that the hon. member is asking right now.

**Mr. Fraser:** Mr. Speaker, given that the devastating fires are still burning in northern parts of our province, causing some uncertainty regarding the feedstock supply of our province's upgraders and refineries – Minister, I do recognize that some of our transportation

fuels are imported from other jurisdictions east and south of here – can you assure Albertans that our upgraders and refineries have sufficient supplies of incoming feedstock so Albertans will not begin to see a shortage of refined products such as diesel and gasoline in these coming weeks and months, especially in our agricultural communities?

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you for that very important question. Mr. Speaker, what I can say is that we are monitoring that issue daily, our Energy department, in conjunction with all the businesses. That is being monitored, and we will address things as they change.

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

### Royalty Framework

**Mr. Coolahan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The massive drop in the global price of oil has not only been hard on Albertans, but it's been hard on our energy industry as a whole. Many of my constituents rely on the oil and gas sector for their livelihoods, and while they were happy with the royalty review, they want to ensure that the implementation of those changes works to the benefit of everyone in the industry. To the Minister of Energy: how will the government's new cost formulas promote investment and create jobs?

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the question and the opportunity to update where we're at. As I've said before, the former system was outdated due to technology and just different ways of doing things. It was out of date, it was a bit rigid, it was risky, it lacked incentives for diversification, and it also lacked transparency. The new one will provide some greater certainty, encourage all companies to keep their costs down, remain adaptable to the changing energy issues, support the environment, and provide greater returns to Albertans without increasing rates.

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

**Mr. Coolahan:** Thank you, Minister. Mr. Speaker, given that our energy industry is one of the biggest parts of our economy and given that any changes need to ensure that our industry remains competitive, again to the same minister: what is industry's response to these changes?

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you for that question. Mr. Speaker, rather than taking the opposition's advice to do nothing and wait it out during the thing, we chose to do the royalty review and make it more competitive. Response from industry has been very positive. One response from Tim McMillan of CAPP:

I commend the Alberta government for its timely approach to create a more modern royalty system through a constructive process. This has led to a royalty system that is true to the principles of the royalty advisory report. The new royalty system helps provide . . . clarity that investors need to plan for the future.

**Mr. Coolahan:** Mr. Speaker, given that both industry and Albertans are now looking to the future and making plans for going forward, again to the Energy minister: what are the next steps in implementing our new royalty framework?

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, there is still some important work to do in order to fulfill the recommendations. We're working through some details related to strategic programs that will help to ensure a tailored approach to some plays that are unique. The Department of Energy is also working on transparency measures so Albertans will see the performance measures and the overall measures of the royalty

system. Additionally, the department is working with industry on the technical and computer system changes needed to implement the new framework and continue the same . . .

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

### Rural Ambulance Dispatch Service

**Mr. Nixon:** Borderless EMS dispatch in central Alberta is intended to allow EMS resources to help neighbouring communities when required, but when rural ambulances are used to transport patients between care facilities, which usually takes them far away from their base communities, borderless dispatch calls often keep them away for extended periods of time, depriving their own communities of their service. To the Health minister: what is this government's plan to protect rural communities and families from the risks that come with a lack of ambulance coverage?

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

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Albertans have a right to expect that when they dial 911 to ask for emergency medical care, it will arrive promptly. We are very proud and grateful of the hard work and difficult work that emergency responders do on a daily basis. Paramedics, EMTs, and EMRs respond to nearly half a million calls every year across our province. The best way to organize first responders may vary from community to community, from rural areas to urban centres, and we recognize that.

2:30

**Mr. Nixon:** Given that in communities like Rimbey volunteer firefighters play an integral role in emergency response and given that a lack of ambulance coverage often means that local volunteer firefighters are the first to arrive at the emergency scene, does this government plan to empower volunteer firefighters, who are often off-duty paramedics and EMTs, to fully utilize their specialized skill sets to provide emergency and medical assistance when they are first on the scene to save rural Albertans' lives?

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

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. We absolutely want to ensure that Albertans are receiving the best medical care possible whenever they are calling for help and as required. We are continuing to work with our partners in the paramedic field and across health practitioners to ensure that Albertans have the care that they need at the right time and in the right place.

**Mr. Nixon:** Ambulance coverage is a matter of life and death in ridings like mine. Since interfacility transfers have become so problematic for rural communities that they are buying non-emergency vehicles for patient transport and given that AHS routinely refuses to allow communities to use these non-emergency vehicles, again to the minister: why won't this government accept local solutions to the lack of ambulance coverage and allow rural areas to utilize non-emergency vehicles for patient transport to save rural Albertans' lives?

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

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. We have regulations and legislation in place to ensure that Albertans are getting the highest quality care that they can and that ambulance services that arrive to greet a patient are conforming to

safety standards that are set out by regulation. The safety of patients is the most important piece for our government, and we will continue to work with our partners across the health care system to deliver safe and efficient health care.

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

#### Provincial Fiscal Deficit

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. Minister of Finance has repeatedly blamed the price of oil for the massive deficit his government is running and will run in the coming years. He pines for the days of higher oil prices while he attempts to justify deficits of \$10 billion this year, \$10 billion next year, and \$8 billion the following year. To the hon. minister, I have a simple question. If oil was \$100 a barrel today, would we have a deficit, a balanced budget, or both?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We'd probably have less of a deficit. We are doing our utmost to control the things we can, and those things are that we're turning the tap down on operational spending. Later today I will be presenting a bill that looks at doing that even more. The challenge in Alberta is that oil prices have fallen off the table and have left us with a huge hole in our revenues, and we can't change that. What we can change, we are.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So the answer is no balanced budget.

Given that when our credit was downgraded, the minister chastised the international lender by stating that they didn't understand his plan and given that Moody's and IMF are predicting that oil prices will be about \$15 per barrel lower than his projection for the '18 and '19 fiscal years, again to the hon. minister: how high will the deficit be in the '18-19 fiscal year if oil is \$49 per barrel instead of the \$64 per barrel you're predicting?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, in the last fiscal year we achieved a better outcome than private estimates around the barrel of oil. We had \$50 in our estimates, and \$48.20 was achieved. That was four dollars better than private estimates, so we're on track. We've got a price shock insulator in this budget, so we're even going to be better on track.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this government is still projecting an \$8 billion deficit in the '18-19 fiscal year and given that this occurs in a year where they predict bitumen royalties to be four and a half times higher than the bitumen royalty estimate for the '16-17 fiscal year, again to the minister: when you said you were getting us off the oil roller coaster, did you mean you were getting on the oil merry-go-round?

**Mr. Ceci:** It's somewhat droll, but it's funny, too.

You know, what we have in this province is no provincial sales tax. We have no health care premiums. We have a competitive personal income tax system. Many of those things are because we brought them in. Previous governments left us on that oil and gas roller coaster or merry-go-round or slide. Call it whatever you want. You did it; we didn't.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-East.

#### Indigenous Education and Curriculum Content

**Ms Luff:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We all know that it's critical that our government supports and builds greater understanding of our indigenous communities and their culture. Teachers and indigenous constituents that I speak to are eager to see new curriculum in this area. To the Minister of Education: what is being done to enhance our curriculum to reflect our indigenous heritage?

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, I certainly agree with the member that we need to strengthen our curriculum to reflect our indigenous heritage. To that end we are enhancing curriculum so that all kindergarten to grade 12 students and teachers learn about residential schools, treaties, as well as the history perspectives and contributions of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people in this province.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Ms Luff:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's excellent to hear.

Given that we know that our indigenous students generally have lower attendance rates and are less likely to graduate from high school, to the same minister: what is being done to close the education gap for our First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students?

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

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In Budget 2016, a difficult budget, we still managed to commit \$28 million to close the achievement gap between First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students and all other students and in addition to the existing \$48 million for FNMI grants. Also, we made an agreement in February with the Kee Tas Kee Now Tribal Council, which means that 950 First Nations students will have improved access to programs, services, and learning opportunities to give them the skills and knowledge that they need.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Ms Luff:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that my constituents want to ensure that our government is backing up its words with actions, again to the same minister: what resources have been dedicated within Alberta Education to support and promote the work that the minister is doing?

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you to the member. In addition to the Alberta Education establishment of a First Nations, Métis, and Inuit dedicated division, we have also established crossministry committees with Advanced Education, Health, Human Services, Indigenous Relations to improve governance of the Northland school division and student achievements. As partners in First Nations education we continue to work collaboratively with the federal government to close the education achievement gap, and we're working very hard to do that.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

#### Marijuana Use and Traffic Safety

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The results of a survey about driving and marijuana released recently are deeply troubling. Despite the fact that marijuana slows reaction time, almost half of pot-smoking Canadians surveyed, who said they drive while high,

were convinced it didn't impair their driving abilities. Worse, 20 per cent said that there's nothing that would deter them from driving while high. The Trudeau government has indicated they intend to legalize marijuana in the spring of 2017. Can the Minister of Justice please reassure Albertans that she has a plan to keep Alberta's roads safe?

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to assure the House and all Albertans that we're taking this seriously, and we're planning for this eventual development. Right now one of the difficulties is that there's not a good test, especially one that can be administered roadside or easily, to determine levels of impairment, so there's a lot of work to do in terms of determining what levels of impairment are serious.

Also, we need to change culture around the use of marijuana. There are many social norms about the use of alcohol, for example, that may or may not exist for the use of a recreational drug like marijuana.

2:40

**Mr. Cooper:** Given that many Albertans are concerned about traffic safety and worried about the impact of legalizing marijuana and given that all Albertans deserve to be able to drive on safe roads, regardless of what shape the federal government's law takes, can the minister please tell us if the kind of administrative penalties put in place to protect Albertans from drunk drivers will be in place to protect Albertans from high drivers?

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, we are very concerned about the impact on traffic safety of people using marijuana or other drugs. It can become a greater concern if the use of the drug increases, as expected, upon its legalization. I want the hon. member to be assured that we are taking this matter very seriously. We're going to continue to make sure that appropriate penalties are in place around this. That is part of the work that is ongoing.

**Mr. Cooper:** Given that not everyone exhibits typical physical signs of being high and given that it is also important to protect those that may be suspected of being high but who are in fact not under the influence of marijuana, can the minister please describe for us what training Alberta sheriffs or other police currently receive to detect high drivers and whether a roadside test will be available before marijuana is made legal?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, our government's first priority in terms of addressing this issue is ensuring that our children and that our roads remain safe. Currently it's the case that there are provisions under the Criminal Code that allow for specific tests and for the allowance of drug recognition experts amongst police, and we have several of those who are trained. The training is extensive, so I won't go into it right now. In addition, officials in my department have been looking at other jurisdictions where legalization has already occurred for lessons that we can learn from those jurisdictions, and our colleagues in the Ministry of Transportation have been working with some groups on tests for this.

Thank you.

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

Hon. members, we'll give you 30 seconds, and then we will continue with the items.

## Introduction of Bills

**The Speaker:** The hon. President of Treasury Board and the Minister of Finance.

### Bill 19

#### Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions Compensation Act

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to introduce Bill 19, the Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions Compensation Act.

The purpose of this legislation is to address consistency and fairness in executive compensation levels for the public agencies, boards, and commissions that are subject to the Alberta Public Agencies Governance Act. This legislation also follows through on the government's commitment that we laid out in the Speech from the Throne.

On that note, Mr. Speaker, I now move first reading of Bill 19, the Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions Compensation Act.

Thank you very much.

[Motion carried; Bill 19 read a first time]

## Tabling Returns and Reports

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

**Ms Babcock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm rising today to table five copies of a document titled NDP Handling of Fire Wins Praise, Even from Danielle Smith. In it author Don Braid states: "Smith says today's fire communication is 'brilliant' by comparison" to the previous PC government. "She praises the detailed public briefings and releases, the extended telephone town halls with evacuated . . ."

**The Speaker:** I think you've had adequate time to outline the matter. I'm wondering if you could table it, please.

**Ms Babcock:** Absolutely.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

**Cortes-Vargas:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite number of copies of a statement from Neil Shelly, the executive director of Alberta's Industrial Heartland Association. It's in response to Alberta Budget 2016, expressing their appreciation of our work in helping to . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member. I think we have adequate information.

The Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table this document and the requisite number of copies in support of private member's Bill 201, the Election Recall Act.

## Tablings to the Clerk

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the Assembly that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of the hon. Ms Hoffman, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health, pursuant to the Public Health Act the Public Health Appeal Board 2015 annual report; pursuant to the Health Professions Act the

Alberta College of Medical Diagnostic and Therapeutic Technologists annual report 2015.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I believe we had a point of order earlier.

The Deputy Government House Leader.

### Point of Order Anticipation

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise on behalf of the Government House Leader on a point of order under Standing Order 23(e), that a member is called to order if he or she “anticipates, contrary to good parliamentary practice, any matter already on the Order Paper or on notice for consideration on that day.” I believe it was the Member for Calgary-Foothills that was asking a question directed at myself in relation to Bill 1. I’ll draw your attention to the Order Paper, where, clearly, we will be continuing debate on Bill 1 today, this afternoon, and we debated it this morning.

I just want to recognize, in case my colleague opposite decides to look in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, that on page 496 there was a ruling that members in the House of Commons would be ruled out of order if they anticipated Orders of the Day. I recognize that that has changed with our colleagues down in Ottawa. However, I will draw your attention again to the fact that in Alberta in our standing orders – and I’m citing the standing orders from January 1, 2016 – that has not been changed or amended. Therefore, a member asking questions about legislation or anticipating matters that are already on the Order Paper is, in fact, a point of order.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The Opposition House Leader.

2:50

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It’s my pleasure to rise and speak to the point of order today. While the hon. member may have mentioned something that is to be debated, the question of the hon. member – and, unfortunately, I don’t have the benefit of the Blues – was not specifically about Bill 1. It was about jobs that have been or may have been or, more appropriately, may not have been created by this government. Clearly, this is not a point of order because the question was not specifically about Bill 1. If the question had been specifically about Bill 1 and a matter of debate around Bill 1, not around the jobs that Bill 1 isn’t going to create, I would suggest that it would be a point of order. Unfortunately, the hon. Deputy Government House Leader is mistaken in the direction of the question, so as a result of his error, this is a matter of debate.

**The Speaker:** Any other perspectives to be offered?

I believe that the statement that may have been referenced in the point of order is: “Is the minister planning on recovering the 100,000 jobs that have already been lost under the weight of low oil prices?” Hon. members, in this particular instance I see no point of order.

## Orders of the Day Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

**The Deputy Chair:** I would like to call the committee to order.

## Bill 11 Alberta Research and Innovation Amendment Act, 2016

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered in respect to this bill? The Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

**Cortes-Vargas:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I have been looking forward to rising and speaking in support of Bill 11, the Alberta Research and Innovation Amendment Act, 2016. Simply put, Albertans deserve and have been asking for an innovation system that builds on a well-educated workforce that creates a more diversified economy and that delivers value for money. This act proposes a new model that consolidates four agencies into one Alberta Innovates board, and it will provide the focus and leadership required to drive success.

Research and innovation is something very dear to me. To give you some context, when my older brother and I were a mere three to four years old, which, I’ll admit, wasn’t too long ago, my grandmother was babysitting us, and after having observed both of us one evening, she turned to my mother and said: you know, one of them is going to become a scientist and the other the next president of Colombia. Well, she wasn’t too far off. While I’m no president, I am humbled to be the MLA for Strathcona-Sherwood Park, and my brother is most definitely a scientist. Specifically, he’s a nanophysicist engineer. Until very recently he conducted and published his theoretical research right here in Alberta.

An interesting fact, Madam Chair, is that my brother’s colleagues were also raised in Strathcona county, and knowing the demographics of my constituents, I can confidently say that I’m not the only one that grew up alongside academics.

What we are doing here today is very relevant to a lot of my constituents, Madam Chair, because it talks to both the researchers and the innovators. My brother and a few of his colleagues had to look internationally when their studies moved from theoretical to experimental, which brings us to the importance of the investments that we’re making, that help diversify by building the supports that a knowledge-based economy requires and enhance Alberta’s reputation as a world-class research and innovation jurisdiction.

This bill coincided with his short return home from his studies in the States, where he is working on increasing the efficiencies of solar cells. What he told me, Madam Chair, was that it would be ideal from his researcher’s perspective if Alberta could learn from the systems that have been in place in Europe. I was able to explain that the evolution of the Alberta Innovates corporation is based on the best practices of other jurisdictions, including Innovate U.K., Germany, and Ontario, and has drawn on these to develop a made-in-Alberta solution to address the challenges of the 21st century.

As part of this transition a performance measure framework will be developed that gauges the progress toward achievement of the corporation’s mandates and outcomes and reports on the corporation’s progresses and finances in a consistent manner year after year. You see, Albertans elected a government committed to accountability and transparency. From my understanding, Madam Chair, the government is inviting the Auditor General to assess the intended outcomes of the performance measure framework and to examine whether the necessary processes are in place to achieve the desired results. A more effective and efficient system will spur innovation and allow for development of new companies and industries. Co-ordinating and leveraging the research and innovation system will help drive research, its application, and increase



business start-ups and its commercialization of Alberta ideas by providing access to services.

I've spoken in this House before about the many examples of innovative technologies that are being developed in my constituency, from portable water treatment systems to Nutraponics. Many of my constituents are innovators and entrepreneurs and have reached out to me to ask how our government is looking to support diversification in our economy. By increasing the pace of technological innovation, we can add value to our resources, improve patient care, advance energy efficiency, and reduce carbon emissions.

As has been mentioned, Alberta is a leader in health research, and our government understands that support for strong health research and innovation means better health and well-being for Albertans and a more diversified economy. That's why we continue to lead the country in our per capita funding for research and innovation. If we choose the opposition's path during these difficult times, we would be slashing funding for research and postsecondary education, but Albertans deserve a research and innovation system that is nimble and helps provide a more diversified economy and ensures that every dollar of research is spent wisely.

There is strong support for our plan to consolidate the four agencies into Alberta Innovates. I am proud to be a cosponsor to this bill, and I look forward to continued debate.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, Member.

Any additional members wishing to speak? The Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to speak to Bill 11, the Alberta Research and Innovation Amendment Act, 2016. It is very encouraging to see the NDP make a move to save money in an area where there is some fat to trim. Mind you, it is only about \$2 million, but I assume some high-paid positions are being retired here instead of front-line research and development that is to be done. One of those high-paid positions was making \$670,000, more than triple the Premier's salary. We also know that there was mention of some disciplinary action taking place in the corporation, but the minister would not necessarily go into any specifics there.

The budget estimates show that the Alberta Innovates corporation will see a reduction of over \$45 million from 2014 to this year. The changes Bill 11 will usher in will provide a leaner system, fewer executives, international governance practice, and the flexibility to direct funds for research and development.

I find it interesting that the Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park's brother was working with solar cells in nanophysics. My son was also working on that at the U of A in the last few years. It's important that we see this research and development continue on.

The board will also now be included in the sunshine list, which I believe is a positive move.

The work of the Alberta Innovates corporation is of great value to all Albertans. Discoveries here will be used to develop the jobs of the future. The streamlined approach will eliminate duplication of efforts and be able to link industry to research and development early on. I know that stakeholders were asking for this, and I look forward to that improvement.

I look forward to reading the annual reports to see the new products and innovations created and brought to market by the Alberta Innovates corporation. It will be through commercialization of this technology that we recover the investment and reinvest to create even more jobs.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

3:00

**The Deputy Chair:** The Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I rise to recommend an amendment to Bill 11, that I spoke about in second. I have copies of the amendment and will circulate them and speak to it as you wish.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, Member. If we can just get a copy to the table, and then you can go ahead. The amendment will be referred to as A1.

Please go ahead.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you. This amendment states that Bill 11, the Alberta Research and Innovation Amendment Act, 2016, be amended in section 6, in the proposed section 6.1(1), by striking out clause (b).

This, I believe, will recognize the critical contribution of medical health research in this province for the last 20 years and the way that that recognized entity under the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research and then Alberta Innovates: Health Solutions has brought internationally renowned researchers and huge investment to Alberta and a recognition that we have a separate identity in research within the medical and health area that has brought more innovation dollars than any other and needs to be protected. If it's hidden under a single entity called Alberta Innovates, there's a real danger that there will be a loss not only of recognition of this as a research centre but, indeed, a loss in terms of the connection between health research and the health system.

Currently under Alberta Health, Alberta Innovates: Health Solutions is carrying out relevant research to the health system, improving efficiencies, improving connections, and making sure that the research that's being done can be translated into concrete improvements in our health care system, can translate into improved management processes various aspects of health research that have really not only improved health in Alberta but have improved health delivery in Alberta, have not only saved lives in terms of new technologies and new drugs and new opportunities for Alberta and the world but also contributed to market and business opportunities around the world. So it has been a generator of tremendous growth, new medical breakthroughs, and businesses in Alberta, to put it in a nutshell.

There is real concern in the research community that since it was removed and put under the Alberta Innovates: Health Solutions, it lost some degree of integrity, some degree of credibility. Certainly, if this continues a trend toward uncertainty about our commitment to health research and medical research, this sends an unfortunate message across the world, if it's hidden under a general rubric of Alberta Innovates and doesn't have its own clear identity.

I would argue that if we're going to continue to be a source of attracting the best medical and health researchers on the planet, if we're going to continue to have the kind of reputation and investment opportunities from outside of the province, which we've enjoyed for many years – and it's my understanding that it's about a 2 to 1 investment. Alberta invests a dollar and other provinces and other funding bodies invest \$2 in Alberta medical research because of the very reputation and quality and outputs that we've had here over the last 25 years.

I heard from both deans Fedorak and Meddings – that is, the deans of the universities of Alberta and Calgary – about the tremendous concern that this second level of change is having on the medical community. They are already concerned in these medical centres that top-notch students are not coming here, that dollars have started to go elsewhere in terms of investments in new

research, and that teaching programs are losing momentum in some areas. So I think we have to think very carefully about whether health and medical research should continue to have some autonomy outside of the Alberta Innovates organization.

I would argue that that's very much the case. The new strategic clinical networks, for example, in the health system that have identified maternity care have a separate research arm that's looking at child and maternal care and how that could be improved; the areas of prevention and public health as a separate entity and the research needed in that to try and improve prevention programs, health promotion programs in the community. It's by no means certain that a single research body would be able to identify the priorities and allocate the funds in a way that would maintain the kind of momentum and credibility and international visibility that the name Alberta Innovates: Health Solutions could or some other name, whatever it be.

I'm arguing that we need to pluck out from this bill Alberta Innovates: Health Solutions and find a place for it, I would argue, under Health but anywhere, including as a subset of Alberta Innovates. But it needs to have its own name. If the international community sees that Alberta no longer has a health and a medical research name and that all their resources are going into something called Alberta Innovates, there will be a tremendous loss of momentum in terms of our health and medical research.

Thanks, Madam Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak to amendment A1? The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I do want to begin by thanking the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View for this amendment. I recognize that we've spoken a couple of times about the intention and spirit of this amendment. I want to assure the hon. member and all members of the House and all Albertans that, one, our health system is second to none and that, two, research and innovation regarding health is absolutely a priority of the Premier, of myself, and of this government and will be a top priority even within the new Alberta Innovates corporation.

You know, Madam Chair, we recognize that Albertans deserve a research and innovation system that is nimble, that helps build a more diversified economy, and ensures that every research dollar is wisely invested. There is strong support for our plan to consolidate the four agencies into Alberta Innovates. The member's amendment, unfortunately, would erode the intent of our plan and this bill. Now, I know the member opposite cares deeply about medical research, so his intent is honourable, and it's why I can tell the House that I considered it very carefully. But I'm worried that the intent that he has will have unintended consequences.

