



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Thursday afternoon, May 19, 2016

Day 31

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)  
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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),  
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Feehan, Hon. Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (ND)  
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Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (ND)  
Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)  
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (ND)  
Gill, Prab, Calgary-Greenway (PC)  
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (ND)  
Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (PC)  
Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (ND)  
Hanson, David B., Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (W),  
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Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (ND)  
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Rodney, Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC)  
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Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (ND)  
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Schneider, David A., Little Bow (W)  
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Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC),  
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Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)  
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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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Brian Mason	Minister of Infrastructure, Minister of Transportation
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Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, May 19, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Good afternoon. Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, the hon. Member for Little Bow.

**Mr. Schneider:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my distinct privilege to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a remarkable group of grade 11 school students from Calvin Christian School in Coalhurst from the marvellously outstanding constituency of Little Bow. I had the privilege of meeting with this impressive group of students and some of the parents earlier as we got a picture taken down here on the steps leading into the Chamber. I shook every one of their hands and heard every one of their names. I can't repeat them all, but as I say your name, please stand: parent Adrian Moens; one of the parents, Jenn Moens; teacher Fred Neels – please stay standing – parent Marian Neels; parent Mr. Leen Van Esch; a teacher, Mrs. Geraldine Van Esch; one of the parents, Mr. Bruce Coates; another parent, Mrs. Geraldine Vanden Hoek; and the last parent was Miss Lelaina VanDenHazel. Was I close? I hope so. I ask that the rest of the class please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

**Ms Fitzpatrick:** Mr. Speaker, to you and through you I would like to introduce on behalf of MLA Schreiner the Glendale sciences and technology school. I lived in Glendale, so I feel privileged to be able to introduce to you teachers Mr. Adam Lionheart, Mr. Larry Hartel, Joyce Tang, Miss Katie Bruinsma, Miss Amanda Mercia; parents Ria Cole and Kim Witwer. Would all the students and those I identified please stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Minister of Indigenous Relations.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to introduce the staff and students of the Edmonton Academy, a private special-education school for children diagnosed with a learning disability. The Edmonton Academy provides specialized teaching to meet students' needs and is found in the wonderful constituency of Edmonton-Rutherford. They recognize that a valuable education will provide more than an academic grounding but social and emotional tools as well. The 19 students and the teachers Mrs. Ashley MacGregor and Mrs. Christa Farmer-Shave will be present in the House between 2 and 2:30.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there any other school groups for introductions today?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Peace River.

**Ms Jabbour:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For several years the Legislative Assembly has supported the Edmonton Regional Heritage Fair, which provides an opportunity for students in surrounding areas to research and present projects celebrating Canada's heritage. The Legislative Assembly Office recognizes one participant for an

outstanding presentation which relates specifically to Alberta history, politics, or governance.

It is my great pleasure to introduce this year's award winner, Britlyn Hammer, a grade 6 student at Elmer S. Gish school in St. Albert. Her presentation, entitled Canadian Oil Industry, was well researched and engaging and speaks to an important and relevant contemporary topic. Accompanying Britlyn today are her mother, Megan Phan, and her teacher Brayden Guy. They are seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, and I would ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly my mom, Sylvia Hoffman. She is seated in your gallery. She is a dedicated schoolteacher, now retired, and community volunteer and, I say, the nicest person I know. Also with her is her newly wed husband, David Gordon. My mom and David met through a government-supported grief support group at the Cross Cancer Institute for spouses who had lost their partners to cancer. David is also a dedicated volunteer at the Marian Centre. With them is my great-aunt Alma Ostapek, the only surviving sister of my baba Anne Krupa, who people thought would be the first to go in our family when she was diagnosed with TB as a young teenager. She is strong, fierce, and managed to have a wonderful life with three children and a loving husband. Please join me in welcoming them.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Minister of Infrastructure and Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly 11 staff members from my Ministry of Infrastructure: Carla Down is with project services; Cindy Kuchka and Anar Fazal are with government facilities; Lynne Cunningham and Samantha Routhier, from health facilities; Eveline Audy, Patricia Gillard, and Cecily Gauvreau, from technical services; Alyssa Boisvert, Sarah Bonnah-Vink, and Gail Baron Simpson, from the assistant deputy minister's office. These wonderful employees support the work of almost every branch of government to ensure that Albertans have access to good facilities, whether they're attending in a hospital, a school, a museum, or any other public provincial facility in our province. I ask these guests to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Energy.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This morning I had the honour to congratulate the first graduating class of the Women Building Futures and Alberta Ironworkers' apprenticeship and training plan program. Women Building Futures is Alberta's premier trades training organization for women and is represented today by JudyLynn Archer, president and CEO, together with the North West Redwater Partnership, represented today by Ian MacGregor, president and chairman of North West Refining, and the Alberta Ironworkers' apprenticeship and training plan, local 720, represented by Scott Papineau. This group launched a new training program for these women and today are celebrating the success of the very first class of all-female ironworker graduates, now entering Alberta's workforce at the Sturgeon refinery. These 11 amazing women are also indentured ironworker apprentices, and they join us here today along with their fantastic group of partners. These women are

mothers, daughters, sisters, and I know they will make some of the toughest, most driven ironworkers Alberta has ever seen. I ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

**Mr. S. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a group of students from the Leduc ESL program. This program has been running for over 20 years and serves students of all ages, nationalities, cultures, genders, and education levels, combining community inclusion and education to connect new community members in the region. I'll do my best to say their names properly, and if you would rise when I say your name. Today we have Anvar Abdoullaev, Marina Abdoullaeva, Jane Kim, Jasmin Jeong, Thomas Lee, Seohyun Lee, Mike Kachuk, Maria Kachuk, and, last but not least, an outstanding individual in our area, Eugene Miller, who not only wears this hat as a director and teacher but also heads up the volunteers for the Summer Games coming up. Thank you very much for being here. I would wish the warm welcome of the Assembly for them.

1:40

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two separate introductions today. First, it is my distinct pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly two long-term residents of Fort McMurray. As I call your name, I ask that you please rise: Lana Maloney and Natasha Maloney. Both women are dedicated members of our community and anxiously await the safe return of all their friends and family to home.

My second introduction is two good friends of mine from the beautiful country of Poland, who have made Fort McMurray their home. Kasia Odrzygozdz is a financial analyst for the Fort McMurray fire department, and Pawel Odrzygozdz was the co-ordinator of the IT team for the regional emergency operations centre that manages this crisis in Fort McMurray. These tireless professionals stayed behind in support of emergency operations.

I ask this House to please give all my good friends the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein.

**Mr. Coolahan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Melissa Nelson, program operations manager of the Calgary Keys to Recovery Society, an organization I'll be speaking more about in my member's statement. I ask Melissa to rise to receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

### Ministerial Statements

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

#### Wildfire Update

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the latest updates for the Assembly on the wildfire situation in Alberta. Today there are 15 wildfires burning in our province. Two are out of control, one is being held, two are under control, and two have been turned over to local authorities. We have approximately 2,400 firefighters on the

ground today, supported by 189 helicopters, 439 pieces of heavy equipment, and 29 air tankers.

Fire risk remains extreme across most of northeast Alberta, but we're pleased that the risk has lessened across much of the west.

The fire in the MD of Greenview continues to burn 10 kilometres north of Fox Creek and 25 kilometres southeast of Little Smoky. It is being held at 660 hectares and is being managed by local authorities. The two-hour evacuation notice for residents of Little Smoky has been lifted.

We continue to fight a fire in the Peace Country. It remains at approximately 20,000 hectares. That fight, obviously, is conducted in collaboration with our counterpart in British Columbia.

In the Fort McMurray area, Mr. Speaker, the fire is more than half a million hectares and is still out of control. Lower temperatures and higher humidity will provide slightly more favourable conditions for our firefighters than in the previous days. Our focus on the ground and in the air today is protection of key infrastructure to the west of the city.

In the city our re-entry plans have been affected by smoke and extreme air conditions. The air quality index has improved but continues to fluctuate.

Structural firefighters responded to a fire in south Thickwood. The cause of the fire is not yet known, but it's worth noting that gas was not activated for these residences.

As the House knows, yesterday the Premier announced a conditional timeline for residents to begin to return to Fort McMurray starting June 1 on a phased and voluntary basis, but we continue to stress that this timeline is conditional on the five basic safety needs being met. There is a great deal of work ahead, but we are committed to supporting the people of Fort McMurray and to protecting homes, businesses, and industry from fire right across Alberta.

As always, Mr. Speaker, we want to express our thanks to all of the people working to protect Albertans and bring them safely back to their homes as soon as possible.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Members' Statements

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

#### Calgary Keys to Recovery Addiction Services

**Mr. Coolahan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today to recognize an organization dedicated to reducing homelessness in Calgary, the Calgary Keys to Recovery Society. Keys to Recovery was developed in 2010 in response to a gap in services addressing homelessness in Calgary, led by Karen Crowther, executive director, and Melissa Nelson, program operations manager.

With other types of services chronically homeless men and women with addictions who had made a decision to reclaim their lives and voluntarily attend treatment centres often ended up back on the street once their treatment was completed. Keys' programs recognize that homelessness is often the result of a number of complicating factors. They provide intensive, collaborative case management services in conjunction with permanent, affordable housing. The program combines both harm reduction and abstinence strategies and includes providing access to elders, monthly sweats, and a biweekly healing circle in addition to addictions, housing, vocational, and mental health services.

By equipping the formerly homeless with the resources they need to achieve independence, the program reduces costs for the health, justice, and emergency shelter systems. Their approach provides the basic needs as well as the nonthreatening and supportive atmosphere that is necessary for the individuals to regain their independence and

maintain their sobriety. Clients are referred by treatment centres, mental health agencies, corrections services, homeless shelters, and other housing providers. I personally toured one of the fully Keys-occupied buildings in my riding, and I met a woman named Lynn, a 57-year-old participant who told me that she would not have survived if it were not for the Keys to Recovery program.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Keys to Recovery for the vital work that they do in our community and for making Calgary and our province a better place.

Thank you.

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

### Provincial Fiscal Policies

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, it's been one year that this NDP government has been in power, one year of many mistakes and a total disregard for many struggling Alberta families. The many flip-flops and indecisions I witnessed are a constant reminder that this government really doesn't know what it's doing, and it's making Albertans nervous.

In November 2015 Bill 4 increased the debt ceiling from 7 per cent to 15 per cent. Less than four months later, the ink barely dry on Bill 4, the government voted unanimously to repeal a section, effectively removing the 15 per cent debt ceiling, again against objections from the opposition. Last September during the Legislative Offices Committee government members voted for a 7.25 per cent increase to senior officials and to send three MLAs to Boston, again against the recommendation of opposition members. Less than one week later a flip-flop due to pressure. Now wages are frozen and no trip to Boston.

On June 24, 2015, the opposition attempted to amend Bill 2, asking for a 1 per cent decrease to small-business tax. Government MLAs voted unanimously against this amendment and the subsequent amendment to reduce small business tax by a mere .1 per cent. Now in the jobs action plan they brag about reducing the small-business tax by 1 per cent because it is the right thing to do. We agree. It was the right thing to do. It should have been done last year.

One year ago most government MLAs were against development in the oil industry, anti pipeline construction, and some had actively protested against pipelines. However, the government now appears to support pipelines and will likely try to claim any new development as their own. Careful getting on and off the bandwagon.

Now, thankfully, it appears that they're about to flip-flop on their ill-conceived minimum wage nonplan. Indecisions like this cause concern and confusion in the investment community and concern Albertans. It would appear that the only things not flip-flopping in this province are the tens of thousands of fish asphyxiated under this government's control.

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

### Pipeliners' Daughter

**Ms Babcock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My thoughts and prayers are with the evacuees of Fort McMurray. Seeing them, once again I remember that I am the proud daughter of an Alberta pipeliner and boilermaker. I have been to and I have lived in almost every corner of our great province and indeed western Canada as we followed the work. We followed the TransCanada pipeline to Ontario. We learned about shutdowns at Sheerness, Genesee, and Fort McMurray. We watched pipelines being built, wrapped, and put in the ground as far north as Fort St. John, B.C.

I learned at an early age to never look at the arc and to appreciate the smell of burnt metal because it meant my dad was finally home. My mother was a wife in the oil patch. She went to concerts, games, and almost every one of her children's activities by herself and then wrote weekly letters to my dad about them. That takes an enormous amount of strength of character and determination.

