



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Second Session

Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, October 31, 2016

Day 41

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta
The 29th Legislature

Second Session

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Larivee, Hon. Danielle, Lesser Slave Lake (ND)	Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND), Deputy Government Whip
Littlewood, Jessica, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (ND)	Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)
Loewen, Todd, Grande Prairie-Smoky (W)	Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

Party standings:

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

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, October 31, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Let us reflect and pray each in our own way. As we commence proceedings today in this Assembly, let us contemplate about our opportunity to once again work together. Let us find a way in which our collective efforts will make our province and our country better. Allow us to find hope, not fear; to co-operate, not compete; to be inclusive, not exclusive.

Hon. members, as is our custom, we pay tribute on our first day to members and former members of this Assembly who have passed away since we last met. As we reflect on these former members, let us keep in mind the family members who shared the burdens of public life.

Mr. Douglas Clifford Cherry
September 22, 1932, to June 16, 2016

The Speaker: Mr. Doug Cherry served the Legislative Assembly of Alberta as the Member for Lloydminster for two terms from May 8, 1986, until June 14, 1993. Mr. Cherry served in the Canadian Army from 1949 until 1961 and saw active service in the Korean War. In 1961 he began farming in the Durness district, Lloydminster. His community involvement included service on the Lloydminster Co-op, president of the Lloydminster Music Festival, councillor for the city of Vermilion River, and director of rural electrification. His service in this Assembly contributed to the establishment of the Lakeland College campus and the Husky Lloydminster upgrader. He was a recipient of the medals of honour for his military service and the Alberta centennial medal in 2005.

Hon. Peter Eric James Prentice, PC, QC
July 20, 1956, to October 13, 2016

The Speaker: Mr. Prentice served as Alberta's 16th Premier, from September 15, 2014, to May 24, 2015. First elected in a by-election on October 27, 2014, he served the constituents of Calgary-Foothills until May 4, 2015. During his term in office he also held the portfolios of minister of aboriginal relations and minister of international and intergovernmental relations.

Prior to his service in our Assembly Mr. Prentice served as the Member of Parliament for Calgary Centre-North from 2004 to 2010. He held the important portfolios of minister of Indian affairs and northern development, 2006 to 2007; minister of industry, 2007 to 2008; and minister of environment, 2008 to 2010.

Mr. Prentice had a long-standing dedication to resolving indigenous issues. As a lawyer he had specialized in property rights and in First Nations land claims, and for a number of years he served as commissioner and later co-chair of the Indian Claims Commission of Canada.

His expertise and his service were recognized widely. He received the Alberta centennial medal in 2005 and the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee medal in 2012. In 2013 he was the recipient of the honorary doctor of laws from the University of Alberta. Most recently he was a global fellow at the Canada Institute of the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington, DC.

Out of respect for the wishes of the family and based on discussions with the caucuses, I expect further opportunities for tributes in the Chamber in the coming days for Mr. Prentice.

Mr. Ralph Andrew Jespersen
May 9, 1925, to October 17, 2016

The Speaker: Mr. Ralph Jespersen was elected to the Legislative Assembly as the Member for Stony Plain on May 23, 1967, and served until August 29, 1971. Mr. Jespersen followed in his father's footsteps, farming the dairy and grain farm established by the family in 1903. During his tenure he used his experience to strengthen relationships between the agricultural industry and the government. After his service as a member he represented Alberta's agricultural interests provincially, nationally, and internationally through tenures as president of Unifarm, the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, and the Dairy Bureau of Canada. Over the years Mr. Jespersen received many honours and awards. In 2012 he was presented the Governor General's caring Canadian award for his long-standing contributions to his community.

In a moment of silent prayer I ask you to remember Mr. Cherry, Mr. Prentice, and Mr. Jespersen as you may have known them.

Hon. Members, ladies and gentlemen, we will now be led in the singing of our national anthem by Mr. Joel Crichton, and I would invite all to participate in the language of their choice.