First, Madam Chair, this bill does nothing to change the mandate of the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research endowment fund. There still will be strong support for medical research in this province, and support provided by Albertans will continue to be the envy of every other jurisdiction in this country. It is already firmly established in section 11 of the Alberta Research and Innovation Act. The Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research endowment fund was established to support a balanced approach for health research and innovation and will continue to support health research and innovation, including "the discovery of new knowledge and the application of that knowledge to improve health and the quality of health services in Alberta." I would make a note that part of that wording actually comes directly from section 11 of the Alberta Research and Innovation Act.

3:10

However, the amount devoted to medical research, quite frankly, should not be decided by members of this House. It should be merit based, and it should be directed by experts for the benefit of Albertans. We've recently heard some exciting ideas promoted about health research, including in the state of the city address when the mayor of Edmonton, Mayor Iveson, spoke about his intention regarding health research and innovation within the province and the importance it has for the mayor and for the city of Edmonton.

I believe the best days for medical research in this province are still yet to come, but we want to give the experts the tools they need to get the job done in health research and in every other research discipline, which is exactly what this bill does. Therefore, again I want to thank the member for his amendment, but for those reasons I've just outlined, I will not be supporting the amendment.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. minister.

Hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow, are you speaking to the amendment?

**Mr. Clark:** Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair. I won't repeat the examples that the Member for Calgary-Mountain View used, but I did want to rise in support of the amendment because I have heard very similar concerns as those raised by my hon. colleague here.

You know, I think that while I support the idea of streamlining the administrative side – and perhaps there's even some opportunity within Alberta Innovates: Health Solutions to move to more of a shared services model – continuing to keep Alberta Innovates: Health Solutions carved out is one of the true strategic advantages that our province has. There's a great deal of concern within the research community about a lack of continuity, of continued change, and I think there's some change fatigue within that community as well. Perhaps one of the reasons the government may not have heard a tremendous amount of push-back is because of that change fatigue and, perhaps, a fear that this is not a time to be rocking the boat.

One of the great advantages that Alberta has in the endowment that is the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research and just the heritage fund itself is that annuity type of funding. It's not subject to the whims of a given government in a given budget cycle, related to the price of oil or anything else, and that's a tremendous advantage we have in this province. It allows us to invest in medical research and in other areas but especially in medical research, which can be very long term to get to success. If there's anything that's going to hinder that goal in terms of attracting top-notch, truly world-class researchers to our province, then I have a concern, and I worry that by consolidating all of this into one, that's precisely what's going to happen.

You know, there's already worry that we're starting to lose some of these researchers or perhaps not bringing them to Alberta in the first place, and that's a real concern. That's something, I think, that although this bill may appear just like an administrative efficiency move – we're saving, as I understand it, about \$2 million a year in administrative savings. That's not trivial and not to be sneezed at, but at what cost? At what cost are we going to save that money?

I think that sometimes when we're looking at these things, we have to be careful about unintended consequences and we have to be worried about the global reputation of our province. I think those who don't have a fully formed idea of Alberta will look at the price of oil and say: gosh; things in Alberta must be really terrible. And now that they've had to consolidate these four into one, there's a risk that the global community will say: gosh; I'm not sure Alberta is somewhere I want to be. I think the signal we should be sending

is that this is a time for us to have stability, to double down on the investment in especially health research but all forms of research, and I worry that this particular move works against that objective, Madam Chair.

Thank you very much.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, Member.

The leader of the third party.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Imagine my surprise, not expecting when I woke up this morning that I'd be standing here on my feet, standing behind and supporting the amendment from the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View. But you know what? When the hon. member's right, the hon. member's right, and this is one of those cases.

I would ask the government side to consider how much money they are saving with their Bill 11. Consolidating administration, being more efficient, delivering services in a more organized, concise way are all laudable goals, so I have no criticism. Whether I support the larger bill or not, even if I think it's a bad idea, I'm not going to criticize it because any time this government tries to get more efficient, that's a good thing.

However, the hon. member, with this amendment, makes a very good point. If you're talking about advancements and innovation in the field of health and biotechnology, that, members, in my view, is one of those places where Alberta can expand and diversify its economy. That, hon. members, is a place where we can actually do research.

There have been great examples. I know that at the University of Alberta what they call the Edmonton protocol for I think it's diabetes treatment is something that is world renowned. Some of my colleagues and I were able to recently have a look at the Li Ka Shing centre at the University of Alberta, where they have new cancer research innovation. It's on the seventh floor for those that want to see it. It is amazing. We talked to a number of researchers there that said: if this investment was not here, we would not be in Alberta doing cancer research. That's what they said, and I believe them.

What we know is that when you get the right researchers in the right fields, a single person – here's one for the minister of jobs – can create an industry. The right researcher, Minister, can create a whole industry. If there's anything in Bill 11 that by taking away this reference to this particular title will stop Alberta from being able to attract those top researchers and developing those jobs with them if we do it right – again, I hope that same minister is thinking about exploiting those inventions, exploiting those discoveries, exploiting those new technologies here in Alberta. Now you're talking about the opportunity to employ potentially thousands of people, for many millions of dollars in financial activity, and to enhance Alberta's reputation in other fields, too, as a place where innovation can happen. I think on all sides of the House the one thing that we agree on is that innovation is the road to the future.

I'm going to support this amendment. I think it's a good one. I hope that the government, when they're thinking about not only this amendment but the rest of Bill 11, thinks about – again, I say this advisedly. It's why I'm trying to be gentle with the government. Any attempt to actually reduce expenses and consolidate things and bring them together is, generally speaking, a good idea, but the potential is there to cut off the very innovation that could well become key to the successful future of this province. If it's in any way threatened, then I think all of us should think again.

My compliments to the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View. I think that his head is on straight on this. I think that his explanation for it was excellent. I think that his reasoning is laudable, and I compliment the hon. member for really bringing something

forward to this House that could well benefit Alberta not only now but far into the future.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak on amendment A1? The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I'll rise just to address a couple of points that the last two members raised. Again, first and foremost, research and development or research and innovation within our health system is a priority of our government. It has been and will continue to be.

Part of the challenge that I've found with keeping the Health Solutions innovation corporation is that, number one, it's not best practice when we look at jurisdictions within Canada and internationally. Best practice is having one entity that is able to not only process applications but to look at ensuring that the Alberta Innovates corporation is moving consistently in the same direction. Health is extremely important to us, but there are members from Energy and Environment Solutions, from AITF, from Bio Solutions that would argue: well, then why don't you keep us carved out, and why don't we actually create even more Innovates corporations to cover off every single sector in the province? That, unfortunately, defeats the purpose of consolidating the Alberta Innovates corporation.

3:20

One of the reasons why there was a little confusion is that we had three different Alberta Innovates corporations – Health Solutions, Bio Solutions, and EES – and then we had AITF, Technology Futures, which really focused on the commercialization of technology. Well, if you were, let's say, a person within the health space who created a great new widget, you had to then work with AIHS for the actual technology, but on the commercialization side you had to liaise with AITF. That's who is doling out the grants as far as helping to commercialize the widget.

Feedback that we received is that there was some confusion. The process was complicated. We feel that within one Innovates corporation we can continue to protect and invest in research, especially in research around the health sector, while at the same time ensuring that we are supporting the commercialization of those ideas and helping support innovation throughout the province and, quite frankly, across all sectors.

I do want to make note of the fact that Alberta invests more dollars than every other province and territory in the country when it comes to Innovates. That hasn't changed. I can tell you that innovation will continue to remain a priority for our government. The one point that I agree with from the Member for Calgary-Hays is that innovation is a cornerstone of diversification. I agree with that a hundred per cent. I can assure members of this House that we will continue to attract and retain some of the best and brightest minds, whether it's in health or in other sectors. Having one innovation corporation does not limit us or will not lead to a brain drain because we have one Innovates corporation.

We've been very clear in our communications. Our interim CEO, in fact, is the CEO from the Health Solutions, a woman named Pam Valentine. We have a number of board members – and I'll encourage all members of the House to look at their biographies – a very strong new board, with some consistency, a couple of members from previous boards so that we have that knowledge continuity. But at the same time we also have a number of board members who come from and have a health background. I can assure members of this House and all Albertans that that still remains a priority.

Alberta is a leader when it comes to health research and innovation, and I am certain that we will continue to remain a leader moving forward. The consolidation of these four entities into one will actually lead to a more simplified system, a more integrated system, and one where we will continue to be a leader in the country and around the world.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Well, I appreciate the minister's considerations. I do have to say two things about it. Number one, there's a global perception that when you eliminate a body called AHFMR, the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research, you have changed the agenda and you have lost a commitment to health and medical research. The second is that Alberta Innovates: Health Solutions was closely connected to Alberta Health, the ministry. If we lose that, then we lose a sense of connection between what is happening on the ground and what the research agenda should be.

Those are two critical pieces. Number one, in terms of national or international terms, if you've reduced your commitment to medical and health research by dropping the name, you've lost significant connection. Secondly, if you lose connection to the very health system that should be a guide for what's relevant and what's important both in terms of commercialization and in terms of new health innovation, you've lost something.

I'm deeply concerned, as many in the research area are. This may be a simpler way of managing. It may save money, and I don't think there's any problem with saving money, but we need a designated body called health or medical research or we're going to lose very substantially in international competition for research dollars in health and medical research.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment?

Seeing none, I'll call the question on amendment A1.

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

**The Deputy Chair:** We will now return to the original bill, Bill 11. Any members wishing to speak to the original bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wanted to rise to speak to Bill 11, Alberta Research and Innovation Amendment Act, 2016. I'm sad to see that this amendment was defeated, but I think the intent – we have to give, again, credit where credit is due. To save dollars with respect to the administration of possible innovation opportunities is always important to us.

I think the ecosystem of innovation is what really is at stake here, and what we have to hope is that it's something that we'll move forward on. We have the likes of TEC Edmonton, Innovate Calgary, Calgary Economic Development, and Edmonton Economic Development, who are hard workers in this ecosystem of innovation. Obviously, Alberta Innovates, in its previous form, has done so as well and been leaders in that. It's been an opportunity, I think, for many organizations to get involved, and I think we have to move forward.

As mentioned by the Member for Calgary-Hays, we had an opportunity to stop in to the University of Alberta. Our universities and postsecondary institutions are very key to innovation within our province, and I'm hoping that the new organization will work very

hard with the savings that they make to partner with these postsecondary institutions.

Another key, I think, to innovation is celebrating our successes in innovation and making sure that we take those people who work hard and have success in innovating and lift them up so that there's an opportunity for people to see what success looks like within the sector. We see that from the likes of Campus Alberta, from the Alberta distinguished innovators awards, from distinguished business awards, from some of our publications like *Alberta Venture* or *Business in Calgary*, and also from the Manning innovation awards, all celebrating innovators across our province. I think we need to do more of that in this province to encourage it.

You know, I see that we tend to focus on innovation in the technology sector, energy sector, agriculture, forestry, tourism, housing, biomedical areas as well, but I think we also have to think of innovation in different terms, in social services and indeed in government. I think it's something that we've asked for in our Engage initiative and Engage document, which is to look for innovation in government to provide savings and value for taxpayers. It's something that we've hinted at and will move further in describing with our \$4 billion challenge to the government of Alberta in the future, which is to find innovation, again, not where we traditionally try to find it, which is where we see it in Alberta Innovates, but in all sectors. Housing, certainly, is one industry that I've been deeply involved with, and we've seen great innovation from the nonprofit sector and the private sector in terms of looking at innovations not only in mainstream and affordable housing but in seniors' housing, and I think that we need to continue with that innovation.

I'd just like to speak out in support of this bill. Again, I think the intent is strong. Again, \$2 million in savings is noteworthy. I hope that we not only save \$2 million but that we enhance the value received by millions and maybe even hundreds of millions of dollars in the future, that we continue to invest.

I think it was pointed out by the Member for Calgary-Hays that the facility that we were able to visit was – you know, many people say: whatever happened to the Alberta heritage savings trust fund? Well, the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research has invested over \$850 million since the formation of that organization by the previous government in 1980. Currently there are over 230 senior researchers that are supported by that medical research foundation.