We were raised to recognize the value of the times when our family could be together but to also fear them. We feared them because that meant there was no paycheque. Spring always meant that as the grass was growing, so was the stockpile of bread and bags of milk in our freezer. We had a 20-cubic-foot freezer to accommodate spring breakup and the shelves of goods my mom had preserved to get us through those lean times.

1:50

Mr. Speaker, I also remember the recession in the '80s and again in the '90s. The boom-and-bust oil economy affected every Albertan and none more so than the families dependent on that industry: long wait times when I broke my arm, large class sizes, and incredible stresses on our families. My father lost his job, like so many others, last year in the downturn. Seeing my fellow Albertans from Fort McMurray today, I recall my days as the daughter of a pipeliner. We all stand in solidarity with those from Fort McMurray, and we hope for them a speedy recovery.

### Oral Question Period

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

### Tax Policies

**Mr. Jean:** This morning Albertans in need of work woke up with more bad news. Across the province engineers, mechanics, electricians, IT workers, and many, many others are finding their wages dropping or are looking for work. Since last March the number of Albertans forced onto employment insurance has jumped a whopping 68 per cent. These are men and women looking to get back to work, but all they're getting is a new carbon tax, punishing families, charities, and health care. Premier, how will new higher taxes do anything to help Albertans hurting right now?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We know that Alberta families are struggling as a result of the drop in the price of oil, and we certainly are working to diversify our economy. We put that in our platform, and we were elected to do so, so we've come forward with the Alberta jobs plan. It's creating the conditions to support the creation of a hundred thousand jobs. Our investment includes more than \$34 billion in infrastructure, a cut to small-business tax from 3 per cent to 2 per cent, and the creation of 3,000 youth jobs through the STEP program. We're proud of the jobs plan, and all Albertans should be as well.

**Mr. Jean:** Under the NDP gas taxes will have gone up by 11 cents per litre by 2018. For Alberta families that drive to school, that drive to work, that drive to dance recitals and hockey practices, this is just making things for them much, much worse. It means that they will be paying nearly \$900 per year more and be \$900 a year poorer because of the NDP government. Families already pinching every penny around their kitchen table just can't trade in their minivans for a Prius. It's not realistic. So why is the Premier bringing in new taxes, higher taxes that will hurt Albertans even more at a time when they simply cannot afford it?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Once again the opposition's math is fatally flawed. Study after study demonstrates that the carbon price makes economic sense. Last month the Ecofiscal Commission report stated that carbon pricing makes economic sense for Canadian provinces, and Steve Williams of Suncor, a major employer in the Official Opposition Leader's riding, acknowledged the science of climate change and said: we think climate change is happening; we think a broad-based carbon price is the right answer. And so do we.

**Mr. Jean:** An attempt to deflect.

Under this carbon tax charities will see their costs absolutely skyrocket. There will be less money to spend to hire teachers, to hire doctors and nurses in our health care and education systems. It's a fact. If you need to take a flight in Alberta, even more surcharges and taxes and fees will be passed on to consumers by this NDP government, all at a time when employment insurance is on the rise and Albertans are simply struggling right across the province to make ends meet. The Premier has failed to produce any number of analyses of the wide-ranging cost to families, businesses, and our charities. When will they release these numbers? We need to see them. Albertans . . .

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We know the Official Opposition has no intention to diversify the economy. They've said so. It was not in their platform. We're actually putting our platform into action, which is moving forward with a price on carbon and reinvesting every dollar from that carbon price back into Alberta families, including 60 per cent of households receiving a direct supplement. That is a very positive step.

In terms of other research, the Mining Association of Canada said that MAC's support of the carbon price is guided by the principles of climate change policy design. Bob Dudley, CEO of British Petroleum, said that a global carbon price would help unleash market forces that provide the right incentives for everyone to do . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Deputy Premier.  
The Opposition House Leader.

### Opioid Use Prevention

**Mr. Cooper:** Albertans continue to be worried about the impact that fentanyl and opioids are having on communities and neighbourhoods. These drugs split families apart, and they put lives at risk. Alberta is on track to see over 276 fentanyl-related deaths this year alone. It's now been seven months since a full strategy to battle fentanyl was promised. This emergency is too important for more lengthy delays. Premier, when can Albertans expect to see a plan that might actually save some lives?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, the situation with fentanyl is something that we are dealing with in Alberta very seriously. We've been doing so for many months. That's one of the reasons why we came out with take-home naloxone kits, why just two weeks ago we announced the expansion so that you no longer require a prescription. You can go directly to a pharmacy. You can call 811 if you want to know which pharmacies have them available, but it's over 500. We're working to make sure that these

get into the hands of people to help them address harm reduction strategies as well as building beds and supporting others in prevention.

**Mr. Cooper:** Fentanyl is just one part of the opioid crisis our province is facing. Heroin, morphine, Oxy are also contributing to a growing number of overdoses across the province. We can't afford delays before the multiyear strategy is released. We need to make sure that all resources are available to battle this crisis, to help victims of these addictions. Premier, will you commit to providing whatever front-line resources are required to tackle this crisis?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. We are constantly working on ways that we can improve access. Harm reduction is one of those strategies. We've also done a mental health report that seriously looked at addictions and mental health in relation, and recommendations and that were around expanding access to detox and treatment beds. We've moved forward on a number of those recommendations and will continue to do so. It's the right thing. We've certainly increased funding in the budget in these line items and in other areas as well that will help families and keep people alive. We're proud of our budget, and this is helping to deliver on that.

**Mr. Cooper:** Mr. Speaker, last week the government admitted that it isn't fully capable of tracking opioid deaths in the province. One front-line physician and expert on this crisis has pointed the finger at the government, saying: we just don't have any idea what is happening with other opioid-related deaths since 2013. If we aren't able to track the information, it makes it much more difficult to battle a crisis that is infecting our province and harming families. Will the Premier today commit to getting a handle on tracking these deaths and start reporting them to Albertans?

**The Speaker:** Thank you.  
The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, we take any death seriously, especially a premature death, in this province. We have been working with the medical examiners' office to continue to have the most up-to-date information. It's certainly available by each of our zones and hospitals. We also are working on the prevention side and making sure that we're working with communities, working with leaders in local communities across Alberta, and making sure that we get information into the hands of individuals, their parents. Harm reduction kits: this is a big piece in helping us save lives. Lives have been saved in communities all across our province with the use of these kits.

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

### Fort McMurray Wildfire Economic Recovery

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When it comes to the large rebuild we have ahead of us in Fort McMurray, it appears that an Ottawa firm, the Advantage Group, has been awarded the contract and has recently been advertising for positions to clean up Fort McMurray. The problem? Social media posts state that these positions are advertised for Ottawa-area residents only. It's baffling that in a time of great need and when many people from Fort McMurray are looking for work, these jobs would be outsourced. Will the Premier confirm whether this information is true, and if so,



will she work to rectify the situation and ensure that jobs and contracts aren't being outsourced?

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

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for an opportunity to dispel this rumour. That's all it is, a rumour. We've granted no, you know, substantial contracts at this time. In fact, the work of cleaning up and rebuilding Fort McMurray will be managed locally, within the regional municipality. We're gathering information on local contractors who are interested in helping with that rebuild and providing all that information to the regional municipality so they can proceed and support local businesses.

**Mr. Yao:** All those in this Chamber are aware of how important the trades are to Fort McMurray. Many of these companies rely on their tools and their materials to do their work. While these trade workers have been evacuated from their city, with their tools hundreds of kilometres away, they have seen out-of-town vehicles and contractors entering the community to begin repair work. To the Premier: now that a plan has been proposed for the re-entry of its citizens, has any timetable been established to allow tradespeople to get back up there and assist in the rebuild?

2:00

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

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Certainly, there has been equipment heading north. That is specifically for industry and for the camps that are north of Fort McMurray. At this point, again, we've awarded no substantial contracts. In terms of the cleanup and the rebuilding, the work will definitely prioritize local contractors.

In terms of returning, Fort McMurray is just not safe. We announced that June 1 will be the beginning of the re-entry, and I'm tremendously excited that, you know, if all the criteria are met at that point, which we expect they will be, we can allow people to return and start resuming their lives.

**Mr. Yao:** It's not just the big businesses and tradespeople we need to be thinking about when it comes to a rebuild. It's also those support and soft services that make a city tick. I know that the Premier has said that re-entry to the city will be triaged, but I would like to ask on behalf of my small business owners, that are my constituents: what sort of timeline will there be for the butchers, the bakers, and the barbers to get back to Fort McMurray?

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

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I stated, right now Fort McMurray just is not safe. In particular, the air quality continues to be an issue, so we're allowing a very restricted number of people in a controlled situation to ensure that essential services such as grocery stores and pharmacies are open and available at the time that those people return to Fort McMurray. As soon as the area and the community in which a small business is located is opened up for the re-entry, I look forward to supporting those businesses extensively to help them with their recovery after the evacuation.

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

### Coal Strategy

**Mr. McIver:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Over the last few days we've learned a few things. The Premier and deputy say that cabinet is united on their plan to eradicate Alberta's coal industry, the

Environment minister will not listen to evidence regarding clean coal because of her tunnel vision, and the Energy minister is in the penalty box because she showed common sense around market-driven factors during estimates. So let's try this again. To the Energy minister: why rush to eliminate Alberta's coal industry and the thousands of jobs attached to it when these facilities have committed to generating electricity as clean as natural gas can?

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you for the question. Study after study demonstrates that a price on carbon makes economic sense. That's why we are phasing out coal. We've developed a climate leadership plan that is going to take care of emissions because health is important, economic diversity is important, and we are going to continue to work with our industry and our communities to do this.

**Mr. McIver:** Sounds like the penalty box has eliminated that common sense.

Given that coal-fired electricity has moved forward by leaps and bounds, controlling and reducing NOx and SOx emissions from flue gas desulphurizers to selective catalytic and noncatalytic reduction systems, to the Energy minister: is this government really encouraging the coal industry to improve emissions intensity when the industry knows full well that the government is putting them out of business as soon as they can?

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** You know, this plan to phase out coal was established a few years ago by the federal government. We are going to work with our industry, with our coal facilitator, and our communities to continue this work. We're going to work at diversifying our economy. We're going to work with the AESO and renewables and develop a plan that is going to keep prices reasonable, keep our lights on.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, when a government minister denies their own job-killing coal plan, you know it's a bad one.

Given that new technologies are able to reduce NOx emissions by 98.6 per cent and SOx emissions by up to 99.9 per cent and given that these technologies are able to prevent 75.5 per cent of all emissions from entering our atmosphere, to the Energy minister one last time: why can't coal-fired electricity be part of our electricity future after 2030 if they reach these incredibly high clean standards?

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, we have developed our climate leadership plan to move forward in phasing out coal and diversifying our economy because we know that the emissions are harmful to our health and our children and our most vulnerable Albertans. We have tasked the AESO to consult with industry experts. We're pleased that over 130 industry experts were consulted with this. Our first RFP for renewables will be this fall.

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

### Provincial Credit Rating

**Mr. Clark:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today Alberta suffered yet another credit-rating downgrade. Standard & Poor's said that the downgrade comes partly from depressed oil revenues but very worryingly said: "The province's fiscal response . . . so far has not meaningfully counterbalanced this external shock." Now, this is after the Minister of Finance travelled to New York to try to convince these very agencies of Alberta's creditworthiness. It sounds like that was a big waste of time and money. To the Minister of Finance: how much will this credit-rating downgrade cost Albertans?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure the Minister of Finance will be happy to answer all the remaining ones, but I want to acknowledge a little bit of history here. Members opposite are asking us to turn back the clock and respond to the downturn by firing teachers and nurses and cutting back on investments. This is not going to support diversification. Let's also remember what happened back in time – 1986, 1990, 1992, all of those years – under Conservative reign. Unfortunately, we had a downgrade. Why? Because the price of oil went down.

**Mr. Clark:** Mr. Speaker, Wildrose is over there. I am over here, so the canned response to that question . . . [interjections] This irresponsible budget . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, please proceed.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you. Now, there is a middle way. Because your budget accumulates such astonishing levels of debt so quickly, you have virtually guaranteed future front-line service cuts or future tax increases or both. Quoting again from Standard & Poor's, the downgrade reflects "Alberta's very weak budgetary performance and high, increasing debt burden." The words of Standard & Poor's. In short, the NDP are risking the future of the province so that they don't have to make tough choices today. To the same minister: have you calculated the projected . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member. Which minister? The Minister of Finance?