Hon. Members:

O Canada, our home and native land!
True patriot love in all thy sons command.
Car ton bras sait porter l'épée,
Il sait porter la croix!
Ton histoire est une épopée
Des plus brillants exploits.
God keep our land glorious and free!
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

The Speaker: Please be seated.

Introduction of Visitors

The Speaker: Hon. members, with our admiration and respect there is gratitude to members of the families who shared the burdens of public office and public service. Today I would like to welcome members of the Cherry and Jespersen families who are present in the Speaker's gallery. Please rise as I call your name, and remain standing until all have been introduced. First of all, from the Cherry family: Brenda Cherry, daughter of Doug Cherry; Adam Brown, grandson of Mr. Cherry; Paul Natland, grandson of Mr. Cherry. From the Jespersen family: Bernice Jespersen, wife of Ralph Jespersen; Darcy Torhjem, son-in-law of Mr. Jespersen; Delnita Torhjem, daughter of Mr. Jespersen; Debi Mills, daughter of Mr. Jespersen. Thank you for being with us today and for the public service you have provided.

The hon. Premier.

1:40

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly a number of individuals from across Alberta whose actions during and after the Wood Buffalo wildfire last spring demonstrated great courage and compassion. They represent a broad spectrum of organizations and municipalities from across this province: the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo, Red Cross, our partners in industry, municipalities, and others. The actions of these individuals inspired a province and gave residents hope, and many more continue to work tirelessly in the long-term recovery of this community.

From the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo we have Fire Chief Darby Allen and the director of emergency management, Bob

Couture. From the provincial wildfire team we have Bernie Schmitte, forest area manager, Fort McMurray forest area; Jennifer Zentner, wildlife operations manager, Fort McMurray forest area; Chad Morrison, wildfire compliance and investigations manager; and Bruce Mayer, assistant deputy minister, forestry division, Alberta Agriculture and Forestry. From the Alberta Emergency Management Agency we have Shane Schreiber, managing director, and Scott Lang, executive director of the Provincial Operations Centre, and from provincial emergency services we have Sonya Perkins, director of the provincial emergency social services team, and Eric Winterburn, deputy director of the provincial emergency social services team.

From the RCMP we have Deputy Commissioner Marianne Ryan. From Alberta sheriffs we have Sheriff Alex Moring. From Alberta Health we have Dr. Karen Grimsrud, Alberta's chief medical officer of health. From Alberta Health Services, Verna Yiu, president and CEO, and David Matear, senior operating director, area 10 and AHS incident commander for the Fort McMurray fire response. From the Canadian Red Cross, Jennifer McManus, vice-president, Red Cross Alberta, and Melanie Soler, vice-president, disaster management.

Mr. Speaker, these individuals are just a few of the thousands of Albertans who came to the aid of the region of Wood Buffalo and its residents, some risking their personal safety and having suffered loss themselves. While they may not seek recognition, today we say thank you on behalf of a grateful province. We are honoured by their presence here today.

I ask my guests to now please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome and thanks of this Assembly. [Standing ovation]

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to the Assembly today guests visiting from Forest Heights elementary school, located in my riding of Edmonton-Gold Bar. They are here to attend School at the Legislature this week, and they are accompanied by their teachers, Frau Marion Fritz and Mr. Dean Jaster, and are chaperoned by Mrs. Beverley Fenton, who is also known as Grannie to the students. I would ask them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Are there any other school groups, hon. members?

Seeing none, I would recognize the Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly some social studies students from NorQuest College and their professor, Ms Diane van der Gucht. These students are exploring what it means to be an Albertan as well as perspectives of Canadian national identity and after their recent tour of the Alberta Legislature were so inspired that they asked to return to attend the opening session of the fall sitting. I ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Hon. members, any other guests? The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly three men from Edmonton, who are in your gallery today, whose actions during the evacuation of Wood Buffalo last spring demonstrated

tremendous courage and compassion for their fellow Albertans. Jeff Fafard, Alex Frost, and Kavin Ban took it upon themselves to coordinate the collection of fuel, food, and water to displaced residents and then drove through the night delivering supplies to evacuee centres on the way to Fort McMurray. Going home, they were caught in the long line of traffic themselves, so they continued to provide supplies to others waiting on the highway. The actions of these three men ensured many families and individuals received the supplies they needed and lifted the spirits of so many during a tremendously stressful time.