Indeed, the facility that we visited just yesterday not only is, I think, a beacon of hope in terms of innovation, but the Alberta Cell Therapy Manufacturing centre, which is part of the Diabetes Institute, as mentioned, is working on cancer cell therapy. They talked to us about surgery. They talked to us about chemotherapy. They talked to us about radiation therapy. What is the real innovation that is being done right here in Alberta through investments and the passion of many people and the support they get from our innovation ecosystem is actually cancer cell therapy, and there's some incredible work being done there that we need to be proud of in this province.

3:30

It allows us to retain talent that otherwise would go elsewhere, not necessarily even in Canada but around the world, and we would lose that innovation. We saw some young researchers there that said they had been supported through their education to do that. There was also in their model a chance for third-party revenue. I think we need to make sure that we don't lose sight of the fact that when we innovate, there is also an opportunity to commercialize some of that capacity that we develop.

Again, I wanted to speak in favour of this bill. As we often say, the devil is in the details. I think that we are going to support this. I'm personally going to support this and going to hope that the commitment from the ministry is there to ensure that it doesn't narrow the opportunities, that it in fact creates a one-stop shop for innovators in this province to move forward, that we will see that innovation internally in the management of that organization, that we will see the retention of the people who have the best experience and the best knowledge of how to make it work better for us here in Alberta, that we do get that return on investment even with the savings there.

I'm proud to stand up and support this and to give this government kudos for an opportunity like this. It's a rare opportunity, but I'm glad to take this one to do it

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's my pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill 11, the Alberta Research and Innovation Amendment Act, 2016. In 2010 the Alberta Research and Innovation Act created the four corporations – Bio Solutions, Energy and Environment Solutions, Health Solutions, and Technology Futures – and each of these had a focus in the economy and built the relationships with local communities to be able to research and integrate and support emerging technologies that would be coming into the Alberta economy.

Through Bill 11 we see that these four corporations are going to be merged. They are going to be integrated into one that we're going to be calling Alberta Innovates. Alberta Innovates will be a new, wholly-owned subsidiary corporation which will fund and drive the innovations and which will be responsible for delivering on research and innovation priorities for the province. My understanding is that it will focus on the agriculture, energy, environment, forestry, and health sectors. Alberta Innovates is intended to be a catalyst for change for the benefit of the full economic base of the province.

On a personal note, I just returned from Europe, and I saw in the Netherlands something related to this, where they've created and funded a place called Brainport, designed to do exactly this, to go into the research and development of new technologies. It was exciting to see how they have been working in the research and development of things like biomass digesters and looking at new technologies with regard to hydroponic greenhouses and using different wavelengths of light to increase production within those greenhouses.

It's an interesting idea, that we can use a corporation to try and advance the technologies within our province. I think that we've seen it done successfully elsewhere in the world, and there's no reason why we can't do it here in Alberta.

As I understand it, this change is being brought about partly because the stakeholders within Alberta and within this system have actually asked for feedback, and we've asked for feedback, and they've identified that the previous model of four separate streams of research was becoming unmanageable and inefficient and that streamlining the research and the innovation system would make it easier for researchers and for companies and small businesses to access and to navigate the opportunities for supports available to them through the various programs in Alberta Innovates. That's a laudable goal.

Again, having come back from Europe, I saw how they've done that successfully in the Netherlands and how they have moved

forward in some of these technologies and have provided world-leading research and development. We need to continue to make sure that as a province Alberta has the right tools and the right systems to be able to push forward this kind of research. If this amendment actually works, if it does what it's intended to do – I believe the government is sincerely trying to provide a solid benefit for Albertans, trying to navigate through the programs and the services that would allow for this kind of research to develop.

Now, Alberta Innovates and the ministry will have to be vigilant. They're going to have to ensure that this transition does not lead to a reduction in its reputation for research and innovation. I believe our hon. colleagues this afternoon have brought this to our attention in the area of medicine and that it is a concern. We are going to have to ensure that we continue the good work that has been done and actually improve on it. So we have to ask some questions like: who's going to decide on the research and the funding priorities under this new system? What happens as the innovations are introduced? Will one corporation have the capacity to adapt and to adjust to the emerging technologies in a timely and effective way, or will we see a deterioration, as is feared, that may reduce the capacity of the organization to move and adapt and to quickly see any change in circumstances or see a reduction in the focus in a particular field like medicine?

We read from the current fiscal plan that the government will save somewhere around \$45 million by realigning their priorities at the Alberta Innovates corporation, and that's a good thing in light of all the things that we've got to do. You know, we've got to make sure that these savings are truly put together.

Now, for all of that, the money that we're going to be saving is supposed to support start-up tech companies in an effort to diversify the Alberta economy. We just hope that as we do that, we don't see some of the concerns that have been brought up, where sometimes the monies from this corporation go towards increasing the compensation to the executives that sit on the corporation. We know that the CEOs of Alberta Innovates, the four branches, recently received significant increases in their salaries. We're a little bit concerned about that, but as we go through that, we also know that these compensation packages should be a part of the sunshine list, so we believe that that should be able to take care of some of the problem.

I guess one of the big issues that we do have is under section 7, where it does say:

by striking out “up to 4 research and innovation corporations” and substituting “one or more research and innovation corporations, in addition to the corporation established under section 6.1(3).”

In other words, it leaves some wiggle room here. If the idea is to streamline and to bring down some of the costs and make it a little easier to navigate, we're worried that “one or more” will allow for this corporation to continue to divide and to add as it goes through. We are going to look forward to listening to the government and to seeing how they're going to address this particular issue, Madam Chair, that we want to see put before the House. I mean, if the purpose is to reduce and to streamline and to become more efficient, we wouldn't want to have this continue to expand. We want to ensure that this is going to be a corporation that is able to innovate and not just place money into a larger and larger bureaucracy.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

The Official Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wanted to spend a couple of brief moments. My hon. colleague has made a lot of very

reasonable comments about some of the strengths of the bill, and I just wanted to make sure that we had highlighted one of his concerns because it's a concern shared by a number of my colleagues on this side of the Chamber.

3:40

He mentioned section 7(a): "in subsection (1) by striking out 'up to 4 research and innovation corporations' and substituting 'one or more'." It's really the "or more" that is a concern. This "or more" allows, potentially, the new organization to create the exact challenge that we're in today, where there are four separate, and the creep that can sometimes happen in government organizations and government generally. I know that some of my colleagues here had spoken about the possibility of doing an amendment around limiting the "or more." So I'd be curious and we'd be curious to hear if the government has any comments around this particular section in the legislation as it is certainly one of our large concerns when it comes to going forward on this bill.

There are many, many good things here in this piece of legislation, but certainly a significant concern for this side of the House is around times where government bodies give themselves sweeping powers to expand without the accountability to the Assembly. So I hope that the hon. minister will be able to provide some clarification there.

**The Deputy Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak? The deputy House leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the last two speakers and some of the comments they made, which I'd like to address. First of all, this consolidation of Alberta Innovates will result in only a \$2 million yearly savings. The reason that the number is not significantly higher is because the intention is to bring them into one innovation corporation, not to cut and gut a whole bunch of the arms of the existing bodies. Again, it's meant as a way to provide efficiencies, but at the same time we still want to be having our program supports for the different areas, and now this one entity also is not restricted to what the three previously were.

Again, if we're looking at exploring – the member cited looking on his recent mission at some other systems like the Netherlands', some of the things that they're investing in in their innovation system — our new Alberta Innovates will have that ability to continue the great research that is ongoing and support of commercialization in our existing sectors but will also be able to explore new sectors.

I just want to clarify again that the savings is only \$2 million, and the Alberta Innovates board are all volunteers. They are not paid a salary. They do receive the traditional government honorarium for the days they meet, but the board themselves are volunteers. One of the things that the new board will be doing is working with our interim CEO, and their first task will be to find a permanent CEO.

I think there were members that spoke earlier about: why a board first and not a permanent CEO first? It's because the board of directors are the ones who hire the CEO and make that decision and are the ones that supervise the CEO. If we hire the CEO, we're going in reverse. So the board will determine which CEO. We've engaged with a professional agency to do an executive search. This is not something the government of Alberta is doing, and I can assure all members of the House that we are casting our net not just nationally but internationally as well, looking for the best person for the job.

The other point. To the deputy House leader: I appreciate his comments. When we're looking at section 7(a) – and I'll just read this into *Hansard*.

- (a) in subsection (1) by striking out "up to 4 research and innovation corporations" and substituting "one or more research and innovation corporations, in addition to the corporation established under section 6.1(3)."

What that's referring to is not that the board or the government will have the ability to create a second Alberta Innovates corporation. This is referring to that subsidiary corporation that, again, came to us in the way of wanting to ensure that there is no conflict of interest, that the body that decides which areas of research to prioritize is not the same body that's then deciding who gets funding. It's separating those two. That's the purpose of the subsidiary corporation.

What this section in the bill does, Madam Chair, is that should the board determine that a second subsidiary corporation is needed – the example that I gave to the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills was that should the board determine, for example, in the realm of health that a second subsidiary should be created in order to ensure that we are getting funding protected for health solutions and innovation dollars in health, the board has that ability. I can assure the House that the board will not be creating a whole host of subsidiary corporations. This just gives them the tool to do that but not to create a second Alberta Innovates corporation, because, quite frankly – and I appreciate the comments from the Official Opposition on this – that defeats the purpose of the bill, which is to consolidate the four into one.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 11?

**Mr. Cooper:** Madam Chair, I move that we rise and report.

**The Deputy Chair:** Official Opposition House Leader, progress?

**Mr. Cooper:** Oh, yes.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you.

[Motion carried]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

**The Acting Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-East.

**Ms Luff:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 11. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, Member.

On progress of the bill, all in favour, say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Acting Speaker:** Any opposed? So it will be recorded.

### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole (continued)

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

**The Deputy Chair:** I would like to call the committee to order.

**Bill 1**  
**Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act**

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The Member for Calgary-Foothills.

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I have an amendment to Bill 1, and I have the requisite copies for everyone.

**The Deputy Chair:** Okay. If you could just wait one minute until I see the original at the table, and then you can proceed.

**Mr. Panda:** Sure.

**The Deputy Chair:** Go ahead.

3:50

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise today to speak about Bill 1 one more time. The theme of the budget is jobs. I mean, the budget itself is called Jobs Plan. The government also said that they're going to create hundreds of thousands of jobs. I have been asking since then about the details of that. But there is one way we can actually help industry to create the jobs, and that's why I'm bringing in this amendment, and with your permission I'm reading this. I move that Bill 1, Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act, be amended in section 2 by adding the following after clause (a):

(a.1) measure the current regulatory burden on businesses, set targets for red tape reduction across Government, and report the results in an annual report published on a public website of the ministry of the Minister.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

The amendment will be referred to as A3. Are there any members wishing to speak to the amendment? The Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Madam Chair. This amendment that I want to speak to, from my hon. colleague here, deals with the issue of red tape and the burden that red tape gives to businesses. To give us all in this House a little idea of just how burdensome red tape can be, I was reading a report from the U.K., and as you all know, there is a big issue in the U.K. right now as to whether they should continue to belong to the European Union or not. They did an estimation that the cost of red tape to the U.K. of belonging to the EU is £33 billion.

**An Hon. Member:** Say that again.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thirty-three billion.

**Mr. Panda:** Million or billion?

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Billion, with a "b."

That was the U.K. government's own estimate of the cost of red tape in just belonging to this other body, belonging to the EU. Red tape is one of those insidious, seemingly little things that can cost all of us a great deal of money.

Recently – I think it was last year, 2015 – the Canadian Federation of Independent Business gave the golden scissors award, which is a red tape reduction award, to a federal cabinet minister, the minister of the Canada Revenue Agency, for cutting red tape. A really simple little thing that she did was to no longer require businesses to have to report payroll taxes weekly but to spread it out. You could choose to do it monthly. Just that one little thing

saves businesses across our country hundreds and hundreds of thousands of man-hours in redundancy, and the government still gets the information that they need to get. Those are just a couple of things about red tape.