**Mr. Clark:** Yes.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. With regard to the borrowing costs we know that they have increased relative to the two large provinces that have lower borrowing costs. Over the last two years, not the last year but the last two years, those borrowing costs have increased, and that aligns with a dramatic drop in the price of oil. Our borrowing costs, the amount of the budget we put into debt servicing, are still far below B.C.'s, far below Ontario's. As a percentage, we're doing quite well.

**Mr. Clark:** Well, we won't be for long, and if we're comparing ourselves to Ontario, that's not a good thing.

I'm going to ask a very simple question of the Minister of Finance. Standard & Poor's says that it is time for a sales tax in Alberta or the province will face future downgrades. To the Minister of Finance: do you agree with Standard & Poor's? Will you bring in a sales tax at any point in this term of government or next?

**Mr. Ceci:** What I'll agree with is that I'll stand with Albertans. We will bring forward the work of the Alberta jobs plan. We'll invest in this province. We'll diversify this province, and we will create a better economy going forward than that party did and that party wants to wreck.

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

## 2:10 Fort McMurray Resident Re-entry Plan

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's been over two weeks now since the people of Fort McMurray have had to flee their homes and escape the fire that still threatens part of northern Alberta. I've talked to many people who are anxious to return home but know that there is still a lot of work to do. To the Minister of Municipal

Affairs: when can the people of Fort McMurray expect to return home, and will they be able to stay for good once they get back?

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

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday our government announced plans for a conditional, phased re-entry on a voluntary basis for the safe return of Fort McMurray residents to begin June 1. I wish to make it clear that re-entry is voluntary, and re-entry will only proceed when key safety conditions that ensure the safety and security of residents are met. We're going to start with the least damaged neighbourhoods. People should understand that if they return in the first weeks of June, they will be returning to a community with very basic services. We strongly urge people with specialized health care needs to delay their return until June 15, when the hospital will be fully restored.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that many people may still be unsure whether or not they have a home or business to return to, again to the Minister of Municipal Affairs: how can people find out about the current state of their homes and neighbourhoods?

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

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last night the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo, working with our government, released an update to the online mapping application. The app now includes high-resolution images from multiple angles to give residents a clearer idea of which homes have been lost and damaged. The high-resolution imagery, that includes new and expanding neighbourhoods, will provide additional detail to assist property owners with insurance claims, eligibility funding, and other recovery actions for both damaged and lost properties. This information is invaluable. However, I've seen the devastating effects a fire can have on a community, and I know how difficult it is to view these images. I urge those affected residents to seek out the emotional and mental health supports . . .

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

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that we need to ensure that Fort McMurray is a safe place before people can return, again to the same minister: can the minister update the House on the current state of essential services in the city?

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

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We continue to work with the regional emergency operations centre and other partners to restore services to Fort McMurray. Hospital restoration has been stalled temporarily with the poor air quality, but the mobile urgent care centre is still operational. Electricity service has been restored to more than 90 per cent of customers and natural gas to 75 per cent of customers. The water treatment plant passed inspection on May 17, and we continue to make steady progress to secure the safety of water. However, returning residents will be subject to a boil-water advisory upon re-entry. We expect that will be in effect for at least a few weeks.

### Emergency Medical Services

**Mr. Nixon:** Yesterday I asked the Associate Minister of Health how this government plans to solve the disparity in rural ambulance coverage that has been created by the centralization of EMS dispatch. All I received was a non answer: “The best way to organize first responders may vary from community to community.” Ambulance coverage is a serious problem from community to community, and it needs this government’s attention. Again to the Associate Minister of Health. Please, a real answer today: what is your government’s plan to solve the disparity in rural ambulance coverage and save rural Albertans’ lives?

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

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Again, Albertans have a right to expect that when they dial 911 for emergency medical care, it will arrive promptly. This question has many parts, including shift rotations, dispatch, and time spent at hospitals. We are working with our partners in AHS to ensure that all of those criteria are met and that we are able to have Albertans receive the safest ambulance service possible.

**Mr. Nixon:** Wildrose understands that our first responders are doing their absolute best to provide world-class medical care. Given that Alberta has the best EMTs, EMRs, and paramedics in the country and given that their valuable time is best used to provide care in the golden hour of an emergency, can the Associate Minister of Health please explain why our fully certified EMTs and paramedics are being used to transfer patients for nonemergency, scheduled appointments instead of using their skills where they are needed the most, on emergency calls saving Albertans’ lives?

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

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Alberta Health Services is also expanding its use of nonemergency vehicles to transport patients between facilities. We know that paramedics, EMTs, and EMRs respond to nearly half a million calls every year, and we’re very proud of the work that they do. We remain committed to working closely with our partners at AHS and with community leaders to give Albertans the right care at the right time by the right professional.

**Mr. Nixon:** Municipalities have been bearing the brunt of the lack of ambulance coverage. Given that in an effort to keep ambulances in their communities, municipalities have been purchasing non-emergency vehicles for patient transport and since the Health department clearly doesn’t have an answer, to the Minister of Municipal Affairs: can you explain why Alberta’s municipalities are being forced to pay for what should be the Minister of Health’s responsibility?

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

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Certainly, I’ve had the honour of meeting with a number of different local governments. We share their commitment to making sure that everyone gets a timely response, and we have worked with them on the process to receive a contract through the government, which is with Alberta Health Services as the operator. Certainly, there are conditions that need to be met with that contract, but there are a number of local regions that do have contracts with Alberta Health Services. The reason why we have a contract is to ensure safety and fair practices for employees and for

the patients, who need to have the utmost confidence in the support of their communities.

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

### Trade with the United States

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta generates more than \$26 billion in trade annually with the 10 states in the Ports-to-Plains trade corridor, which runs through the Great Plains to the Gulf of Mexico. The Ports-to-Plains Alliance is a coalition of governments, communities, and regions advocating for the economic interests of North America’s energy and agricultural heartland. Alberta has a proud history of active and effective membership and political representation in the alliance. To the Premier: which hon. member did you appoint to represent Alberta to the alliance, and when was the last time they attended an alliance meeting?

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

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I’ll thank the member for the question. Trade is absolutely critical to our government and to the province of Alberta. I can tell you that we work very closely with our partners. We recognize that the United States is our largest trading partner.

To the member’s point: I will get back to him as to when the last meeting of the Ports-to-Plains took place, but I can assure this House that Alberta is at the table. We are advocating for market access, and that’s a priority for our government.

**Mr. Ellis:** We’re talking about political representation at the table, Minister.

Given that one key focus of Alberta’s involvement in the Ports-to-Plains Alliance has been its interest in developing and promoting the eastern Alberta trade corridor, which runs alongside the Saskatchewan border up to Fort McMurray, and given that developing the eastern corridor can provide an alternative route for moving Alberta’s more than \$75 billion of products to key American and other international markets, again to the Premier: why is Alberta abandoning its political – and I mean political – prominence in the Ports-to-Plains Alliance when so much is at stake?

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

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’ll refute the premise that Alberta is abandoning its position at the table. Quite frankly, our government is working through a number of different initiatives for market access. We understand that there are many different opportunities, both within our province and within North America, to get our product to market. That is absolutely a priority of this government. We will continue to look at all possible different trade routes to ensure that we’re getting our product to market in a timely, efficient, and safe manner.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Ports-to-Plains Alliance works with Alberta to advocate for policies and investments that will promote trade and commerce and given that areas of advocacy interest include border crossings and trade issues and that Alberta, unlike almost all other provinces, has only one 24-hour border crossing, to the minister responsible for intergovernmental relations: what efforts are you making today to convince the federal

government to expand the Wild Horse border crossing to provide 24-hour commercial service?

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for that question. That is a very timely question. Quite frankly, I've had numerous conversations with REDAs down in southern Alberta as well as with our municipalities, who have raised that point. That is something that I'm in dialogue and conversations with my federal counterpart, looking at opportunities to expand trade. I recognize and agree with the hon. member that the crossing that he is speaking of right now is a 12-hour crossing. We're working with the federal government, looking at opportunities to expand that.

Thank you.

## 2:20 Provincial Fiscal Policies

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Mr. Speaker, this province has suffered four credit downgrades already in just the past few months. This is because of the government's reckless debt and spending plan. The day after they introduced their budget, Moody's downgraded the credit rating of this province as a direct result. As we are debating Bill 10 right now, S&P has just given us yet another credit downgrade. Will the Minister of Finance withdraw Bill 10?

**Mr. Ceci:** Oil-producing jurisdictions around the world, in Canada, in North America have received downgrades of late: Newfoundland, Saudi Arabia, Alaska, North Dakota. No.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** The opposition isn't going to stand for non answers like that right now, Mr. Speaker. It's too important.

He is gambling with Alberta's future. We have had a balance sheet meltdown in this province over the last decade of almost \$60 billion. Mr. Speaker, given that the price of oil has not significantly changed since our last credit downgrade, the only thing that has been downgraded is the minister's credibility. Will he take responsibility for this?

**Mr. Ceci:** What I won't take responsibility for is a PST. That's what they want. We won't do it. Albertans don't want it. [interjections] We're not doing it.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Mr. Speaker, even you're laughing at this one. I have no idea what the Minister of Finance is smoking today.

The NDP has already brought in a PST in the form of their ND PST carbon tax. Today the Minister of Finance himself said that we need to, quote, look at all fiscal tools. By that, does he mean even more borrowing, even more spending, or another PST?

**Mr. Ceci:** You know, if the hon. member wants to quote me, perhaps he should listen to the whole statement that I made. Diversification is what I was talking about. We need to have more revenue coming from a wider variety of economic drivers in this province. Oil and gas are too narrow a focus. We need to have more economy going on, and we're doing it with our diversification plan.

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

## Highway Maintenance

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta Transportation cut \$33 million over two years to highway maintenance, and 50 per cent, or \$30 million, was cut from highway preservation. Dangerous

cracks, potholes, and missing shoulders in our area can easily pull a vehicle travelling at highway speeds off the road. Why is the Minister of Transportation putting Albertans at risk by making dangerous cuts to core public safety functions like road maintenance? Surely there are other places in the budget to trim.

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

**Mr. Mason:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the hon. member for the question. This is a question from the Official Opposition that I responded to in the estimates, but I don't mind doing it again. We've all been asked to find savings within our budgets because we're serious about curbing the growth in expenditures of government programs. There are only so many places that you can go. This is not an ideal choice, and I am hopeful in the future that as the financial position of the province improves, we will be able to restore this funding. In the meantime we've made a very large . . .

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

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that in Alberta there are upwards of 14,000 large-animal collisions per year on our highways and given that these accidents result in huge costs, injuries, and, all too often, fatalities, why is the Transportation minister reducing highway maintenance, which includes cutting down grass and brush along our Alberta highways? Why is the minister putting Alberta drivers at increased risk?

**Mr. Mason:** Mr. Speaker, I don't accept the premise of the hon. member's question. Again, the reduction in cutting along the medians and so on of our highways is a necessary cost-reduction measure. It's not ideal, and we hope in the future to be able to restore the funding for that program to the previous level.

**Mr. Hanson:** Given that Albertans are worried about this budget, which seems to only have cuts to essential road maintenance and to the wildfire budget, to the minister: are there no efficiencies to be found in his department, no areas that could have been reduced without having to make cuts that increase the risk to Albertans' lives and property?

**Mr. Mason:** Mr. Speaker, as a matter of fact, a number of reductions have been made throughout the department. Efficiencies are constantly being found. It's important to note that there was a significant reduction in the overall budget. We are working towards finding those efficiencies, and that's an ongoing piece of work that we do. We want to avoid layoffs, we want to avoid reducing essential services, we want to maintain safety on our highways, and we're doing so.

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

## Electric Power Plant Capacity

**Mr. Fraser:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Post-2030 the government endeavours to have a baseload, or firm electrical generation mix, that will look very different than it does today. For the record, I'm fully aware of the federal coal phase-out regulations and what they mean for Alberta. However, the increased scope of their rapid, early phase-out scheme is causing great concern. Investors crucial to cleaner electricity generation are stepping away from this government's new policies. Minister of Energy, what specific measures have you taken to ensure that Albertans won't be short on

firm and dispatchable electricity if your policies continue to scare investors away?

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you for that question. Certainly, we are working with the AESO and consulting with industry experts for them to recommend a program that will bring on more renewable generation based on two principles: keeping costs reasonable and making sure that we protect the reliability of the system. We are going to have a fully phased, reasonable, solid, prudent plan.