Mr. Speaker, these men are just three of more than 200 people who were nominated as heroes of the wildfire, an online program that encourages Albertans to recognize others who have gone above and beyond to support the people who were affected by the Wood Buffalo wildfire. Today we say thank you on behalf of a grateful province, and I ask Mr. Fafard, Mr. Frost, and Mr. Ban to receive the traditional warm welcome and thanks of this Assembly. [Standing ovation]

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

I'm advised that there is another guest to introduce. The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly an old friend of mine. Jason Kenney was a Member of Parliament for 18 years. During several of those years he held senior portfolios in the federal government. Many of those years he served as my MP, and for some of those years I served as a city councillor at the same time he was my MP. He is currently a leadership contestant for the PC Party, and I would ask him to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

Ministerial Statements

The Speaker: The Minister of Infrastructure and of Transportation.

Responders Way

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to pay tribute to the first responders who worked during the Fort McMurray fires for their outstanding work battling the fire and keeping families safe. These hard-working people emerged as heroes for tens of thousands of Albertans who were forced to flee their homes in May and who are now rebuilding their lives and their homes. First responders during this devastating event proved their sense of duty and their desire to help others. They put themselves between danger and Albertans. They successfully helped families to escape and worked tirelessly to put out the fire.

While the fire destroyed 2,400 homes and businesses, firefighters saved about 25,000 buildings, Mr. Speaker, roughly 85 to 90 per cent of the city. All of the critical public infrastructure in Fort McMurray was protected, and the evacuation of 80,000 people was completed successfully, with one terrible vehicle collision with two fatalities. It's difficult to thank these courageous people enough.

Over the last seven months the outpouring of support from Albertans and Canadians has been tremendous and reveals the respect and admiration for the responders who dedicated their time and efforts to saving Fort McMurray. During the fire Albertans stepped up and demonstrated the strength and resolve that always gets us through difficult times together. Now as Albertans we are coming together to recognize and thank the first responders in a more permanent and visible way. On June 1, the first day of re-entry, firefighters used cranes to raise the Canadian flag above the

King Street overpass in an arch of welcome. The bridge was the unofficial welcome home point as residents returned to their city and their homes, preparing to rebuild their lives and their community.

1:50

Last week our government announced it is naming the overpass Responders Way. Our commitment reflects the impact made by the many responders who willingly assisted under extremely challenging circumstances.

I wish to thank the mayor of the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo, Melissa Blake, and her council for their support of this initiative, and I want to recognize Councillor Keith McGrath for contacting the province and asking to have this bridge named.

Finally, to the first responders, on behalf of all Albertans we hope this gesture is accepted as a small but heartfelt token of gratitude.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Yao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today we have an opportunity to honour the heroes of the Fort McMurray fires. Through their service and sacrifice they've given so much to our community, and it is an honour to rise today and thank them for their tremendous effort.

I know these brave souls don't like being called heroes. They'll tell you that they're just doing their job. To run into a burning city when everyone is running out is incredulous to most people. To fight to save their neighbour's home even while their own was ablaze, they'll say that they were just doing their job. To live for days with almost no sleep, no food, and not enough air tanks to go around and a water supply that was dwindling, it was simply adapting to the job at hand, to keep fighting even when the smoke was so thick, visibility was impaired, and breathing was difficult. If people might imagine sitting around a campfire and the wind shifts and the smoke heads to you in your chair, that's what it was like 24 hours a day, seven days a week for these men and women. To improvise and organize the largest evacuation in our province's history is phenomenal.

Condolences to our friends who did lose family members during the evacuation, the Ryan and Hodgson families.

The main communications tower for the fire department was lost on the first day. For emergency services to co-ordinate so many crews throughout that community was a feat unto itself. These outstanding men and women are heroes.