I have in *Hansard* a number of statements that have been made by the Premier and the Deputy Premier about red tape that I'm going to take a moment just to correct. I'm going to read to you a little bit here from *Hansard*, March 15, 2016, from the hon. Premier. "When we talk about red tape and regulations, let's be clear what some of those are: minimum wage, environmental protection, health and safety, speed limits." That was the Premier's own definition of red tape.

Now I'm going to read to you the definition of red tape from the dictionary. Red tape is an idiom that refers to excessive regulation or rigid conformity to formal rules that are considered redundant or bureaucratic and hinder or prevent action or decision-making. One definition is, quote, the collection or sequence of forms and procedures required to gain bureaucratic approval for something, especially when oppressively complex and time consuming. Another definition from the dictionary: the bureaucratic practice of hairsplitting and foot-dragging. End quote. Red tape generally includes endless filling out of paperwork and having multiple people or committees approve a decision and various low-level rules that make conducting one's affairs slower, more difficult, or both. In the EU in 2008 they launched a campaign actually giving awards, the best idea for red tape reduction award, and many nations and departments within the EU work really hard at coming up with red tape reduction measures to get this award. Those are some of the definitions of red tape.

I'm going to reread to you the Premier's definition of red tape. "When we talk about red tape and regulations, let's be clear what some of those are: minimum wage, environmental protection, health and safety, speed limits." Madam Chair, that is not red tape. That is not red tape. That was from *Hansard*, the 15th of March, 2016. So now we know why it is that this government is not at all concerned about cutting red tape; it's simply because they haven't got a clue what the definition of red tape is.

Again, the Deputy Premier, in *Hansard* of May 10, 2016, on the same subject of red tape: "Some things that might be referred to as red tape are simply security measures to make sure that individuals don't speed on highways, don't sell alcohol to minors." Just a profound lack of understanding of what red tape is.

Do I support this amendment? You bet I do. Should we have a red tape reduction strategy? Yes, we should, once we have a proper definition of red tape. I think every member in this place can agree that red tape is a problem. It's expensive. It's costing our people money. It hinders decisions being made in a timely fashion. It slows down everything within government and everything within our province and ultimately costs our people millions and millions of dollars.

I would ask this government to seriously consider a very widespread red tape reduction strategy, and I would support my hon. colleague's amendment wholeheartedly. Thank you very much.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

My apologies to the Member for Calgary-Foothills. I didn't let you speak to your own amendment. Please go ahead.

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I think everyone in the House agrees that with Bill 1 the intentions may be great, but the operating part of that is not clear. On behalf of the Official Opposition we are trying to make this bill work for the government, for the people it intends to help. That's why I brought in this third

amendment. Here is the opportunity for all members of this House to make this bill a better one.

Also, the Finance minister said that they want to find savings in the budget. The theme of the budget is, again, a jobs plan, and the Energy minister spoke about how to help people get back to work. Everyone's intentions seem to be helping people to create jobs.

I just want to give my personal experience from when I worked in the oil patch for 28 years. For most of the projects, you know, many times it took three to five years, whether it was a SAGD project or a mining project or any other pipeline project, just to get the approvals. From the initial application to the time they got the approval, it took many times five years. In the meantime the world market is not waiting for us. Most of the time the steel price had gone up so much, and then some of these projects became actually unviable. There were cost overruns. There were schedule overruns. So from someone who experienced that, I just wanted to share my experience with the members opposite so they can make an informed decision.

4:00

If you guys really want to make this bill at least look better than what it is and if you guys want to really believe in your budget theme of creating jobs, the best thing you can do is to vote in favour of this amendment, red tape reduction. That would show your seriousness in terms of helping Albertans by creating jobs and also, you know, to find savings in the budget without cutting front-line services.

That's why in our 12-point jobs action plan, from which you accepted recommendations 1 and 12 – and red tape is in between. That's another recommendation we made in our jobs action plan, that every time you introduce any bureaucratic process or regulation that adds to the approval process or adds to the cost of the project or anything, you need to take out another regulation that is adding layers of bureaucracy in this approval process.

Madam Chair, we can all agree that supporting entrepreneurship is important. We can all agree that supporting businesses is important. But we have to put our words into action. We need to agree on a way to support businesses and entrepreneurs.

The previous government did many studies on the excessive red tape in our province, and we have urged the government to take a look at those reports and do something about them. We don't have to duplicate the work. The previous government has already done those studies, and we can make use of some of that.

This amendment is to encourage the government to help Albertans by reducing the red tape that entangles businesses and entrepreneurs. Red tape takes up valuable time for Albertans, and time is money. As someone who worked in downtown Calgary, I can tell you: time is money. When you work on billions of dollars of projects, cost overruns sometimes could be billions of dollars. This red tape is a serious cancer. It could spread like wildfire. So all of us here have a responsibility to look at that and contain that. That would save Albertans money while simultaneously encouraging new start-ups because of reduced red tape.

The minister talked about Bill 11 a little while ago. We talked about innovation, how innovation is important for creating new businesses, which will, in turn, create jobs and wealth for the province. So if you are serious about that, please work on this red tape.

I encourage the members to vote for this amendment and support businesses and entrepreneurs. This is the last chance for the minister to make this bill better, so let of all us in the House help him. I mean, he worked really hard to earn the middle name One Job. I'm here to help him so he can take credit for creating jobs. If he's

serious about really helping businesses and entrepreneurs, here is your chance to vote in favour of this amendment.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Red tape is a problem; we need to acknowledge that. There are a lot of things that we need to solve in government. Wildrose has been very clear. We even created a red tape reduction shadow minister. This is something that we need to put on the forefront of where we're going as a province because it actually impedes what we're trying to achieve, which is trying to make sure that our tax dollars are spent effectively, with transparency and accountability.

Now, we need to be clear. When we're looking at red tape, it's everybody's responsibility in this Chamber – it's all of our responsibility – to make sure that when we run across red tape, we address it and move forward because in the end red tape costs jobs. It's a terrible burden on any province or country in the world, and we need to address that.

I do have a couple of important quotes that I'd like to read out. From November 18, 2015, in *Hansard*:

I can tell you that this is one of the priorities of our government in looking at ways to increase value-added. We are not about to charge out in isolation, on a decision that we make on our own, without working with the private sector to look at ways the government can support. Nowhere and never have we stated that the government of Alberta creates jobs. We do not. The private sector creates jobs. We have a role to play in, you know, increasing efficiencies, reducing red tape, looking at supporting private industry in their creation of jobs. From our point of view, if there are opportunities that the private sector has to increase value-added, both downstream and upstream, then we will look at ways of supporting them.

This is from our hon. minister of economic development.

This is something that we need to be very clear on. It's ironic that we've got a bill that is meant to create jobs even though we've got a quote stating that this isn't in the government's capacity. Our hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills has brought forward concerns that the government continues to say that it is out to make 100,000 jobs, and we haven't seen that. We have no way of being able to work out exactly how they came up with these job numbers.

This is where we come up with saying that this is a way to help create those 100,000 jobs, by reducing red tape. You need to be making sure somebody in government is being held to account to say that this is a priority, that this needs to be addressed. It doesn't appear that anybody is taking that leadership role. The fact is that this is foresight, that my fellow caucus member has brought this amendment forward, saying: let's actually do something with Bill 1; let's actually create something that this department will move forward and be accountable and transparent to Albertans on; let's bring a function that we can actually use.

Now, this brings me to the second quote that I've got.

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

Again this is the Minister of Economic Development and Trade in *Hansard*, March 9, 2016.



**4:10**

Now, the ministry itself acknowledges that we need to make sure that we encourage business. So far the government appears to be working counterintuitively to that. We're seeing increased taxes. We're seeing increased bureaucracy, which will increase red tape. The fact is that as we grow bigger with government, we become less efficient, and we need to be looking at efficiencies. We need to be making sure that every dollar that the taxpayer contributes to Alberta is utilized in a responsible manner. That's why these two quotes are so important. The minister acknowledges that red tape is a problem. The minister acknowledges that a one-stop shop is important. It would be unbelievable if the government votes against trying to reduce red tape.

Now, let's look exactly at what my hon. colleague is trying to do. He's trying to measure the current regulatory burden on businesses, set targets for red tape reduction across the government, and report the results in an annual report published on the public website of the ministry of the minister. That seems very reasonable. So how is it that when we're looking at Economic Development and Trade, this minister is only looking towards Alberta but should be looking towards and improving all of our relations with the other provinces? It shouldn't be just limited to Alberta.

But let's stay with this amendment. Let's just stay with this amendment and say: let's focus right now on Alberta. My colleague from Calgary-Foothills has been very clear that the businesses that he has worked with are hampered by red tape. It is costing hundreds of millions if not billions of dollars to our economy. My colleague from Innisfail-Sylvan Lake has also stated that this is not just an Alberta problem; this is a global problem, costing billions and billions and billions of dollars that are not going to health care, that are not going to our education system, are not going to any of our front-line employees.

If we focus on red tape, we will create jobs. That is just a fact. Minimum wage increases won't. Corporate tax increases won't. Personal taxes increased won't. We have a lot of things that definitely don't increase jobs, but this is something that will actually create jobs in Alberta, and voting down red tape reduction is incredibly distressing for me, distressing for my colleagues, and it will be distressing for Albertans. You need to stand up. You need to do the right thing. You need to vote for reducing red tape.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

We will now have the leader of the third party.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. Reading the amendment: "measure the current regulatory burden on businesses, set targets for red tape reduction across Government, and report the results in an annual report published on a public website of the ministry of the Minister." With all due respect to the mover of the motion, there is some benefit to the motion, but I have a big problem with it. Everything in the motion seems like a good idea, I have to say. I'll compliment the mover on that. My number one reason for wondering whether I'm going to support it or not is that this will add the very first piece of substance to the original bill, and then I'll be conflicted on whether I support that or not.

The bill itself, as it's commonly referred to around here, is the bill about nothing because it gives the minister authority to do what he already has authority to do and ought to already be doing. So whether Bill 1 passes or not without this is inconsequential. My concern with the amendment is that it may require me to vote for the rest of the bill, which is inconsequential, in order to get this, and

that leaves me with a dilemma because it actually puts a little bit of meat on the bones where there is none right now.

So I will sit down and contemplate this legislative dilemma which the mover of this amendment has burdened me with.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak on amendment A3? The hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

**Cortes-Vargas:** Thank you, Chair. Thank you very much to the mover of the amendment. You know, I'm listening to the interesting comments on the other side and the perceptions that they have of red tape. I think it's been clear, though, that we are looking at ways to reduce red tape and that not just the Minister of Economic Development and Trade but all of our government is willing to work together to find these things.

What I didn't hear in a lot of the comments were specific examples of red tape, because what was provided and at once referred to was taxes. The quote that was provided actually quoted the Premier explaining something about what the opposition was saying was red tape. Again, it's not clear exactly what they mean. I would assume that if they have a shadow minister of red tape, they would have some examples. Nonetheless, I do want to say – I mean, I even remember it previously in this House. The Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner criticized officials for requiring clean water in RVs and that being an example of red tape.

If that's what you're talking about, I think we also have to evaluate that we are stewards of Alberta, and we have responsibilities and we have processes that are there for a reason. It's not just about making sure that we have the openness to receive feedback to make sure that – absolutely, we started by creating a ministry for people to have a one-stop shop. As was said on the opposite side, it's a good start, and it provides us with the ability to also have those conversations with people.

In fact, we don't need an annual report if we're continuously working on this issue. I would hope that as the shadow minister, you would be continuously showing actual things that are prohibiting or not allowing businesses to succeed in the best way, because at the end of the day those are the outcomes that our government is working towards. We're continuously meeting with business stakeholders and chambers of commerce in order to do so. I don't see the reason to add this because it's absolutely a priority for our government.

I believe that it's also not best done in silos. I think that throughout ministries everyone needs to work on this and that you continuously need to be open to having these conversations, to hearing that feedback, to hearing what the experiences are on the other side from the people e-mailing you and going through those processes. That's part of just basic governance and reviewing your processes. That's why we ask a lot of questions.