**Mr. Fraser:** Given that in 2015 the Department of Energy called for 6,000 megawatts of additional generation over the coming years – the system is now going to need an additional 2,300 megawatts above the original 6,000 because of the NDP's early coal phase-out – and with natural gas investors stepping away and the early phase-out of coal generators, Minister, can you assure Albertans that they will not face brownouts stopping them from accessing reliable electricity for their homes and businesses?

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, that is why we are working with the AESO to consult with industry experts and develop a plan so we will have reliability. We will have reasonable costs, and we will still have a mix of natural gas and renewables as we move forward.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, be cautious about the use of preambles in the supplementals.

**Mr. Fraser:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the NDP strategy leaves a gap in electricity generation for Albertans and given that you've been suggesting an electricity-for-pipelines deal with British Columbia, Minister, are you about to tell Albertans that you're not only killing the coal industry and the livelihoods that go with it, but you're about to tell natural gas generators that there's no place for them either, leaving Alberta short of electricity, jobs, and royalties for future generations?

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Well, thank you for the question. You know, we consult with our provincial partners on a number of matters. The consultation on electricity for pipelines is in a what-if stage, but as I've made clear before, we won't need extra electricity if we don't get a pipeline.

### Minimum Wage

**Ms Fitzpatrick:** Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Labour announced consultation on the minimum wage. We've heard a lot of heated rhetoric in this House on the minimum wage, but I've heard a lot from constituents, who've shared with me stories of how this has already helped their families. To the Minister of Labour: why does the minister think that a phased-in approach to the minimum wage is good for Alberta?

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the member for the question. No Albertan who works all day should have to go to the food bank to feed themselves and their family, but the people who run food banks in Canada say that 1 in 3 in Alberta do just that. That is wrong. It should not be acceptable to any member of this House. On this side of the House we believe in income security and basic human dignity. That is why we believe that implementing a phased-in \$15 per hour minimum wage is right for Alberta.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Ms Fitzpatrick:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: could the minister please update the House on some facts

on this important issue given that there is a lot of misinformation about who is paid the minimum wage in Alberta?

2:30

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Members opposite like to pretend that the minimum wage is just a training wage paid to a few kids. They're wrong, and they should be doing their homework. Over 33,000 Albertans that earn less than \$15 per hour are single earners with children; 194,000 women in Alberta earn \$15 per hour or less; and over 37,000 Albertans earning \$15 per hour or less are 55 or older. These are the people who are low-income earners here in Alberta.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Ms Fitzpatrick:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Minister of Labour: can the minister please inform this House about who will be consulted in the weeks ahead and when we can expect a decision since many Albertans may be interested in participating in this consultation?

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

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we committed to previously, we will be listening to employers and employees on how to move forward with the changes to minimum wage. Focused consultations will be held over the next month with key stakeholders, including employers, social services agencies, and the low-income earners themselves. Topic discussions will include future increases, meal and lodging deductions, and the phase-out of the differential liquor server rate. We want to take the time to listen to the people directly involved while making sure that we are taking care of Alberta families.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

### Wainwright Health Care Facilities

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Sunday a broken waterline at the Wainwright hospital drove 27 elderly residents out of their beds, forcing many to be transported to other facilities, and this is just the latest in a list of problems that reach back years. About six months ago a different waterline failed, causing flooding as well. The hospital serves as a hub for the community of Wainwright and for the military base, and it's literally falling apart. To the minister: when can my constituents expect to see the hospital they desperately need and were promised?

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

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. The safety of the residents and staff of the hospital is our first priority, and AHS is working with residents and their family members to ensure that everyone is getting the care they need. Over 20 rooms were affected by the water main break. This means that some residents will need to be temporarily relocated to a different wing of the facility or to facilities in nearby communities. Repair and restoration work to the damaged areas is already under way, and it is anticipated that it could take up to six weeks.

**Mr. Taylor:** When are we going to get a new hospital? Given that in 2010 the Wainwright hospital was Alberta Health Service's number two priority and a community care project and then dropped to seventh in 2012 and that in November 2015 the Minister of Infrastructure stated that it's "in a list of 24 high-priority projects," will the Minister of Infrastructure tell the people served by the

hospital where it is on the priority list now and when this critical, life-saving infrastructure will be built in the community?

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, unlike those on the other side who claim that they want large cuts to the Infrastructure budget, we're actually trying to step up and provide for the needs of the people of this province throughout the province, without regard to what political party represents them. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I've passed a couple of notes requesting that the volume of the voices decline. I expect it to happen now, please.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that very much. It's important that the infrastructure needs are met throughout the province. We assess everything carefully and objectively, and I can assure the hon. member that the project in his community . . .

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

**Mr. Taylor:** We need to have it on the priority list, and that's really what we're asking for.

Given that both the mayor of Wainwright and I have contacted the Minister of Health requesting to meet and discuss the state of the hospital and have questioned the Minister of Infrastructure about the timing of the promised build and given that the hospital is falling apart around the patients and staff and residents, when will the ministers of Health and Infrastructure come to Wainwright and see for themselves the building that passes for a hospital for the citizens and soldiers who seek care in the hub of Wainwright?

**Ms Hoffman:** Once before in the House the member opposite talked about dirty water. I think he actually used the phrase "raw sewage." It was clean water. Now he's saying that a hospital is falling down around patients. I need to stress how important it is for us to talk about facts. We are taking patient safety very seriously. That's why we made sure that patients were moved to an area of the hospital and to other facilities, where they could be treated safely, Mr. Speaker. The tone and the misinformation that's being shared on the other side . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Would you finish your statement, Madam Minister?

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The tone and the misinformation is certainly not conducive to a good dialogue.

I have met with the mayor and will continue to have ongoing conversations about this. As I have demonstrated, I am very keen to see the hospitals throughout the province. I think there are two ridings that I haven't been to.

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

### Support for Agriculture and Forestry Industries

**Dr. Starke:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While this government plays cat and mouse with Alberta's energy sector, putting current investments at risk and future economic expansion in serious doubt, the agriculture and forestry sectors continue to generate good news. Winnipeg-based Paterson Grain recently announced plans to invest some \$25 million to build an export terminal near Bowden. It will have 55,000 tonnes of capacity and a high-speed unloading system that could empty 150 rail cars in seven hours. To the agriculture minister: since being elected over one year ago, what specific initiatives has this government taken to improve our capacity to move grain by rail?

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

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for the question. That was very good news. Quite frankly, the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry has not only been engaging with stakeholders across this province but also has been advocating for increasing our trade opportunities with our trading partners internationally. Again, Alberta is an export-based province, and it's absolutely critical not only for our grain sector but also for our beef producers, our pork producers, and other producers to get their products to market.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Dr. Starke:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this is not the only major agricultural project that has been unveiled in recent months, with GrainsConnect Canada proposing to build a 35,000 tonne capacity handling facility outside of Innisfail, and given that further economic diversification in this province will be dependent on innovative, community-based economic development initiatives, to the minister: what specific initiatives has this government taken to maximize opportunities throughout rural Alberta and to expand the value chain for Alberta-made and Alberta-produced goods?

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

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for the question. I think it's important to note that we do have some healthy sectors. Unlike the Official Opposition, that seems to only condemn one – quite frankly, there are a number of initiatives that the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry and I are working on, again looking at working with not just our producers but also with our different sectors. In the budget that we tabled we have \$10 million going toward regional economic development. There are a number of projects that we are working on with the different REDAs throughout the province.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Dr. Starke:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the still burning fires in northern Alberta are affecting forestry operations and threatening sawmills and given that significant stands of white spruce have been lost to the inferno and that some operations may be forced to downsize, to the minister: what specific assistance is this government providing forest producers, and how is this government protecting forestry transportation infrastructure so that the forestry industry can continue to be a multibillion-dollar contributor to Alberta economic history?

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

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll thank the member again for his question. You know, first and foremost, as the Minister of Municipal Affairs has pointed out, all hands are on deck as far as trying to protect our infrastructure assets up in northern Alberta, and that includes our sawmills and our assets in the forestry sector. We do recognize that because of the size of the fire quite a large amount of our fibre has burned up. I know that the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry is working with our partners in the forestry sector to look at ways that our government can provide assistance to them.

Thank you.

2:40

### Support for Business

**Mr. Nielsen:** Mr. Speaker, we know that during tough economic times large-scale capital investments are important. They spur job

creation and create spinoff economic benefits throughout our province. But tough economic times also mean businesses have challenges attracting private investment, capital investment. These businesses need support as they get Albertans back to work. To the Minister of Economic Development and Trade: how is our government encouraging investment in and by Alberta-based businesses?

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

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for that question. Our government is taking action to attract capital investment that will support job creation and economic diversification across the province. Introducing a capital investment tax credit at a time when businesses are struggling with tight margins will help to boost investor confidence and encourage timely investment decisions when Albertans need it the most. In fact, once in place, we expect this program will support over \$700 million worth of investment and thousands of direct and indirect full-time jobs.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that other provinces may also offer incentives to businesses and given that we need to be promoting Alberta as an exceptional place to do business, again to the same minister: how is our government supporting and attracting new businesses in Alberta?

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

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll thank the member for the question. We know Alberta needs to level the playing field with other jurisdictions. British Columbia, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Manitoba, and a number of U.S. states have an investor tax credit. As part of the Alberta jobs plan the Alberta investor tax credit is a \$90 million tax credit over two years that will support small and medium-sized businesses. The tax credit will also encourage venture capitalists and business angels to invest in homegrown businesses, boosting access to capital when it is most needed.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that as we work to stabilize our economy and get off the resource royalty roller coaster, we will need to ensure that we are supporting emerging and growing industries and given that often small businesses are creating new jobs, again to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade: what is the minister doing to encourage more development and diversification opportunities for small and medium-sized businesses?

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

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll thank the member for the question. Our government made a commitment to support greater economic growth. Unlike the Official Opposition, our government believes in diversification. We announced the petrochemicals diversification program, which is just one example of the many ways that we're acting on that commitment. The new petrochemicals diversification program will help our province compete for new investment and job opportunities by turning our raw resources into the building blocks for plastics and other goods. We expect the program to attract two to three new petrochemical facilities to Alberta through financial incentives in the form of royalty credits.

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

Hon. members, I've had a request for unanimous consent to introduce some guests who arrived late. Is there agreement?

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Introduction of Guests

(continued)

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

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce a classroom from Forest Lawn high school, grades 10 to 12. They're joined by Ms Tina Merali, Ms Nijehus, Ms Laura Duker, Mr. Thanh Ly, Mrs. Michelle Wagler, and Mr. Rob Gossen. It's my privilege to introduce the 50 students who are here. They've had a tour of the Legislature, and they watched this rather interesting question period. I'd like to thank everyone for coming and have them stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

### Members' Statements

(continued)

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

### Wild Mountain Music Festival

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to talk about a very popular music festival happening in my neck of the woods, in Hinton, this July. You guessed it right; it's the Wild Mountain Music Festival, one of the province's biggest music festivals, at the original crossroads at the historic Entrance Ranch, just off highway 40.

First Nations peoples from all over visited this area, which is the traditional home of the mountain Métis, because this was a place for powerful medicine, summer celebrations, and feasting.

This year's lineup includes an impressive array of Juno award winners, nominees, and popular local artists from Alberta and across Canada. Serena Ryder, Buffy Sainte-Marie, Dan Mangan, and the Rural Alberta Advantage will join local talent like Laura Vinson and Free Spirit.

Wild Mountain has the best beer tent ever, with a great view of both performance stages. Free camping is included with the price of entry, but the field is rustic, so bring everything you need.

Every year the Wild Mountain Music Festival attracts approximately 6,000 people to the area, making it a major contributor to the local economy. The festival started in 2007 and is a 100 per cent community-owned and volunteer-run initiative supported by many sponsors. I would like to recognize some of them: Jules Oilfield, Alberta Foundation for the Arts, Travel Alberta, CKUA, SunDog tours, Eagle radio, rock FM 96.7 The Rig, Wild Orchid Liquor Co., town of Hinton, Titan Specialized Hauling Ltd., the *Hinton Voice*, Morad Communications, Yellowhead county, Servus Credit Union, and the Dunn family.