On the day of re-entry our first responders welcomed home the people of Fort McMurray by flying a flag on top of our overpass at the entrance to the city. After being driven from their homes, our people returned to a sight of reassurance and endurance, and that is why this bridge has been rightly renamed Responders Way, and, to you, thank you so much for that. While there is no way the people of Alberta could ever thank you enough for your dedication and steadfast commitment to Fort McMurray, we hope that they will accept this symbol of our appreciation.

Finally, I do wish to thank those that volunteered in supporting our community and the emergency responders: the people who did drive up that highway to provide that gasoline and food to those that were stranded, the homeless guy that walked over to Mac Island, where emergency crews were staged, and started cooking what little food was available. That guy is a hero, too. To the folks that did drive into town, past every security block somehow, and then brought in water, food, coffee, whatever it was, they helped our responders just so they could have the basics so that they could

continue on. Those guys are heroes. To the volunteers who tirelessly worked to lend a hand by whatever means they could, whether it was taking a displaced family into their homes right across this province, right across this country or providing money, clothing, and support: Fort McMurray thanks you all.

To the communities and organizations in support of the displaced, from Lac La Biche and Boyle all the way down to Chestermere and Medicine Hat, from Northlands to Samaritan's Purse and so many other organizations: thank you so much.

Our community was tested, but the resolve has never been stronger. After many years of our community being the embarrassing cousin of Alberta communities, it's heartening to see that our province stood together, united with love and support, and for that I thank you, all, in tears.

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, I rise to request unanimous consent from the House to allow a response from the Progressive Conservative Party as well as the independents from Calgary-Mountain View and Calgary-Elbow.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Mr. McIver: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, am privileged to rise and pay tribute to our first responders, the brave men and women who put themselves in harm's way to defend the community of Fort McMurray from the devastating wildfires of this past spring. These responders were led by the phenomenal Darby Allen, who was introduced earlier, but Darby would say that it was a team effort and that all first responders and all Albertans were part of that team, once again proving that as Albertans our theme song is *We Are Family*. When one member of the family hurts, we all hurt. These tremendous souls worked tirelessly to make sure that not one life was lost to the fire and that property damage was kept to a minimum. Sadly, they did this while some of their own homes were in flames. We can never thank them enough for that. As residents returned to the damage on the first day of re-entry, local firefighters used their trucks to hoist the Canadian flag above this overpass in a welcoming arch, truly a beacon of hope.

I want to thank the government for the naming of the overpass Responders Way – now you have me on *Hansard*, too, Premier – reflecting the significance of the impact of these brave responders. I also want to thank Mayor Melissa Blake and the council of the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo for their support of the initiative, in particular Councillor Keith McGrath, who made the request to the province. Again, to the first responders on behalf of all Albertans: it's small gestures and big that make a big difference. In our caucus we're proud to have two past first responders, our members for Calgary-South East and Calgary-West, as well as our Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster, who actually looked after animals – of course, he's a veterinarian – as they were leaving the wildfire.

Mr. Speaker, on this particular day on this particular issue we're family, we're all in it together, and I thank the government. This is a wonderful gesture to pay tribute to our very, very well-deserving first responders.

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

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, as a preamble to my remarks on the tremendous efforts of our first responders I want also to add my comments for the record congratulating this government, this new Premier for the extraordinary leadership they showed in this once-in-a-lifetime, I hope, event.

As all the world knows, the first responders of Fort McMurray are a breed apart. For weeks these men and women battled a fearsome beast and emerged victorious. Through their quick thinking and dedication nearly a hundred thousand residents were but for one tragic vehicle accident safely evacuated under the King Street Bridge. Then, with others, Fort Mac first responders threw themselves at the beast and would not back down. Through the eyes of the media we watched these responders struggle with hope and despair, triumph and tragedy, but above all we witnessed their determination to stand fast no matter what the cost. Their families, too, must be honoured and remembered. We witnessed several cases where families were evacuated while husband or wife or mother or father remained behind so that others might be protected.