I'm actually not going to support this amendment for those reasons. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** The hon. member that just spoke: is it permitted for me to ask her a question?

**Mr. Cooper:** You can say whatever you want. If she answers . . .

**Mr. MacIntyre:** If she answers? She doesn't have to?

I would like to have the hon. member's definition of red tape, please. She did refer to statements made over here as being too vague, so I am asking for clarification.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. member, you can make a statement or ask a question. However, it's up to the member to respond if they choose to.

If not, we will move on to Drayton Valley-Devon.

4:20

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Madam Chair. You know, I've appreciated listening to the members here, especially the comments over here about putting some meat on the bones. That would be an interesting dilemma to actually be in at some point in time.

You know, governments can help or they can hinder business. I would, I guess, refer to some of the comments by the Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park. We do understand that governments do have to have regulations and that those regulations are there to protect the citizens and they're there to protect and ensure that government is accountable and that business is – it's public safety. Governments can and do set those regulations to try and help businesses and society.

At the same time I think that a fair look at this issue would also show us that there are times when governments, through their regulations, can become burdensome. There's always a balance that we're trying to find here. You know, there are times when our governments can be excessively bureaucratic, where they can place rules that are a burden on the taxpayers and on the businesses in this province. And, as you suggested, there are times when we do have to start asking questions and we do have to start looking at the unintended consequences – we throw that term around a lot – of the regulations and the bureaucracy that sometimes accompany government.

I think that this member's amendment, that I would speak in favour of, is suggesting that there are times when we can use good judgment and look at these things to see if there are ways that we can make government more efficient and make business more efficient and be able to navigate the rules and the regulations of government so that they are allowed to be more efficient.

You know, as I was preparing for this, I found a couple of articles that I found kind of interesting. One was by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, that has started a Red Tape Awareness Week. They've suggested that there are places and there are times when you could take a look at the research that's been done on red tape and see just what kind of a burden it has placed on the ability for business to do business and to create jobs.

You were asking for some examples, so here are some examples. It is referring to Canada and the United States, and in this study they're comparing red tape in the United States and Canada.

In both countries, regulation is a highly regressive hidden tax with the smallest businesses paying the highest per-employee costs. Canadian businesses of every size, except those with over 100 employees, pay more per-employee than their American counterparts.

Immediately, that means that Canadian businesses are behind the eight ball when comparing themselves to American companies in their ability to be efficient and to be able to compete with American companies.

For the majority of business, the gap is significant. Businesses with fewer than five employees in Canada pay forty-five per cent more per employee in Canada (\$5,942) to comply with regulation than their U.S. counterparts (\$4,084). In total, Canada's businesses pay \$31 billion a year to comply with regulation.

[Now] how much of these regulatory costs are red tape?

It goes on to say.

Businesses owners in both countries report that about one-third of the cost of regulation could be reduced without affecting the legitimate health and safety objectives of regulation. In other

words, eliminating red tape would be the equivalent of a \$9 billion annual stimulus package in Canada.

Significant by anybody's thinking.

Now, when we take a look at some of the examples that I'm going to suggest here, you know, in my own constituency I was talking with one gentleman that owns a drilling company. He has suggested that in this past year the application process for being able to drill – that it's taken so long for the government to approve that application that he's missed the window of opportunity to drill. Therefore, jobs and the ability to make a profit for that company have been set in jeopardy by the bureaucracy of the government in trying to apply the regulatory process for drilling.

You know, here's another one. I was at the ASBA zone 4 meeting, and I was talking with one of the school boards. They were saying that the government has implemented a new policy whereby they now have to put forth their budgets monthly to the Ministry of Education and that in order to do that, that has considerably increased the costs to the school board without, again, any additional revenue being given to the school board in order to be able to do that.

Now, we understand that school boards have to be accountable, and we would all support that, but asking ourselves whether we need to do it, as previously, quarterly or now monthly: what are the benefits of actually going from a quarterly system of reporting to a monthly system of reporting? They're suggesting that, really, there is no additional benefit to the government, there is no additional benefit to the taxpayer, and that this is a considerable issue within our system. This would be an example of red tape which the government should be able to look at. So you've asked for some suggestions, you've asked for some examples, and I think I've provided you with some.

I would ask that this government would consider and that the people of this Legislature would consider this amendment. It is asking for us to consider this whole issue of red tape, and there's a benefit to it, I believe. So I will be supporting this amendment.

Thank you very much.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, Member.

If I could just gently remind all members to speak through the Chair, please, when you're delivering your message. Thank you.

The Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, thank you very much, Madam Chair, and I'll thank the previous speaker for his comments. I do appreciate that and will comment on a couple of his comments.

And I will thank the member for moving this amendment. Again, I appreciate the spirit of this amendment and what it's intending to do. But I can assure the House that I meet regularly with business leaders, entrepreneurs, industry leaders in all sectors in all corners of this province and will ask them for examples or ways that government can support business and industry, whether that's to gather ideas, you know, outside of monetary ways of supporting our business and entrepreneurial sector – although we did listen to the business community, which is why our government dropped the small-business tax rate by a third.

To this point that the member was speaking of, we are looking not just to finding efficiencies but to making Alberta an even more competitive place to do business in. That is something that happens on an ongoing basis, that we are listening and consulting with our stakeholders to remove barriers and that if there are barriers, to decrease speed bumps when there are.

You know, I appreciate the member's example about a driller and the regulatory burden that he faced. I do need to comment that there are processes in place that ensure that before projects begin, they've

gone through the proper environmental processes, that they've gone through a series of processes. I appreciate the opposition may refer to that as red tape, but they are processes that are in place to ensure that we are protecting the well-being not only of Albertans and our citizens but also of our planet. We are stewards of the environment, and we have a responsibility to act in the best interests of all Albertans.

Although I do appreciate that at times that may be burdensome for some businesses, we do also look – and, again, when I sit down with these business leaders, we'll ask them for specifics. I appreciate the member mentioning that one as a specific. Again, previous comments talked about things like taxes. Taxes are not red tape. You know, other comments in previous conversations looked at, again, providing public safety, which I don't think is red tape. It may be burdensome at times, and companies may wish for a speedy process, but there are processes in place.

4:30

Now, are we and can we always look for ways to simplify or expedite in a way that still guards the public interest yet doesn't unnecessarily drag things out? Absolutely. You know, the Premier has spoken on numerous occasions about pipelines, whether it be Energy East or the Trans Mountain pipeline, that, yes, there is a regulatory process that they go through with the NEB, but she has urged the federal government not to lengthen or make it overly burdensome because we recognize and our government knows that we need market access for our product. There is a process in place, but dragging one's feet is not going to help anyone.

I just wanted to stand and clarify that and to thank the member for his amendment. I will make it easy for the leader of the third party in his previous comments in the sense that I will not be supporting this amendment, and I encourage members of the House to do the same.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Cooper:** I was doing everything I could to stay in my seat, but I just couldn't stop myself. [interjections] I know that may disappoint some members in the Chamber.

You know, the Deputy Government House Leader was thankful for some examples of red tape. I think that they are numerous, and I'd just like to provide another one for him. There's a particular community in the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills that has a very strong belief that the provincial government is one of the most significant obstacles that they currently face to economic development. There's a particular quarter – that's a quarter of land, for some city folks if you might not know – within the boundaries of this particular municipality. While the economy was charging, a certain company did a significant number of studies that included environmental studies, transportation impact assessments, and some other land-use studies. Now, on this particular quarter the economy slowed, and as a result the developer chose not to proceed with the development, but now this particular community, fortunately, is having some real success during this downturn and would like to now proceed with the development of this quarter.

Now, unfortunately, a period of time – and I believe in this case that it's 18 months – has elapsed, and as opposed to the government working closely with the developer, the developer has been required to go back to square one, and all of the studies and hoops that they had to jump through in order to develop the land are now back at square one. Environment has informed them that even though it's the exact same study, the exact same piece of land, the

exact same bureaucrats in Edmonton, in order to get approvals, it will be over 12 months – 12 months – to approve something that's already been approved. Transportation has given some indication that it will take close to 10 months to approve something that was already approved by the same bureaucrats and the same ivory tower elites in Edmonton. There is no greater example of red tape. All of the checks and balances have been gone through. All of the i's had been dotted. All of the t's had been crossed.

Now, instead of expediting the process, an organization who wants to create jobs, who wants to move a community forward, who wants to provide economic development and growth is being held up by this government. Yet they say: oh, well, give a real example of red tape. They are in all sorts of places, and this is a perfect example of one. It's an exact reason why we should have a report card on red tape, so that we can be identifying things just like this and ensuring they don't happen in the future, things that prevent jobs, prevent economic development. I would think the minister would be keen, given that he's having a hard time creating any jobs, to identify issues just like this and move forward.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, Member.

The Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

**Mr. Strankman:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's indeed a pleasure to rise and speak today. I thought I might bring a little levity to the comments this afternoon because some of the members opposite aren't necessarily as familiar with some of the rural acronyms and some of the rural things that happen. To some members of the government side who represent primarily rural ridings, I'd like to relate a story that happened to myself and a good friend of mine when we travelled to Broken Bow, Valentine, and I believe it was Glendive. Glendive is in Montana, but Broken Bow and Valentine are in Nebraska.

We were talking specifically there about red tape and how government affects Canadian agriculture production. A very good friend of mine actually got up and talked about police and how bureaucracy and such is policed in Canada differently than it is in the U.S. My good friend Jim got up, and he started talking about that in Canada we have chicken police. If you have too many chickens in a commercial operation, an organization will come out and make sure that you don't have too many chickens, the chicken police.

That same agency also has egg police. We have supply-managed egg production in Canada, which they do not in the U.S. We also have milk police so that under supply management you cannot produce under commercial operations more milk than the quota size that you're allowed.

Madam Chair, we also have had wheat police. Some of you may know that I've been in direct incursion with the wheat police. A former government of the country actually changed that regulation so that we don't now have wheat police in western Canada and such that the farmers can sell their wheat to whomever they want. They don't have to go through a government agency to decide to whom and where and when they can sell their wheat.

In the constituency of Drumheller-Stettler we have a government agency known as the special areas, and they have grass police. The man comes out and actually assesses the grass production on your property and decides when, where, and how you can graze your cattle.

Certain regulations related to the milk industry also incur cheese police. You may laugh, but this is serious business to those people who are importing cheese into this country because it has a monstrous tariff on it. It's insanity. If you think that this does not

affect commercial operations, you need to reassess your evaluation of it. It's a serious situation.

My friend Jim, when he rattled through this whole list of chicken police, egg police, milk police, wheat police, grass police, cheese police in an auction mart in Valentine, Nebraska, the whole atmosphere broke out in open laughter because they could not believe the government red tape and how that would affect the agricultural industries that they're involved in.

4:40

I know there are some members from international heritage backgrounds, as am I, that need to realize that sometimes government regulation actually can negatively affect commerce. That's what this amendment is trying to do. Maybe you have cousins who are involved in the police industry. I don't know. Maybe you have cousins that are involved in the ag police part or with traffic police. We limit commerce traffic by weights and restrictions and speeds, and we all agree on that, and there are penalties for that. But the cheese police, for example, travel around and talk to people who import cheese at the borders. Now, does that sound like a sane thing for business?

We need to re-evaluate, and we need to re-evaluate the member's intention to the amendment here. I'd ask that you give it serious consideration and support the amendment that's before you.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Any other members wishing to speak on amendment A3?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A3 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:42 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, W.	Gotfried	Smith
Cooper	MacIntyre	Strankman
Cyr	McIver	van Dijken
Ellis	Panda	Yao

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Fitzpatrick	McCuaig-Boyd
Babcock	Ganley	McKitrick
Bilous	Goehring	McLean
Carlier	Gray	Miranda
Carson	Hinkley	Nielsen
Ceci	Horne	Piquette
Clark	Jansen	Renaud
Coolahan	Kazim	Rosendahl
Cortes-Vargas	Kleinstauber	Sabir
Dach	Littlewood	Schmidt
Dang	Loyola	Schreiner
Drever	Luff	Sigurdson
Eggen	Malkinson	Sucha
Feehan	Mason	Swann

Totals: For – 12 Against – 42

[Motion on amendment A3 lost]

**The Deputy Chair:** We will now return to the original bill, Bill 1.

**Hon. Members:** Question.

[The remaining clauses of Bill 1 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

5:00

**Bill 11**  
**Alberta Research and Innovation**  
**Amendment Act, 2016**  
*(continued)*

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill?