Come visit and take in breathtaking mountain vistas while grooving to the music of some of Alberta's and Canada's most talented artists July 15, 16, and 17.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

To let the members who need to leave, have commitments, we'll just take a few seconds here.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

### The Emeralds Show and Dance Band

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Speaking of music, last fall, as you may recall, I asked Members of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta to sign a letter of support to nominate the Emeralds to Canada's Walk of Fame. To refresh our memories, the Emeralds Show and Dance Band are an internationally acclaimed Edmonton-based group best known for their hit *The Bird Dance*.

Well, what a tremendous response we received. Over 50 MLAs on both sides of the House sent letters of support to my office, but it didn't stop there. Numerous people contacted my office to see if they could provide letters of support and if they could help in any way. The Emeralds also received numerous letters from all over the province, all over the country, and down in the U.S. fans signed support letters at their concerts as well. Some Edmonton city councillors have also sent letters of support to my constituency.

Right now there are hundreds of letters of support in my office waiting to be sent to Canada's Walk of Fame. On May 27 at 10 a.m. the Emeralds and I will mail the first box of letters to Canada's Walk of Fame at the Londonderry Mall post office located in Shoppers Drug Mart, and you are more than welcome to join us.

Thank you to each and every one of you that have provided your support for this nomination. Together we can make history by helping the Emeralds get the recognition they so rightly deserve.

### Wildrose Conservative Coalition Initiative

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** One year of NDP government has made many Albertans clamour for a united conservative choice in the next election. Unfortunately, the PCs have rejected that option and chosen to continue in isolation. [interjections] Many of us in the Wildrose were once proud PCs and recognize that for many years . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, we've had this discussion before. During Members' Statements there's respect for a tradition that the member has an opportunity to speak without being interrupted. I'd appreciate it if you would allow him to do that.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Reset the time? Reset?

**The Speaker:** I think we stopped the clock.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** If we could reset the clock, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** How about – it took 10 seconds, so keep going after that.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Many of us in the Wildrose were once PCs and recognize that for many years they provided Alberta with good government, before they strayed from common-sense conservative principles. Indeed, any unified conservative party should embrace the best elements of the Lougheed and Klein legacies while rejecting the liberal drift and questionable ethics that caused Wildrose conservatives to leave in the first place.

2:50

But sitting across the aisle from an NDP government has made us reassess our prejudices. I believe that it is time for all conservatives to do likewise. Since the PC establishment shut the door to co-operation at their AGM, there is no point in pursuing that path any further. Instead, the Wildrose will rise to the occasion and move to invite and unite conservative Albertans with more than a greeting.

The current incarnation of the Wildrose can and should become a bigger and broader coalition of conservatives. We will begin a

process whereby all conservatives can come together and be welcomed as equals and not as winners and losers. Let's start with a shared vision, a conservative party dedicated to the principles of individual freedom, fiscal responsibility, religious liberty, equality of opportunity, and the greatness of Alberta, welcoming to Albertans of all backgrounds, unafraid of taking principled stands even when they may be unpopular, and uncompromising in its commitment to accountable and ethical government.

This summer our party will bring people together to solicit support for changes to bring conservatives together. Together we will put our children's Alberta before . . .

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

### Notices of Motions

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Infrastructure and Minister of Transportation. The Minister of Infrastructure and of Transportation. Possibly for a third time . . .

**Mr. Mason:** Oh, I'm sorry. He was signalling to me, Mr. Speaker, and I couldn't understand him, but he was trying to tell me that you were trying to get my attention.

I have a notice of motion that I'd like to read, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to Standing Order 34(3) I'm rising to advise the House that on Monday, May 30, written questions 15 and 16 will be accepted.

### Tabling Returns and Reports

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

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table five copies of the S&P Global Ratings credit-rating downgrade, where it notes that Alberta has been "downgraded to 'AA' from 'AA+' on very weak budgetary performance."

Thank you very much.

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

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I table a copy of something we discussed this morning, just basically page 4 of the government of Alberta's annual report showing a billion dollar plus surplus from 2014-2015.

### Tablings to the Clerk

**The Clerk:** I wish to advise the Assembly that the following document was deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of the hon. Mr. Sabir, Minister of Human Services, responses to questions raised from the May 5, 2016, Ministry of Human Services 2016-17 main estimates debate.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

##### Bill 15

#### An Act to End Predatory Lending

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

**Dr. Starke:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to section 2(2) of the Conflicts of Interest Act I must at this time rise and recuse myself from the Chamber owing to a potential perceived conflict of



interest. As has been previously disclosed to the Ethics Commissioner, I have a family member who sits on the board of directors of one of Alberta's credit unions. This creates a possible perception that I would be in conflict if I were to participate in the debate on this particular matter, and therefore I would ask that I be able to recuse myself from debate today and that that be recorded in the *Journals*.

**The Speaker:** So noted.

The Minister of Service Alberta.

**Ms McLean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure to rise and move Bill 15, An Act to End Predatory Lending.

In the Speech from the Throne on March 8 this government committed to stand up for Albertans when they are most vulnerable. We committed to introduce legislation this session to end the practice of exploitive interest rates that are currently permitted in Alberta for payday loans. An Act to End Predatory Lending puts an end to practices that harm Albertans. Let me be clear. Interest rates that reach 600 per cent are predatory; 600 per cent interest that prevents Alberta families from being able to meet their needs are predatory. Loans that require you to take out loans to pay back loans are predatory. We are ending it, and we are protecting Albertans. Bill 15, An Act to End Predatory Lending, protects Albertans by tightening the regulatory framework around payday lenders.

Right now Albertans have to pay \$23 per \$100 for a 10-day loan. Here's an example of where this leads. Let's say an unexpected expense comes up and it leaves you \$500 short on your food budget in the month of May. To cover the shortfall, you head to a payday loan store and take out a \$500 loan at the current maximum cost of borrowing of \$23 per \$100 borrowed. Although you can now pay for your groceries in May, you'll have to pay back \$615 to the payday lender and still buy your groceries for June, so this totals \$1,115. If that repayment or the \$115 in fees leaves you unable to cover other expenses, you might then feel that you need to take out another payday loan, which will result in more fees in the next month. The longer this cycle of taking out payday loans continues, the more money the borrower pays in fees and the harder it becomes to catch up.

Albertans told us that they want us to end this cycle and reduce the cost of borrowing. We have significantly reduced the cost of borrowing to \$15 for every \$100 borrowed. This is the lowest in the country, Mr. Speaker.

Albertans also told us that they want longer payback periods. We are ensuring that repayment options help Albertans stay on their feet and have a chance to repay debt rather than being overwhelmed by it. These changes specifically make cycles of debt and rollover loans less likely by introducing mandatory instalment payments. This means that Albertans will have a minimum of 42 days to pay back an initial loan.

We've heard widespread support for this initiative, Mr. Speaker. We will ensure that this change is carefully implemented with payday lenders so that practices are standardized and compliance is high. The executive director of Momentum said that by moving to instalment payments, it makes it so that people have more of a chance to get out of a debt trap.

The executive director of International Avenue, Calgary's BRZ, or business revitalization zone, said:

This is ground-breaking legislation. It ensures vulnerable borrowers are protected, particularly now when budgets are tight. These changes will positively impact our community's revitalization efforts, and [actually] help attract new businesses to our neighbourhood.

We are so proud to support communities and Albertans with these proposed changes, and we are increasing other protections for Albertans who may not be directed to all the fine print at the payday lender counters. We will require that information be clearly communicated to people borrowing money. Fifteen dollars per \$100 will be an all-in rate, Mr. Speaker. No more hidden fees or insurance premiums.

We are also adding a prohibition on lenders providing other forms of credit to borrowers who have already taken out payday loans. Again, this will help stop cycles of debt and will support Alberta families and help them ensure they can make ends meet. Together these changes will dramatically reduce the annual interest rates for payday loans.

Just as significantly, the legislation commits payday lenders, by law, to provide information on financial literacy. We need financial literacy to reach Albertans wherever they are.

3:00

Mr. Speaker, I have been inspired by GameSense. This is an initiative that operates on-site at Alberta gaming establishments. GameSense is a dynamic initiative and has had a real impact in casinos. We will work with community groups and lenders to promote similar models to provide Albertans the tools and resources they need to build financial stability.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, An Act to End Predatory Lending commits government to promote real and accessible credit alternatives. We are working with our community partners like Momentum in Calgary, with credit unions and others so that these alternatives meet the needs of Albertans. Once we get there, once uptake is strong, we will bring down the annual interest rate even further. I am confident in this approach, and I am excited to report that credit unions across the province have already made strong commitments to expand and launch alternatives, microloans and cash crunch loans. First Calgary, Servus, and Connect First together with groups like Momentum are showing community leadership, and we can all be proud of these Albertans.

In short, An Act to End Predatory Lending will promote fair and responsible lending. Albertans asked us to do this. When we consulted with more than 1,400 stakeholders last year, Albertans told us that payday borrowing costs are too high. One participant called them exorbitant. Another participant told us that after taking out a payday loan in an emergency, it soon became a cycle, needing a loan to cover the void left from paying back the first one. We heard last week that Google is banning payday loan ads for exactly these reasons.

Our leadership and these changes are making a difference. We are helping to end cycles of debt and making the time between paycheques a little easier for Alberta's families.

Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Anyone wishing to speak to Bill 15? I would recognize the Member for Red Deer-North.

**Mrs. Schreiner:** I decline right now, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise today to speak to the bill before us here. This bill is very well intentioned. I believe it is crafted with the intention of ensuring that some of our most vulnerable citizens do not fall into extreme poverty as a result of the very high rates of interest faced at payday loan stores. No Albertan ever wants to find themselves in a payday loan store. The rates of interest charged there are far higher than

rates of interest, I'm sure, that any member of this Legislature faces if we go to the bank looking for a loan.

It is well intended, but this bill has unintended consequences. Interest represents risk, risk to the person lending the money, and the individuals who go to payday loan stores are going to payday loan stores and not banks because they are, overwhelmingly, high-risk borrowers. For a variety of reasons their creditworthiness is going to be rather low. It might be that they're between jobs. It could be issues of addictions. It could be any host of very serious issues that keep this individual from attaining a reasonable credit score. But for one reason or another these individuals have low credit scores, and they are therefore high-risk borrowers. As a result most banks will not provide them with the loans that they might need.

Now, these loans are very specific kinds of loans. These are not like when we put something on a credit card, or they're not like a line of credit. These are traditionally short-term loans for a span of a single week, essentially before payday; hence, the term "payday loan." These loans are of a very short-term nature, but they're also at very high interest because the borrower in these cases has a high risk of defaulting, of not being able to pay back the lender. As a result the interest rates can take on extremely high levels, and if someone is not able to pay those loans back on time, the penalties can be quite severe, and it can trap someone in a cycle of poverty.

That being said, I do not believe that it is the answer to merely ban high interest rates. To legislate away a rate of interest might sound nice. It might sound like we're trying to help this person because we are saying, "We don't want you trapped in this cycle of poverty," and a big part of that will be these exorbitant, in many cases, interest rates. But what's going to happen if we legislate away some of these interest rates without addressing some of the deeper, core issues?

My fear is that we may drive some of this high-risk lending underground. In other jurisdictions, in other areas where these kinds of loans are not available, we often see the prevalence of organized crime being involved, where an individual is badly in need of a loan and they're willing to pay almost anything to get it. They might be in very desperate circumstances. Maybe they can't pay their heating bill, or they can't pay their kid's tuition. They could be in very desperate circumstances, and when that money is not available, people will sometimes turn to unsavoury methods of borrowing money. If these kinds of financial products are not available, my sincere concern is that some folks might turn towards illegal means of obtaining those loans.

This is a serious potential unintended consequence. It is a very well-intended bill. It is trying to do a very positive thing for lower income people who need availability of credit, but my concern is that we're going to have significant unintended consequences. One will be that we could be driving these people underground in search of available credit. The other is that there might just not be anything available and the extreme problems that can come from that. They might end up borrowing from family, or they might not have anything available at all. Instead of legislating an artificial rate of interest that we believe is reasonable – these interest rates are quite extreme – instead of legislating arbitrarily a rate of interest that we think is more fair, I think that we would be better served to provide services to these people.

Now, I'm pleased to hear that the minister is working with our credit unions. I think that's positive. If we can get our credit unions to provide financial products to these high-risk borrowers, then I think that is an extremely positive move, but I'm not convinced that merely legislating away high interest rates is going to fix that. The way we need to fix it is through financial literacy, helping people understand their household finances. We need people to understand

the extreme cycle of debt they could potentially be getting themselves into. In many cases people take out a payday loan, and they don't know the kind of financial hole they could potentially be getting into as interest rates compound on them. That being said, some people do use these kinds of financial products responsibly, but some people do fall into a very unfortunate trap of poverty.