Months later as the residents of Fort McMurray approached their city, unsure what to expect, they found their saviours welcoming them atop the bridge that now bears the name Responders Way. Though much was lost, many of these residents passed under this bridge to find homes and businesses safe from the flames. For residents of Fort McMurray and for all Albertans Responders Way will stand as a symbol of courage and hope and thanks from all Alberta. We will forever be in your debt.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. If you ask an Albertan to describe a hero, it's pretty simple. They will almost always talk about first responders. They will talk about the people who run toward danger while the rest of us seek safety, the people who are highly trained and ever ready. But if you ask a first responder the same question, they don't consider themselves heroes. The answer is always the same: just doing my job. It is that humility, bravery, and commitment to others that defines a hero. So make no mistake; in the hearts of every Albertan each and every first responder is a hero.

2:00

Now, having myself lived through a natural disaster, my most vivid memories are not of what was lost in the 2013 southern Alberta flood but of the tremendous outpouring of support from Albertans. The one image I will never forget is the hundreds of firefighters and police from Edmonton and beyond streaming down the QE II to help, of the Edmonton Police Service patrolling my neighbourhood to make sure it was kept safe while their colleagues from Calgary could take a break or serve elsewhere. That is the true embodiment of what it means to be Albertan.

So today it is my great honour to recognize and thank the first responders present here today and throughout Alberta. Renaming the King Street overpass Responders Way will remind all residents and visitors of Fort McMurray of the heroism that went on in May 2016. The people of Fort McMurray have been served by these remarkable people, including the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, with little fanfare. They did it because they're Albertans, and Albertans look out for each other, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

Government Policies

Mr. Jean: While tens of thousands of Albertans were losing their jobs this summer, the NDP were busy hammering Albertans with a radical economic agenda. They waged war on power companies,

they are taxing businesses out of existence, and their new carbon tax will kill Alberta jobs, make life more expensive for everyone, and hurt our top industries. I've seen first-hand the damages these policies are having across the province from Calgary to Grande Cache. What does the Premier have to say to these Albertans who are suffering because of this NDP government's policies?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government is actually extremely proud of our climate leadership plan. It is long overdue, and it's a fundamentally important initiative to do three things. First of all, it's to protect our environment and the health of our children and our grandchildren. It's also important because it's the right thing in terms of transitioning us to a more renewable energy based economy. Thirdly, it is important because it will finally help us break the landlock that climate denial has resulted in, getting no outcomes on that. So we are taking a different approach, and that's . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Jean: A new report is actually out, warning that the NDP's accelerated shutdown of coal will cost Albertans \$8 billion. That's not including the social costs of destroying livelihoods and communities right across Alberta. The only economic impact study we've seen from the government on any of these policies is a leaked memo saying that the carbon tax will wipe out thousands of Albertans' jobs. Will the Premier release the government's own studies on the damage of all these NDP ideological policies, or have they just not done the work?

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, the internal studies that we've done, which show that, in fact, our climate leadership plan will be a benefit to Albertans and to Alberta jobs and to the Alberta economy, will be released today.

Mr. Jean: Well, most Albertans disagree.

There are actually over 150,000 Albertans currently employed in the restaurant industry just in Alberta, but because of NDP policies, over three-quarters of operators will cut their hours while nearly half are planning layoffs. Instead of doing anything meaningful to help low-income families, the NDP is taxing them out of jobs that they need right now. And with the NDP carbon tax set to kick in in just two months, things are going to get a lot worse for Albertans. What does the Premier have to say to the thousands of Albertans in these industries who will now be out of a job?

Ms Notley: Well, you know, interestingly, there was a recent study that came out that showed that notwithstanding that we have gone into the most significant recession as a result of the drop in the price of oil that we've had in many, many years, restaurant sales are almost the highest they've ever been, and that is after we put in an increase to the minimum wage. So the fact of the matter is that when you pay workers fairly and they contribute to their local economy, it grows the economy and it grows fairness. Those are our values, Mr. Speaker.