Seeing none, are you ready for the question on Bill 11, Alberta Research and Innovation Amendment Act, 2016?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

[The remaining clauses of Bill 11 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

**Bill 13**  
**Veterinary Profession Amendment Act, 2016**

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

**Mr. Strankman:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. It's a pleasure to talk today about the veterinary amendment act. I don't think I'll be quite as informative as I was earlier about the police and their involvement in this organization although there is some consternation among some veterinarians and the self-policing that this professional organization does do, but that's not really our point today. Our point is betterment of the industry and betterment of the service that it provides to agriculture, to cattle producers, to animals.

Before I forget, I want to mention to the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster – I talked to him yesterday about what I believed was higher moral ground in working with the animal profession, and I may have chosen the wrong words. It is an honourable profession to be working with and caring for animals, especially animals who are in distress. I've seen it, personal experience where some animal is in distress. We had a dog who had a bunch of quills come to us after the dog had had an altercation with a porcupine, and the animal – even though they can't speak, they know that they are in distress and come to a care provider, whether that be a veterinarian or anyone, to try and alleviate their problem.

This bill is trying to streamline regulation, and unlike some of the previous legislation, which may have been stabilizing red tape and not necessarily decreasing it, as the Member for Calgary-Foothills would like to have had brought forward, it is an interesting change in direction by the government to take a step in the direction, in this case, of what some of us would believe to be reducing red tape.

Wildrose knows that adequate professional representation for veterinary technologists is important, and we will continue to engage

stakeholders to ensure that this legislation will not trigger any unforeseen consequences. Madam Chair, that's a fear that needs to be exercised vehemently in this Chamber, that legislation that we bring forward and legislation that's passed is brought and done so in a fashion that does not create unintended consequences, just like I talked about previously with the wheat police, the chicken police, the egg police, the milk police. Some would say that it could turn into a cheesy situation.

Madam Chair, protecting Alberta consumers is a Wildrose priority, and it's important that this housekeeping legislation does not facilitate government overreach. As we deliberate here on this legislation, it's important that we are cognizant and serious in recognizing that we have a duty and responsibility to Albertans, to Albertan taxpayers, and in this case to the animals and the husbandry that's affected. To date stakeholders have told us that this bill is harmless housekeeping legislation, and that's part of the reason why I'm supporting it and why, I believe, the rest of the Wildrose caucus will. Given the importance of the veterinary profession, we will be paying close attention to the accompanying regulation to ensure that it does not effectively limit the operating potential of veterinary technologists.

Yesterday, Madam Chair, I brought it up to the member from Spruce Grove, I believe it was, that veterinary technologists do not necessarily have a chance to vote under the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association body. Even though they may be included in this, I have a concern that there may down the road be an unforeseen consequence, but at this point in time it seems to meet with approval of the stakeholders that we've spoken to. Reducing red tape saves time and money for professionals as well as the government, and by bringing veterinary technologists under the same regulatory framework as veterinarians, this bill would simplify their professional obligations. Albertans deserve to know that they are receiving the best services from the people that they are qualified to approach for this matter.

Madam Chair, the veterinary technicians, who are not necessarily gender specific, as the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster talked to us about yesterday, provide a valuable service, and they do that with heartfelt feeling. I've seen them at our farm and in the facilities operated by veterinarians at odd and unusual hours. The clock on the wall or the clock on their wrist does not necessarily signify the end of the working day. They do that out of compassion for the animals and to, effectively and hopefully, make a better environment.

Madam Chair, this bill appears to be a rare example of the current government resisting the temptation to make things worse for Albertans.

I want to relate a story about the idea of taxation and how regulation can sometimes create a problem for regulations going forward and how this would actually create problems. A situation that occurs in the cattle industry: we use a product called ivermectin, which is a licensed product, to relieve a parasite in the cattle, and these parasites are both internal and external. They can cause harm to the animal. They can cause degradation of the hide as they go forward, and they can cause degradation internally to the performance of the animal as it's brought to its performance of raising another calf or in some cases slaughter. This product is, in my estimation, an effective product. Actually, what it does is that it kills a parasite.

In some cases people could relate regulation or, as my Member for Calgary-Foothills talks about, undue regulation coming forward as a parasite or a taxation base that is unnecessary. This chemical called ivermectin is administered topically upon the animals, and it kills the parasite. That's something that's needed in this industry and needed in an economic area to reduce the parasite of taxation in government and allow people to have the freedom to spend their

own money wisely with less taxation, less interference by government, or less interference, as in the example I gave, by police.

5:10

Madam Chair, there are analogies that we can use, going forward, between various parts of industry, various parts of the economy to bring some of these issues forward. I want to say that I believe that the supporting of this legislation is important. If there's some way that there are unforeseen consequences, hopefully and possibly the government, down the road, would find a better way to bring this legislation forward and that this legislation could effectively be changed should it need to be.

Madam Chair, I'm going to be voting in favour of this amendment, and I think I would endorse others to do the same. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak on Bill 13?

Seeing none, are you ready for the question on Bill 13, Veterinary Profession Amendment Act, 2016?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

[The clauses of Bill 13 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

**The Deputy Chair:** Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I move that we rise and report bills 11, 1, and 13.

[Motion carried]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bills: Bill 1, Bill 11, Bill 13. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Acting Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur with the report?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Acting Speaker:** Any opposed? So ordered.

## Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

### Bill 17 Appropriation Act, 2016

[Debate adjourned May 18: Mr. Cooper speaking]

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Why, thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise in the House and speak to Bill 17, the Appropriation Act, 2016. I had the pleasure of adjourning debate earlier today and look forward to hearing some important discussion around a piece of legislation that, certainly in my opinion and in the opinion of many on this side of the House – and I can assure you that many of the

outstanding constituents of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills have some grave concerns about this particular piece of legislation – is a piece of legislation that is going to see an unprecedented amount of debt, a path of reckless spending and high taxes, a path where we'll see a carbon tax implemented on every single Albertan, a tax that is going to make every single thing more expensive.

As I was mentioning earlier today – and I didn't have the opportunity to finish – a constituent in the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills runs a transportation company, Madam Speaker, and one of the things that he has spoken to me about is the fact that on every single invoice that he writes following the implementation of the carbon tax, he is going to include a separate line item for the increased costs to his business from that carbon tax. He transports a wide range of products.

The fact of the matter is that this carbon tax is going to be downloaded and placed at the feet of Albertans and, in many respects, at the feet of families right across this great province of ours. It's a concern because the government wants you to believe, Madam Speaker, that the increased cost for families is only going to be about \$400 a year. They have made this claim, that for low-income Albertans they're going to provide a rebate of \$400 a year and that that's going to cover all of the costs, but what the government has failed to do is to table any piece of economic impact study on the true costs to Albertans. An example like I used just moments ago, a transportation company in the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, is just one example of how the carbon tax is going to be passed along to Albertans.

The wild thing about the carbon tax is that it's going to be paid at so many different levels. It's going to be paid multiple times by every consumer that touches a product. It's going to be paid at the transportation level. It's going to be paid at the manufacturing level. It's going to be paid at the distribution level. It's going to be paid at the retail level. So what we have is a tax on a tax on a tax on a tax on everything.

It should be a concern because we are going to continue to lose the competitive advantage that has made Alberta great. We see a path forward that's being proposed by the government that, I can tell you, the constituents of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills certainly don't support. They have one concern on the tax side. They also have concerns on the debt side, that this government is borrowing more than any government in the province's history, and at the end of this government's short mandate there are going to be more than \$2 billion in debt payments on interest alone.

**An Hon. Member:** How much?

**Mr. Cooper:** Two billion, with a "b." Sometimes people in this place get a million and a billion mixed up, but in this case we're talking about \$2 billion. That is a lot of schools, hospitals, roads, teachers, nurses, and on and on it goes.

The challenge is that this government is not only making everything more expensive for average Albertan families; they're also increasing the debt and the burden of government on future generations in this province, and we all should be very, very concerned.

5:20

You know, this government had initially spoken about their jobs plan, and now they have this nice shiny name for this budget, calling it the jobs plan. The last jobs plan they introduced was a subsidy plan with a price tag of \$178 million for two years, and it did absolutely nothing, so little that, to their credit, they listened to some stakeholders and cancelled this project. My concern is that

their track record on laying out plans in stage 1 of their jobs plan is going to be very similar to their track record on this new jobs plan.

There is significant risk to all of Alberta because of this so-called jobs plan. Madam Speaker, not only is it going to have an impact on families; it's also going to have an impact on communities. Right across this province we see communities from all corners hurting, and much of that pain is because of this government. We see that this budget makes everything more expensive at a time when Albertans are losing their jobs, at a time where they are feeling the pains and the realities of joblessness. This government wants to make everything more expensive, and as a result it's going to hurt communities.

To add insult to injury, through the carbon tax and the impacts of that carbon tax and their desire to accelerate the phase-out of coal, they're going to cost thousands of jobs right across this province in communities like Hanna and Foremost and Grande Cache. I received an e-mail just this past week from an individual in Grande Cache desperate for this government to stop their attack on those communities, desperate for their livelihood to be able to remain. Unfortunately, I don't have the e-mail with me today, but I would love to be able to table that e-mail and read it into the record so that government members can have a real sense of the impact that they have. This budget has real consequences. This carbon tax will have real consequences on real communities and on real people.

I think of other consequences that this budget has for our province, including our credit being downgraded. Madam Speaker, you know that as individual credit ratings become worse, the individual's ability to borrow money at reasonable rates is decreased. That's exactly what we will continue to see in our province. Not only do we have \$2 billion in debt payments on the interest alone; that number doesn't even include the increases from the downgrades of our credit. So there are real consequences, and there are real costs to families, to communities, to the treasury. Every day we come to this place we hear the government talking about leadership. The people of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills don't believe that this is the type of leadership that the province needs right now.

Madam Speaker, there are so many significant challenges and concerns with this budget that I could stay and stand and chat all day, but I know that time is short in the Assembly today. I'd like to provide the opportunity for some of my hon. colleagues from other parts of this great province of ours to share some of the things that they're hearing from their constituents because I think that it's important that the government understand that the decisions they're making, the path that they're taking have real consequences. If there's one thing that I'm hearing from the people of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, it's that this NDP government is making worse – much worse – the unfortunate situation, the bad situation that our province is currently in in terms of the economic realities that we're all facing.

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

Are there any members wishing to speak to 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, I will recognize the leader of the third party.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have to say that this is unfortunate, the way the government has brought forward Bill 17, the appropriations bill. Unfortunately, there are no sunny ways in this particular bill.

**An Hon. Member:** No sunny ways in Ottawa.

**Mr. McIver:** There are no sunny ways in Ottawa, and there are none in Edmonton, Madam Speaker.

Unfortunately, this actually sets Alberta back in a number of very unfortunate ways. It erases a good part of the Alberta advantage. It puts our province, unfortunately, in a spiral where the government borrows money uncontrollably, with no plan to pay it back at least till 2024. We don't know how much the debt load will be by then, but we do know that what the government will have in hand as a result of this bill and other ones to come is nearly \$60 billion in debt before the next election.

Assuming that a lot of Albertans haven't left by then because of this government's policies – assume that the population is about the same, or just assume that the population is what it is in the government's budget documents – children born in 2019, the year of the next election, will come into this province owing on behalf of their province about \$13,000 on day one. Happy birthday. Happy birthday to all those new Albertans. The same could be said to those that move to Alberta that year from other jurisdictions: “Welcome to Alberta. You owe us \$13,000. If you stick around, if this government is here, it will be a lot more really soon.”