We should be working with our credit unions, and I credit the minister for doing that. That is a positive step forward, but I'm not convinced that this will necessarily fix the problem. As I said, interest represents the availability of money and risk, and if these borrowers are extremely high-risk borrowers, you're not going to be able to lend them that money without a high rate of interest because that rate of interest represents the high risk that they present to the person or institution lending the money. It's basic creditworthiness, Mr. Speaker.

3:10

Even if credit unions are making a conscious attempt to make credit available to high-risk borrowers, if those borrowers are finding themselves still not credit worthy, then a lower rate of interest will simply not be available to those people. They could potentially find themselves without any financial product available. It is very well intentioned on the minister's part, and I truly hope that the credit unions will be able to fill that gap, but I'm not convinced that that will necessarily be so. I genuinely hope that I am wrong about that.

There are significant unintended consequences here. I believe that we would be better intentioned to provide programs to high-risk borrowers in this province to educate them about financial literacy, to help them understand the real dangers of getting into these financial products if you do not use them very sparingly and responsibly. I think we would be much better serving the people we are trying to help here, Mr. Speaker, if we focused on education and programs to help these people rather than on an arbitrary limit to interest rates.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Mason:** Under 29(2)(a)?

**The Speaker:** You're not under 29(2)(a). I believe that was the second speaker; 29(2)(a) does not apply.

Is there another member who would like to speak? The Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I will open my comments on Bill 15 by saying this. If Bill 15 makes it more difficult for payday lenders to stay in business, if it means that payday lending companies go out of business, good. I think the minister deserves a lot of credit for bringing this bill forward, for listening to stakeholders like Momentum in Calgary and many others.

The title of the bill, I think, says it all. We have a problem in this province with predatory lenders. When people are being charged, in any context, 600 per cent interest, it's not just, it is not right, it is not fair, and it is our job as legislators to stamp that out. It is far past time for that to happen, and I'm pleased and thrilled that that is happening here in this House and to even be a small part of supporting something like this. I am enthusiastically supportive of the work the government is doing here.

I want to pick up on an argument, the unintended consequences comment, from my hon. friend from Strathmore-Brooks, the idea that it may create demand for shady activity. You know, poverty does not equal criminality. For people who are low income, who

have a difficult time, who are living paycheck to paycheck – and there are hundreds of thousands of people like that in this province – that doesn't mean that they know criminals and know people who would give them some back-alley loan and crack kneecaps if it's not repaid.

What it will do is that it creates something called a market demand. Demand for a product will be satisfied through things like credit unions or even chartered banks. I see section 2 of this bill references exactly that work that the minister will do, working with credit unions in this province to provide alternative products. I'm also thrilled to know that organizations like Momentum have already started a microloans program as an alternative to payday lending. The way the market works is that where there's a demand for something, supply rises to meet it – basic economics – and that's what I sincerely hope and fully expect will happen in this case. The government has a role to play to ensure that that happens.

You know, I think credit unions can make this a profitable venture over time even if they do it simply from a position of social good and do it only to break even. I expect that that's exactly what they would do. Credit unions in this province have a strong track record of standing up for our province. I would even encourage the government, of course, to use our very own credit union, Alberta Treasury Branches, as perhaps one of the vehicles where we can provide a microloan program to people.

But none of this replaces the need for a proper province-wide and comprehensive poverty-reduction strategy. We have to ask ourselves: why are people finding themselves in this position? Financial literacy absolutely is a big part of it. People shouldn't live beyond their means, but when their means only allow them to buy food for two-thirds of the month, what do we do to help those people and ensure that we can alleviate poverty in a more systematic way?

Income security certainly is part of that. Early childhood education is a huge part of eliminating poverty. Breaking the cycles of violence, breaking the cycles of addiction, ensuring adequate housing, ensuring great education systems, ensuring adequate health care: all of those pieces fit into a poverty reduction strategy, which will reduce the demand for microloans or what are currently called payday loans.

I also very much like the transparency aspects of this bill, requiring payday loan companies to calculate all fees in the borrowing process and make that very transparent right up front. Repayable loans in installments I think makes a lot of sense as well.

Again, I've talked about financial literacy.

You know, I do wonder if these payday loan shops have sprung up like weeds in low-income neighbourhoods because the profit margins are just so remarkable and outrageous that perhaps they're going to be able to make a go of it at much lower rates. Do you remember the terrible ad from it's got to be 20 years ago now, when the payday loans first came around? It's like, "Three bucks on a hun," right? That's \$3. That's 3 per cent on \$100 borrowed. Well, we're taking it to \$15, which is a drop from \$23. Twenty-three dollars to borrow \$100: that is unbelievable in terms of the rate of interest. It's usury. It's remarkable to me that it was legal in the first place. This government deserves a lot of praise for no longer allowing that.

I think there's absolutely more than enough room here for payday lending companies to continue to operate if, in fact, there is a demand for it. But putting together all of the different aspects, I think that we will do some real good in this province if we can finally do away with the outrageous levels of interest and also think beyond just this, think beyond payday lending, and think about an overall poverty reduction strategy, which I certainly hope this government is working on, and I look forward to hearing exactly what you come up with there.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

**Mr. Mason:** No. We alternate, don't we?

**The Speaker:** My apologies to the members. I understood it was only 29(2)(a) you wished to speak to.

You'd like to speak to the matter?

**Mr. Mason:** I would, please, yes.

**The Speaker:** Proceed.

**Mr. Mason:** Very briefly, Mr. Speaker. I cannot let the comments of the hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks pass without some comment. You know, I found them breathtaking in their failure to grasp what we're dealing with. We have these payday loan companies, and the hon. member is trying to justify the existence of these predatory loans by claiming that it's just a relationship with the risk of the person who's borrowing the money and that that justifies the interest rates that are being charged. That's absolutely far from the actual facts.

At 23 per cent over a 10-day period, if you calculate that out, Mr. Speaker, over a year, the interest rates are 600 per cent over a year, and that is far beyond any compensation that might be required for the loss of loans. In fact, it is these loans themselves that are creating the extra risk. Because these interest rates are so high, the risk of default is much higher because of the interest rates and the way in which it is calculated. It is not the borrower that is the primary source of risk. It is the lender that is the primary source of risk because of the types of loans that they are providing to people who have very little choice. It may well be that these people have low incomes, maybe bad credit ratings, maybe they are a high risk, but to attempt to say that this is merely the market at work is to misstate it.

In fact, I want to read from some people. First Calgary Financial says: I don't see payday loans as high-risk loans; we're putting skin in the game; we believe this is a social issue; we believe we can make a positive impact. Mr. Speaker, the president of First Calgary Financial has said that this is a social issue, and perhaps that's where we lost the Member for Strathmore-Brooks. We know that social issues are not in his top 100 priorities, so he doesn't appreciate or understand the importance of this as a social issue.

3:20

Mr. Speaker, this is how poverty is perpetuated. This is how you keep people down. This is how you take advantage of people and you keep them poor and you make them poorer. I think that what we're doing makes tremendous social sense but also good economic sense. It's a good policy, a good economic policy, to help reduce poverty, to help people and families out of poverty and get them on their feet. These payday loans keep people in poverty. It's like quicksand; the more they struggle, the harder they are stuck.

I just want to say that I can't let Strathmore-Brooks' comments go without being responded to because I think that they really do not appreciate the dignity of the people who are caught in these traps, and it is unworthy of him and of the House. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions or comments under 29(2)(a) to the hon. Government House Leader?

Calgary-North West.

**Ms Jansen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wanted to rise and address some of the thoughts I've heard in the Chamber so far. One of them is, of course – and I'll echo some of the comments of my colleague across the aisle – when the Member for Strathmore-Brooks talked

about the unintended consequence of this bill and about high-risk borrowers. That's an interesting conversation to have, high-risk borrowers. I like the concept of discussing high-risk borrowers because they include a lot of people that I am very familiar with: single moms, vulnerable people. My colleague from Calgary-Elbow and I sit on the Calgary Homeless Foundation, and we discuss the issues relating to vulnerable people at every meeting that we attend. When we talk about a predatory lending bill, the key term here is "predatory." What do predators do? They prey on the vulnerable.

In discussions about the province's most vulnerable, certainly the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood hit the nail on the head when he said that some of our colleagues in the House have a difficult time talking about social issues. They are uncomfortable with them. They're bootstraps people; they think everybody should be able to pick themselves up and that we don't actually have to have a social safety net because everybody has the ability to go out and get a job and take care of themselves. Well, that doesn't always happen. You know, if there's anyone shocked at the idea that our two parties might not be simpatico, well, here's a perfect example of where we differ in how we feel about vulnerable people in this province.

Frankly – and I've said this to the minister responsible for Status of Women – the work she's doing right now is fantastic. I praise her for that. I think she has been inclusive. We've had a chance to sit down in a nonpartisan way to talk about issues that are extremely important, and I think this is one of those issues.

While I say that, I would hope that when we look at the idea of people who will go out and get a \$500 payday loan and, through a series of circumstances, by the end of the year owe \$6,000, \$8,000, \$9,000 and are mired in such a desperate place that they don't know what to do next – that is a terrible place to be. The kinds of people who are left in those circumstances are people who feel powerless. I certainly feel very good about the idea that there are tools that may be offered to those people so that they never end up in those situations, so that they can begin to have, first of all, a discussion about getting themselves to a place where they don't have to take advantage of those kinds of companies, where there is an opportunity to access microloans, where there is an opportunity to have a discussion about financial literacy in the sense that they can develop the tools so that they will never have to access those companies again.

But I think it's not an either/or situation. I don't think that we should just, as some of my colleagues feel, let these groups continue to operate because the alternative is that people who are desperate and go looking for these loans will then resort to criminal activity, which is such a terrible stereotype but not surprising.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** You're lying. You're lying.

**Ms Jansen:** Did you just say that I'm lying? [interjections] Yeah, you did.

**Mr. Mason:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a point of order.

**Ms Jansen:** Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The point of order being . . .

**Mr. Mason:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks just repeatedly told the hon. member who is speaking that she was lying. That is not acceptable in this House, as that member knows, and then he misstated the facts when she asked him about it.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Mr. Speaker, I did say that the Member for Calgary-North West was lying. She was saying things that clearly

misrepresented what I was saying, but the term "lying" is unparliamentary. I withdraw the comment and apologize.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

**Ms Jansen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to wrap up by saying that certainly for those of us in the Progressive Conservative Party we do feel a commitment to the most vulnerable people in this province. We do appreciate that social issues have to be dealt with, and we don't believe that if you come from a lower income level, you're going to resort to crime in order to figure your way out of a problem. I think that those kinds of stereotypes, frankly, are tired and in the past, and we don't actually have to succumb to that kind of behaviour and that kind of thinking anymore.

I would just like to say that I thoroughly support Bill 15, its intent, and I look forward to seeing the results of it and the fact that in the future we will have many more families who can take advantage of . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member. I understood that you were rising under 29(2)(a). Did I misunderstand that? You were speaking to the main point? Is that correct?

**Ms Jansen:** I was.

**The Speaker:** You still have 10 minutes left.

**Ms Jansen:** Well, then, maybe I could go on and say that in discussing the whole concept of looking at the predatory lending piece, I like the idea that not only are we calling attention to it – there are probably lots of people who have no concept that this sort of thing goes on. If you live in a community where you don't have one of these companies on the corner, you probably have no idea about the pitfalls. If you watch a commercial and it's a peppy little commercial that talks about – actually, Member for Calgary-Elbow, what was the term?

**Mr. Clark:** "Three bucks on a hun."

**Ms Jansen:** "Three bucks on a hun." You know, it sounds so convenient, and if you don't make that payment, then you think: oh, well, I'm sure the consequences aren't that terrible. I think a lot of people get drawn into that. There is a reason those commercials make it look so easy. There is a reason those companies are in economically challenged areas. There is a reason that you don't see a company like that in an economically advantaged area.

I think we can draw attention to exactly what predatory lending means for the folks who don't know and talk about the kinds of tools that we should be able to provide to the individuals and families who would resort to using these companies. If they know that they have a whole tool chest available to them that includes microloans, that gives them an opportunity to know where it is they can go in order to access short-term help if they need that short-term help and then, if they access that short-term help more than one or two times a year, they should be able to talk to someone who says: "You know what? Here's an idea. Why don't we sit down and talk about how in the longer term you can manage your money better?" Now, aren't those great skills to be able to impart upon people who don't have them currently? Aren't those the kinds of conversations we have in a civilized society, where we want everyone to have the opportunity to get ahead? If you are in a situation where you access payday loans, you are not in that group of people. You are not getting ahead. Most of the people who access those loans do it more than once, and they are in a terrible cycle.

3:30

I'm not going to use all the rest of my time. I will only say that I think that when it comes to strong social policy, we all have to stand up, and we all have a responsibility to help it, to support it, and to ensure that it goes ahead for the vulnerable people in this province. I would also say that the PC Party is always behind good social policy for vulnerable people, and that's why the two of us will never meet.

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions to the Member for Calgary-North West under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am excited to rise today to speak in support of Bill 15. Now, my hon. colleague, presenting a few minutes ago, may be confused by that, but that's because my party has free votes, something that her party did not have when she was in power, that may be why they are not in power anymore.

Having said that, I rise in support of Bill 15 because, for me, the interest rates of about 600 per cent on these types of loans are exactly that; they are predatory. Now, I will take my record on social issues and the work that I have done with people in poverty in this province and put it up against anybody's in this House at any time. I resent and will not accept any remark that I do not or that all of my party do not support or have something against people in poverty because that is not true. In fact, that is why I will speak in favour of this bill.

I do want to address the issue of loan sharks and the implication that the previous two members brought up, that by bringing up concerns about how the poor could be taken advantage of, a member bringing up those concerns is saying that that means that all the poor are criminals. That is not true. Again, I have worked with homeless people my entire life, and they are not criminals. They are often taken advantage of by criminals, which is exactly why this government says they're bringing forward this bill and is exactly why I support this bill. They are taking advantage of low-income people, taking advantage of people in a tough situation. For a member to bring up the fact that other people can do that is exactly what the government is saying.

There's nothing wrong with pointing out that, yes, this bill is good. I'm going to support this bill, and I encourage my colleagues to vote with me in support of this bill, but we have to make sure that when we go through this legislation, go through the stages here, we make sure that we're not leaving open other areas where people can take advantage of the poor or the very people that we're helping. That is what the hon. member was discussing, and I don't appreciate the comments from the other two members who don't seem to understand that.

With that said, I want to be clear that I support this bill. Many of my colleagues support this bill because the interest rates and the payment rules put to extreme disadvantage the people that are already in a tough situation, and that's totally unacceptable.

I remember often seeing within our shelter system people that we call the working poor. A lot of people don't understand that people who live inside our shelters in Calgary and Edmonton and throughout the province work. In fact, a large majority of people who live in our shelters work, and we call them the working poor. They work, but they often have to take these type of loans in order to be able to make ends meet or to do certain things throughout the month and would get stuck in a vicious cycle, and then they were taken advantage of. I agree a hundred per cent on that, and that's why I'm going to vote for this bill.

But let's not be silly and say that other people can't take advantage of the poor in our province. Let's make sure that as we go through this legislation, go through the next stages of it, we get it right, that what we're trying to accomplish is actually accomplished.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions or comments under 29(2)(a) to the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre?

Are there any other members who would like to speak to Bill 15, An Act to End Predatory Lending?

Hon. minister, any closing remarks?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

[Motion carried; Bill 15 read a second time]

## Bill 16

### Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2016

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Do you require me to move that Bill 16, the Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2016, be now read a second time? Is that what you want?

**The Speaker:** Yeah.

**Mr. Mason:** Then I just did.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise and speak to Bill 16, the Traffic Safety Amendment Act, in second reading. Most sections of the Traffic Safety Act came into force in 2003. That was 13 years ago. It was a year before Facebook came along, three years before Twitter, and six years before the creation of Uber. The rapid advance of technology and social media has changed the way we do things in the world. For example, people hardly ever use their phones only for phone calls anymore. I recently have learned how to take a photograph with my phone. Apparently, we can now download entire seasons of TV shows and watch them at our convenience. I've no idea why you'd want to watch it on a screen three inches across, but apparently some people do that. If we need a ride somewhere, we have the option of tapping an app instead of phoning a cab company to speak to a real live dispatcher.

We are living in a world where things are getting more convenient, yet at the same time these conveniences are causing new complexities; for example, distracted driving. Keeping up with changing times means adapting to changing technologies and addressing the complexities that come with them. As government our job is to regularly revisit and update legislation to ensure that it meets the evolving needs of our changing society, and that includes the Traffic Safety Act, legislation that has an impact on some 3 million licensed Alberta drivers. The proposed amendments I will speak about today reflect the changing needs of drivers while ensuring the safety of everyone who uses our roads and highways.

A serious issue that continues to have an impact on drivers, passengers, and their loved ones is impaired driving. Between 2010 and 2014, Mr. Speaker, 400 people were killed and more than 6,000 people were injured in alcohol-related collisions in Alberta. Bill 16 proposes to strengthen the impaired-driving legislation through changes to laws that apply to the ignition interlock program. This is a mandatory program for all individuals who have been convicted of an impaired-driving offence in Alberta. Participants have an alcohol-sensing device attached to their vehicle ignition system. Basically, it's just a plastic tube that a driver must blow into in order to be able to start their vehicle, and if the device detects a certain

level of alcohol, the person won't be able to start or drive the vehicle.

This program has proven effective at reducing drinking and driving. It separates the act of drinking from driving, and it changes behaviour. But under current legislation first-time offenders with under .16 blood-alcohol content can apply for an exemption to the program. That .16 is double the legal limit. So anyone under double the legal limit is currently able to apply for an exemption. Albertans have told us that this isn't good enough. The amendment will remove that exemption and will help us in our battle to keep more drunk drivers off Alberta roads.

Another proposed amendment will clarify the law regarding proof of insurance. The current legislation is vague, to put it mildly, so anyone who's ever received a ticket for producing an out-of-date insurance card, known as a pink card, even while they have a current pink card in their possession will attest to this. This amendment would make the law clearer to police officers and to drivers. If drivers can produce a current pink card, they would not receive a ticket regardless of whether or not they also produced their outdated pink card. If people are like me, when you get your pink card, you take it out to your car, and you just add it to the ones that are already there in your little plastic folder on your dashboard. That, apparently, is currently an offence, and we're fixing that.

3:40

Bill 16 also includes amendments that would address the relatively new influx of transportation network companies, or TNCs, that are operating in our province. The issue of private vehicle-for-hire operations is becoming an emergent issue around the world with the introduction of TNCs such as Uber. TNCs electronically connect private drivers with passengers seeking rides through a smart phone app. It's a new transportation business model, and our current provincial regulation does not fully address it. As a result, requirements for TNCs and their drivers are unclear.

We want to bring some clarity, and we want to ensure that TNCs operate safely, reliably, and fairly in our province. To that end, Bill 16 seeks to establish an appropriate regulatory framework for rides for hire. The impetus for regulation changes began at the end of February, when I announced basic safety requirements for TNC operation. These include requiring every TNC driver to have appropriate insurance coverage, driver's licence, and a police information check. At the same time I made a commitment to update our regulations. Our government's priority is public safety for passengers, drivers, and other users of our roads.

Over the past few months the government has been speaking with stakeholders, including Uber and other transportation network companies, the cities of Edmonton and Calgary, and the taxi industry. The amendments I am proposing today were informed by those conversations and will establish a reasonable framework for ride-for-hire companies. One of the main changes is to amend the Traffic Safety Act so that we may make regulations regulating these companies. TNC operations do not currently fall under the act.

As well, Mr. Speaker, we want to amend the act so legislation could apply to the companies themselves rather than to individual drivers. As it stands now, the legislation applies just to the drivers. We want to place the onus on the TNCs because it is the TNCs that control who drives for them, and they establish their own driver policies. This regulatory framework ensures that TNCs are responsible for knowing who their drivers are and that all drivers meet safety requirements before they provide rides for hire through a TNC. It also allows us to speak with the TNC directly rather than trying to identify hundreds or thousands of individual drivers. While I know that TNCs are typically doing these checks already, this amendment gives the province a practical enforcement tool.

Mr. Speaker, while it's important that we create regulations that enhance the safety of Albertans, we won't get anywhere if we can't enforce them. To that end, the amendments would also add a provision under which the registrar of motor vehicles may levy administrative penalties of up to \$50,000 against a transportation network company if the company allows drivers to drive with less than a class 4 driver's licence, if the company fails to ensure that its drivers have adequate insurance, or if the company fails to produce a record of criminal background checks for its drivers. These penalties are significant enough to encourage compliance in an industry like this, which has the potential of growing much larger in scope and size.

We're also proposing an appeals provisions so that any transportation company that is affected by an administrative penalty has a recourse and can appeal to the Alberta Transportation Safety Board.

Finally, Bill 16 proposes a provision for the registrar to apply for an injunction against a transportation network company if necessary.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, the regulations that Bill 16 proposes have been developed in part to keep our province moving forward and up to speed with changing needs of Albertans, changing times, and changing technologies. Many amendments in this bill intend to bring more clarity to an industry that is practically brand new and create regulations that will work for all parties, but this bill, first and foremost, is about safety on our roads and safety for Alberta's drivers, passengers, and all users of our province's roads and highways.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to the debate, and I encourage members to support Bill 16, the Traffic Safety Amendment Act.

I will now move that we adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

## Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

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

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

**Ms Kazim:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to move third reading of Bill 11 on behalf of the Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

We Albertans need an innovation system to strengthen and diversify our economy. This bill is a step forward towards innovation to secure the future of Alberta and drive the current economy of the province. By bringing the research sector and innovation as well as industry, small businesses, entrepreneurs, and academia all together, we are going to develop a strong system that will help us to diversify our economy and get the value for money that we Albertans always enjoyed. We are positive that we will have a bright future for our future generations.

Therefore, I would like to continue with the third reading of Bill 11. Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** Any other members? The Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to speak on Bill 11, the Alberta Research and Innovation Amendment Act, 2016. This bill stands to eliminate the inefficiency of having separate boards of directors for Alberta Innovates: Bio Solutions, Alberta Innovates: Energy and Environment Solutions, and Alberta Innovates: Health Solutions. It does seem particular to have four boards working side

by side to accomplish similar goals. The notion of streamlining leadership is appealing on the surface level. I certainly hope that efficiencies are found, that top-heavy bureaucracy becomes leaner.

I think that it is important that we make clear that governments rarely actually reduce spending, especially this particular government. One of the problems that I see far too often with governments is that there is rarely a meaningful scaling back of expenditure. There seems to be a culture of a lot of shuffling around of line items and responsibilities, all in the name of efficiency, but when it comes down to brass tacks, there is little that is actually saved or reduced. I certainly hope that this bill doesn't fall victim to the pattern I just described.

I think that we have a real chance to streamline some of the administrative components of the Alberta Innovates corporations, especially when we begin to look at some of the cost savings that can come from eliminating redundant positions at the board level. These salaries are large, plain and simple. These people get paid a lot, plain and simple. I read a media report that states that there are over \$8 million worth of salaries among 30 employees. This is a result of instituting private practices in a public service. Anyone with any type of business experience understands that in order to attract talent, you have to be competitive, with competitive job postings that include a competitive salary. Albertans understand this.

On the other side of the same coin, there is a need to eliminate waste and reduce, to operate a more lean and agile organization. The people of Alberta expect that our government operate in a responsive and a responsible manner, especially when it comes to spending their hard-earned tax dollars.

Those are the points I'd like to make. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Are there any other members who would like to speak to Bill 11, Alberta Research and Innovation Amendment Act, 2016?

[Motion carried; Bill 11 read a third time]

### **Bill 12 Aboriginal Consultation Levy Repeal Act**

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today and am pleased to move third reading of Bill 12 on behalf of the Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Peace River.

3:50

**Ms Jabbour:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm really honoured to speak once again to this bill in third reading on behalf of the Minister of Indigenous Relations. As mentioned before, it's a small bill but an incredibly important one. It fulfills one of our campaign promises, one that I know our government takes very seriously and that I personally take very seriously, and that's to reinforce our commitment to Alberta's indigenous people, to our First Nations and Métis communities, that we will always consult in a meaningful way, one that is open and transparent and that we always consult respectfully and as equals because we are all treaty people. With this bill we reinforce that any decisions that we make and any legislation that we develop that relates to our indigenous peoples will always be informed and grounded in the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples.