It's going to hurt Alberta families, unfortunately, Madam Speaker, in more ways, starting with the fact that this government has only taken less than a year to throw Alberta's triple-A credit rating overboard. I know the government will complain that they're not responsible for low oil prices despite the fact that I think the Finance minister accidentally said today in question period that he was. I don't think he actually believes that. The fact is that the triple-A credit rating will make it more expensive for this government to do business.

**An Hon. Member:** Didn't you leave them with that?

**Mr. McIver:** Actually, in fact, a member of the Official Opposition is chirping here, so I'll remind him that I think we left the government with a \$7 billion fund and a billion-dollar surplus. Thank you, sir.

We also had a plan to pay back money that was borrowed, which is very important because that is an important fiscally conservative policy. I know there are people in here that believe that no debt is the right policy, but that's not actually a fiscally conservative policy, Madam Speaker. A fiscally conservative policy is using debt responsibly as a tool to furnish infrastructure. To use it responsibly requires a plan to pay it back in a reasonable amount of time, a plan that's credible and actually leads to the people paying for the infrastructure actually being able to use it.

5:30

What we have, on the other hand, from the government is, unfortunately, a plan to borrow money and never pay it back. I would say that the loss of the triple-A credit rating is going to hurt in ways that we don't know yet. The Finance minister, certainly in estimates, refused to put a number on it, but we know that it's going to cost the government more to borrow money, 1 to 1 and a quarter per cent more, we think.

What we did get out of the Finance minister is that even for the Alberta Treasury Branches, a tremendous Alberta institution, that does a great job on behalf of Albertans – we were told that they don't borrow money; the government borrows it for them. So if it costs the government more to borrow money for the ATB, then clearly it's either going to cost the ATB more or the government is going to eat the difference. But either way the taxpayers are on the hook at the end of the day for that difference, that the government has brought on to Albertans.

What you have, then, is a spiralling effect, a very negative spiralling effect based on what's before us in this bill, Madam Speaker, and it's really due to the government's absolute refusal to

put in place any cost control. I know that they say: well, what would you not spend? We've even had government members say: you know, we're going to build all this infrastructure, and it's a great thing. I agree. Building infrastructure is a great thing. The problem is that when you don't have a plan to pay off your debt, which there isn't in this plan, and we have \$2 billion of not even servicing costs, just interest costs that don't actually service the principal at all, that is \$2 billion of infrastructure every year that could have been built, which could be one and a half cancer centres, which could be 50 or 100 schools, depending on the size of the schools, that Albertans will not get every year for the rest of their lives or at least for the rest of their lives with an NDP government, because they'll just be paying the interest on what happened in the past.

Lots of other things. We spend all this money, and we learned in estimates that the government has chosen to cut crack filling on the roads and to let the average condition of the roads deteriorate over the next three years. They've also committed to letting the average condition of health care facilities deteriorate over the next three years. They've also promised to let the condition of every building that the government of Alberta owns deteriorate over the next three years. Madam Speaker, I want you to know that these are not editorial comments on my part; these are numbers directly lifted out of the government's business plan.

In fact, the only infrastructure that the government says they're going to slightly increase the average condition of is schools, which is, I would submit to you, probably as a result of the ambitious program to build new schools started by the previous government. I'm glad this government saw the value in that and has decided to carry on. What that amounts to is that the average age of schools, based on how many new ones there are, is going to improve, but I didn't see anything in the plan where it says that they're actually going to do catch-up on repairs to the old ones.

A government comes in, complains about what they call a backlog of deferred maintenance, and their result is to spend way more money and let the deferred maintenance grow. They're spending more money but getting less benefit for Albertans. I think that's pretty much exactly the opposite of what they promised before they came here. When you think of that, it really makes this difficult to support.

Let's talk about the hon. House leader from the Official Opposition. I agree with him on this. There are towns in this province that produce coal. The government has promised to put them out of business. I know they can keep that promise because through this budget and through these appropriations what they can guarantee is how many jobs they will cause to go away from Alberta. What they're unable to promise is how many jobs will come to Alberta.

Just today in question period the jobs minister was asked: “You know, you're putting thousands of people out of business, potentially turning several Alberta towns into ghost towns. Can you tell us how you're going to create at least a hundred jobs there to replace the several thousand that you're eliminating?” The minister did not have an answer.

**Ms Renaud:** That's not true.

**Mr. McIver:** It actually is true. The minister didn't give an answer. He actually had an opportunity to give an answer, and he did not provide where he was going to provide jobs in those towns.

Madam Speaker, unfortunately, it's a comedy of errors that just gets worse the further you read into the appropriations and the budget that they're attached to. We talked about the additional borrowing costs. You know what? The government can't actually claim the low oil and gas prices and the triple-A credit rating

because the previous government over 15 years had several rounds of low oil and gas prices and maintained that triple-A credit rating. But I'll tell you that what they did not do was to borrow without a plan to pay it back. They didn't. They always had a plan to pay it back. They always managed to have net assets, where this government is going to have net negative assets in a very short period of time.

Again, Madam Speaker, those listening at home and those in the House don't have to take my word for it. These are things that the bond-rating agencies have said about this government and their fiscal policies, their severely damaged, negative, hard-on-Alberta, bad-for-the-future fiscal policies. I don't have to create words around this. The world's lenders, the credit-rating agencies that every government depends upon are saying it for me, are saying it for us. The only problem is: are the members on the government side listening? So far there has been no evidence whatsoever that they are, no evidence whatsoever that they will be willing to in the future.

Between that and the fact that – if it wasn't bad enough that the government is driving investment and jobs out with their plan, they've added a carbon attack, which they call a carbon tax, on Albertans, which is going to take money out of every families' pockets in Alberta. In fact, the Premier yesterday in question period said that people that are rebated will get as much out of the carbon tax as it costs them. Well, I think that the Premier might not have thought it through because, actually, her own government's budget documents don't say that; they say something quite different. If the government is right, people will get back what they pay extra for gas in their car in carbon tax, and they'll get back what they pay for heat in their house in carbon tax – and that's only assuming that the government is right – and that's where the rebates stop.

Unfortunately, that's not where the carbon attack stops on the average family. The food that they buy in the grocery store rides on a truck: extra costs. The clothing they put on themselves and their kids arrives on a truck: extra costs. The furniture that they buy, the electronics they buy, every other thing that they buy that rides on a truck will cost more because of the carbon attack on families.

On top of that, municipalities are not being rebated. They're all angry about this thing. I mean, if you listen to them, you couldn't possibly support this. They're all going to have to either cut expenditures or raise their property taxes in order to pay the way for this government's carbon attack on Albertans. We know that.

This is a tax on kids playing hockey and swimming and figure skating and all activities where you've either got to heat the water or cool down the water to make ice or a warm place to swim, which takes energy. The carbon attack is an attack on kids' activities as well, and that is what we're considering here.

Madam Speaker, it doesn't add up very well for Alberta. It doesn't add up very well for families. It doesn't add up very well for – even the most vulnerable of Albertans are being attacked by the carbon attack. Like other families, whether those Albertans are on AISH or seniors on fixed incomes and or any type of other supports, the people that you least want to hurt will be hurt by the carbon attack. Yes, they will be rebated. [interjections] No, the government members never think that's funny, that people on AISH and seniors will be hurt by this.

Again, not unlike other Alberta families, when a senior on a fixed income gets their rebate cheque, assuming that the government is right – and we'll try to give them the benefit of the doubt at least on this – they'll get rebated for the gas they put in their car and the heat in their house. But they, too, will pay extra for their food: not rebated. They, too, will pay extra for their clothing: not rebated. They, too, will pay extra for everything else that they bring into their homes: not rebated.

5:40

It's so damaging. Really, you would think, Madam Speaker, that I would be making this up, but the crazy thing about this is that there's nothing to make up. The government actually put something as bad as all of this in black and white and published it for all Albertans to read. You don't need to embellish this. You don't need to exaggerate. A friend of mine in the media says oftentimes one of his sayings: you can't write this stuff; it writes itself. The government has written it for all of us. We don't have to write it; they've written it for us.

I know that the government members are not enjoying me talking about this, but really they need to remember that what I'm doing is recounting what they have put in black and white and presented to the public. Some of them are squirming in their seats – and I don't blame them – but they should remember that they actually had the authority to make a different choice. They actually had the ability to make a choice that would support Alberta jobs, support Alberta families, support Alberta people on fixed incomes, and they chose instead to go down this path, the path of Bob Rae, that Ontario still has not recovered from decades after the fact. Decades after the fact. He spent the province into oblivion with no plan to pay any of it back.

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

Are there any members wishing to speak under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, I will recognize the Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. When I saw this budget, I was literally speechless, and that takes a lot of doing. That takes a lot of doing. I couldn't believe – I couldn't believe – that the government actually had not only a \$10 billion deficit in this budget but a \$10 billion deficit next year and an \$8 billion deficit the year after that. It is beyond irresponsible; it's negligent. It really is. There are choices that this government can make that avoid massive front-line cuts but allow Alberta to maintain a strong financial footing in difficult times.

The big question I have for this government is: what if you're wrong? What if these forecasts are wrong? What if it's even worse than this? We could be in serious, serious trouble because what you're doing is setting us up for massive cutbacks in the future or massive tax increases or both. That's a huge risk in this budget. This government had other choices, and they unfortunately didn't have the bravery to make those choices.

It's like someone who moves out of the house for the first time, racks up a huge bill on the Visa, and doesn't realize that you've got to pay it back at some point. Those debt service charges, those interest charges will ultimately add up and add up very, very quickly. We are looking at \$2 billion in debt service costs by 2018. That's a 159 per cent increase in two years – 159 per cent – and there's no plan to balance the budget anywhere in sight. The Minister of Finance has said: well, maybe at some point in the next five to 10 years, maybe eight years. Why eight? Where does that number come from? Where is the plan? There's absolutely no plan that sees us move anywhere close to balance.

In difficult financial times running a reasonable deficit: that's okay. Borrowing money to build infrastructure projects: that's okay. In fact, it's a desirable thing. So I'll give this government credit for doing that. That makes a lot of sense in a difficult economic time. But what doesn't make a lot of sense is borrowing money for operations, day-to-day operations: keeping the lights on in this very building, paying salaries, buying pens and pencils and office furniture. That doesn't make sense because it is not sustainable. It is the difference between buying a house and taking



a mortgage and having good debt, and borrowing money and just making the minimum payment on your credit card, bad debt. That's the difference. It's not a small amount of bad debt on the operating side; it's substantial, multibillion-dollar, year-after-year borrowing for operations.

Now that the credit rating of Alberta has been downgraded yet again and yet again, this budget and future budgets, if you stay on the same path, will see the province of Alberta downgraded yet again. That means that our debt service costs will continue to grow, that more and more money will be spent on debt servicing rather than on important front-line programs. That is a huge concern.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow, but in accordance with Standing Order 64(3) the chair is required to put the question to the House on the appropriation bill on the Order Paper for second reading.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:45 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, S.	Ganley	McKittrick
Babcock	Goehring	McLean

Bilous	Gray	Miranda
Carson	Hinkley	Nielsen
Ceci	Horne	Piquette
Coolahan	Kazim	Renaud
Cortes-Vargas	Kleinsteuber	Rosendahl
Dach	Littlewood	Sabir
Dang	Loyola	Schmidt
Drever	Luff	Schreiner
Eggen	Malkinson	Sigurdson
Feehan	McCuaig-Boyd	Sucha
Fitzpatrick		

Against the motion:

Anderson, W.	Fraser	Smith
Clark	Gotfried	Strankman
Cooper	Jansen	Swann
Cyr	MacIntyre	van Dijken
Ellis	McIver	Yao

Totals:	For – 37	Against – 15
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[Motion carried; Bill 17 read a second time]

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

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Seeing the time and the progress that we made today, I move that we adjourn till 9 tomorrow morning.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 6:03 p.m.]



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