With that, I would ask that all in the House continue to support this bill. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there any other members who'd like to speak to Bill 12, Aboriginal Consultation Levy Repeal Act? Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the opposition shadow minister for aboriginal relations I'm very proud to stand up and speak in support of the recall of Bill 22. It's long overdue, and I believe it's the right step. First Nations, Métis, and industry have all agreed that Bill 22 did nothing to help the negotiations.

What I would like to say is that I'd implore the government to make certain that any new legislation is not put forward until all parties have had a chance to properly consult, preferably in a round-table discussion with all stakeholders present. Only when we have a real dialogue with all parties present can we come to an agreement that will be equitable and honoured in the future. I'd also appreciate it if all parties in this Chamber would also be included in the discussion and formation of any new legislation prior to it hitting the Order Paper. This issue has gone on for far too long, and it is too important for us not to get everything right. We need to make this right.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there any members who would like to address a question to the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills under 29(2)(a)?

Hearing no one, are there other members who would like to speak to Bill 12, Aboriginal Consultation Levy Repeal Act?

[Motion carried; Bill 12 read a third time]

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

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert.

**Mr. Horne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to move third reading of Bill 13, the Veterinary Profession Amendment Act, 2016, which I am pleased to note has the support of this Assembly, on behalf of the Minister of Labour.

These proposed changes will allow veterinary technologists to become full voting members in the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association's governance. This bill will enable veterinary technologists to have a voice in the governance decisions that affect their profession. It will also ensure that veterinarians and technologists comply with the highest professional standards, which will provide greater consumer protection. As we have all heard, veterinary technologists are crucial to veterinary practice and are depended on by Albertans in the care of their animals. These amendments will not change the scope of practice of veterinary medicine or the qualifications required to be a technologist. I want to be clear on one point that came up in debate. There is no part of this legislation that changes or impacts membership fees.

The ABVMA membership is supportive of these proposed changes. By enhancing accountability for all technologists, Albertans can be confident that their animals are receiving the best care possible.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Any other members who would like to speak to Bill 13, Veterinary Profession Amendment Act, 2016?

[Motion carried; Bill 13 read a third time]

**Mr. Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, I think that if you seek it, you will see unanimous consent to shrink the bells in Committee of the Whole,

which, it is my understanding, we have to do before we go into Committee of the Whole.

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

**The Chair:** I'd like to call the committee to order.

#### Bill 17 Appropriation Act, 2016

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

**Mr. Stier:** I have a few minutes to spare to give a little wisdom on that.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, hon. member.

**Mr. Stier:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise this afternoon to speak a little bit on Bill 17, the Appropriation Act, 2016. I'd like to touch on a couple of themes that were raised during the Municipal Affairs estimates in relation to this act, actually.

I'll start with the Alberta Emergency Management Agency, which co-ordinates the government's resources in response to disasters and emergencies. In the Municipal Affairs business plan on page 110 under outcome 3 it states: "Albertans have an enhanced ability to prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies and disasters." In response to the 2011 Slave Lake fire the government at the time commissioned the Flat Top Complex report, which studied the government's preparedness and response to the disaster and in the end provided 20 recommendations for how the government could improve if not prevent a wildfire and mitigate the damage to people's homes and livelihood.

While firefighting and wildfire mitigation are largely under the authority of Agriculture and Forestry, the Flat Top Complex report provides a number of recommendations that do fall under the auspices of Municipal Affairs. The recommendations specifically dealing with improving communications, both internal and external communications, are incredibly important to conducting a thorough and successful disaster response. Unfortunately, when asked about Municipal Affairs and whether the department had accepted and implemented any of the recommendations, the minister questioned the relevancy and passed off the report as "100 per cent embedded in the Forestry budget." I'm certainly not saying that Municipal Affairs or the government as a whole failed to prevent the wildfire currently raging in northern Alberta, but I guess I question the minister's dismissive tone in relation to what I believe Albertans see as legitimate questions around the role Municipal Affairs plays in response to wildfire disasters.

One of the main sources that the provincial government uses to fund municipalities, though, is the municipal sustainability initiative, or MSI, which helps support local infrastructure priorities and to build strong, safe, and resilient communities. While the government has committed to providing long-term, stable, predictable funding, this program has almost since day one been underfunded. It was originally promised that the MSI would deliver \$11.3 billion over 10 years to municipalities. As the minister admitted during estimates, the program is set to expire next year and as of today has delivered only 7 and a half billion dollars in funds. Even when next year's projected MSI funds are included, the program is yet \$2.56 billion underfunded. When I asked the minister if there was a new funding

agreement being discussed, her response wasn't clear on what the plan was or even if there was a plan, and that was really disappointing.

4:00

A significant issue for many municipalities, especially rural municipalities, is the lack of commercial tax opportunities. In addition, they face significant land issues, and their transportation infrastructure has experienced accelerated deterioration due to industrial installations and maintenance of things like pipelines. Rural municipalities depend on revenue associated with linear taxes to assist with covering these costs. In addition, rural municipalities have always shared these tax revenues regionally to fund projects of regional importance such as recreation centres, libraries, and community arenas.

Unfortunately, there has been a lot of mixed messaging about linear taxation recently. When pressed about whether there will be changes to linear tax assessment, collection, allocation, and/or distribution, the minister stated that there would be no redistribution of linear taxes to cities but, regrettably, wouldn't rule out other changes, and that was very disappointing to hear.

I hope the minister and this government will begin to be clearer on these issues moving forward. I was disappointed by the lack of clear answers to many of the legitimate questions raised by myself and others during the estimates committee meeting, and given the tough economic times Albertans deserve clear answers. Madam Chairman, until this government starts being up front on these issues, it will remain difficult to take what they say seriously.

Thank you very much. That's all I have to say to this.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to the bill?

[The clauses of Bill 17 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? That's carried.

**Mr. Mason:** Madam Chair, I move that the committee rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

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

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 17.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Opposed? So ordered.

The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I want to thank all the hon. members for their comments, contribution, and particularly their efficiency on this Thursday afternoon. I'll move that we call it 4:30 and adjourn until 10 o'clock Tuesday morning.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 4:04 p.m.]



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

**Activity to May 19, 2016**

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

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

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

### **1 Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act (Bilous)**

First Reading -- 5 (Mar. 8, 2016 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 732-36 (Apr. 20, 2016 aft.), 685-91 (Apr. 20, 2016 morn.), 749-60 (Apr. 21, 2016 aft.), 825 (May 5, 2016 aft., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 1019-24 (May 18, 2016 aft., passed), 987-95 (May 18, 2016 morn., adjourned)

### **2 Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2016 (\$) (Ceci)**

First Reading -- 96 (Mar. 10, 2016 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 162-67 (Mar. 15, 2016 morn., passed on division)

Committee of the Whole -- 239-49 (Mar. 16, 2016 aft., passed)

Third Reading -- 251-59 (Mar. 17, 2016 morn., passed on division)

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

### **3 Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2016 (\$) (Ceci)**

First Reading -- 156 (Mar. 14, 2016 eve., passed)

Second Reading -- 201 (Mar. 15, 2016 aft., passed), 157-62 (Mar. 15, 2016 morn.)

Committee of the Whole -- 239-49 (Mar. 16, 2016 aft., passed)

Third Reading -- 259-66 (Mar. 17, 2016 morn., passed)

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

### **4\* An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services (Gray)**

First Reading -- 180 (Mar. 15, 2016 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 285-88 (Mar. 17, 2016 aft.), 349-66 (Apr. 5, 2016 aft., passed)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Committee of the Whole -- 820-24 (May 5, 2016 aft., passed)

Third Reading -- 902-903 (May 12, 2016 aft., passed)

- 8 Fair Trading Amendment Act, 2016 (McLean)**  
First Reading -- 568 (Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 669-71 (Apr. 19, 2016 aft.), 684 (Apr. 19, 2016 aft., passed)  
Committee of the Whole -- 824-25 (May 5, 2016 aft., passed)  
Third Reading -- 903-904 (May 12, 2016 aft., passed)
- 9 An Act to Modernize Enforcement of Provincial Offences (Ganley)**  
First Reading -- 568 (Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 640-49 (Apr. 19, 2016 morn.), 728-30 (Apr. 20, 2016 aft., passed)  
Committee of the Whole -- 979-81 (May 17, 2016 aft., passed)
- 10 Fiscal Statutes Amendment Act, 2016 (Ceci)**  
First Reading -- 599 (Apr. 14, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 671-82 (Apr. 19, 2016 aft.), 730-32 (Apr. 20, 2016 aft., passed on division), 691-703 (Apr. 20, 2016 morn.)  
Committee of the Whole -- 950-51 (May 17, 2016 morn.), 1041-49 (May 19, 2016 morn., adjourned)
- 11 Alberta Research and Innovation Amendment Act, 2016 (Bilous)**  
First Reading -- 773 (May 2, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 907-908 (May 12, 2016 aft.), 971-79 (May 17, 2016 aft, passed)  
Committee of the Whole -- 1012-18 (May 18, 2016 aft.), 1024 (May 18, 2016 aft., passed)  
Third Reading -- 1068-69 (May 19, 2016 aft., passed)
- 12 Aboriginal Consultation Levy Repeal Act (Feehan)**  
First Reading -- 802 (May 3, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 904-907 (May 12, 2016 aft., passed)  
Committee of the Whole -- 985-87 (May 18, 2016 morn., passed)  
Third Reading -- 1069 (May 19, 2016 aft., passed)
- 13 Veterinary Profession Amendment Act, 2016 (Gray)**  
First Reading -- 872 (May 10, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 965-71 (May 17, 2016 aft., passed on division)  
Committee of the Whole -- 1024-25 (May 18, 2016 aft., passed)  
Third Reading -- 1069 (May 19, 2016 aft., passed)
- 14 Health Professions Amendment Act, 2016 (Hoffman)**  
First Reading -- 872 (May 10, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 983-85 (May 18, 2016 morn., passed)
- 15 An Act to End Predatory Lending (McLean)**  
First Reading -- 901 (May 12, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 1062-67 (May 19, 2016 aft., passed)
- 16 Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2016 (Mason)**  
First Reading -- 921 (May 16, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 1067-68 (May 19, 2016 aft., adjourned)
- 17 Appropriation Act, 2016 (\$) (Ceci)**  
First Reading -- 950 (May 17, 2016 morn., passed)  
Second Reading -- 1025-29 (May 18, 2016 aft., passed), 995-1000 (May 18, 2016 morn., adjourned)  
Committee of the Whole -- 1070 (May 19, 2016 aft., passed), 1031-41 (May 19, 2016 morn.)
- 18 An Act to Ensure Independent Environmental Monitoring (Phillips)**  
First Reading -- 964-65 (May 17, 2016 aft., passed)
- 19 Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions Compensation Act (Ceci)**  
First Reading -- 1011 (May 18, 2016 aft., passed)
- 201 Election Recall Act (Smith)**  
First Reading -- 92 (Mar. 10, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 119-32 (Mar. 14, 2016 aft.), 303-304 (Apr. 4, 2016 aft., defeated on division)

- 202 Alberta Affordable Housing Review Committee Act (Luff)**  
First Reading -- 92 (Mar. 10, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 305-16 (Apr. 4, 2016 aft.), 470-73 (Apr. 11, 2016 aft., passed)
- 203 Fair Trading (Motor Vehicle Repair Pricing Protection for Consumers) Amendment Act, 2016 (Carson)**  
First Reading -- 280 (Mar. 17, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 481-83 (Apr. 11, 2016 aft., referred to Standing Committee on Families and Communities), 473-81 (Apr. 11, 2016 aft.)
- 204 Alberta Tourism Week Act (Dang)**  
First Reading -- 468 (Apr. 11, 2016 aft., passed)  
Second Reading -- 616-30 (Apr. 18, 2016 aft., passed)
- 205\* Pharmacy and Drug (Pharmaceutical Equipment Control) Amendment Act, 2016 (Ellis)**  
First Reading -- 707 (Apr. 20, 2016 aft.)  
Second Reading -- 839-50 (May 9, 2016 aft., passed)  
Committee of the Whole -- 924-31 (May 16, 2016 aft., passed with amendments)  
Third Reading -- 931-34 (May 16, 2016 aft., passed)
- 206 Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Awareness Day Act (Goehring)**  
First Reading -- 902 (May 12, 2016 aft., passed)
- Pr1 Bow Valley Community Foundation Repeal Act (Westhead)**  
First Reading -- 447 (Apr. 7, 2016 aft., passed)







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