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

Electricity Power Purchase Agreements

Mr. Jean: Mr. Speaker, it can be hard to figure out which NDP policy mistake is doing the most damage to Alberta's economy, but this government taking itself to court over power purchase arrangements has to be very high on that list. We have the NDP

suing government agencies and taxpayer-owned power companies to rip up a 17-year-old, multibillion-dollar contract. Nothing says, "Don't invest here" like ripping up existing government contracts. To the Premier: is her government still sticking to their ridiculous story that they didn't know anything about the change in law provisions in the PPAs?

Ms Notley: Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, when the previous government embarked upon a deregulation and privatizing of a fundamentally important utility that Albertans rely on, they said that we needed to do it because industry would take the risk. But then they went behind closed doors and negotiated a deal so that taxpayers would take the risk and consumers would take the risk should things be lost. [interjections] It seems to me that the members opposite in the Official Opposition also want to stand behind having corporations put those costs onto Albertans rather than standing up for Albertans. We're going to stand up for Albertans.

The Speaker: I would remind both sides of the House to please keep your comments constructive. And a little quieter, please, both sides.

Mr. Jean: The financial markets and the investment community notice when governments try to rip up contracts. When this government changed the emitters tax on power plants, they changed the law and made these plants even more unprofitable than the bad NDP policies already have. The companies surrendered their PPAs, but the government is suing, saying that that part of a 17-year-old contract is invalid. How can this government claim they didn't know what was in the PPAs when those rules were mentioned in submissions to the Leach report and, of course, when Enmax briefed them on it last December?

Speaker's Ruling Sub Judice Rule

The Speaker: Hon. members, I rise to remind the House, all of you, of Standing Order 23(g), also known as the sub judice rule, which governs statements made in this Assembly about legal proceedings before the courts. Members should not be engaging in debate or asking questions which may prejudice a civil proceeding that is "set down for a trial or notice of motion filed, as in an injunction proceeding." I understand that an application was filed in July of this year by the government of Alberta seeking a declaration with respect to several power purchase agreements.

It's extremely challenging to make a determination on whether statements made in this Assembly might prejudice those proceedings without knowing all of the particulars of the case, and I must rely on members and ministers who have greater information about the possible prejudicial effect of a question or an answer. Members are referred to pages 627 to 629 in *O'Brien and Bosc* and pages 153 and 154 in *Beauchesne's* for a discussion of the sub judice principle and the application to statements made by members in the House.

I would also note that Standing Order 23(g) states that "where there is any doubt as to prejudice, the rule should be in favour of the debate." I will therefore allow some latitude with respect to this matter, but I would also urge members to exercise discretion when engaging in debate, asking questions, or giving answers on this matter or any other matter which may or may not be subject to the sub judice rule.

The hon. Premier.

Electricity Power Purchase Agreements (continued)

Ms Notley: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. In deference to your concern I will speak generally about the carbon levy, which some people might argue had something to do with this particular matter. It didn't, but let me just say this. Many of the members opposite are still not sure about the science of climate change. The members opposite actually voted this weekend to hand over to the federal government the power over Alberta's carbon levy. We are going to act on behalf of Albertans. We are going to work with Alberta businesses, with Albertan communities to move this province forward on something that has been long overdue.

Mr. Jean: Mr. Speaker, we either have a problem with incompetence in this government or no one is telling the truth. Enmax in documents makes it clear that they told this government about the more unprofitable clause in December. They put it in their cancellation letter to this government, yet the Premier's top adviser swore that no one in the government knew about it until mid-March. The Premier needs to set the record straight. When did she personally know about the PPA exit clause? Is it her position right now that Enmax is lying?

2:10

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to offer up my opinion about the state of positions put forward by parties to a legal proceeding. I will, however, say that the matter of moving forward on long-overdue climate change policy is something that we needed to do. It is critical to the future of our economy. It is critical to soliciting support and social licence in jurisdictions across this province, to get support for our efforts to get our products to tidewater, and it is important for the future of our environment and for the health of our children, and we will not back down on it.

The Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

Home-schooling

Mr. Jean: Many Albertans are concerned that the NDP government has mismanaged the Trinity Christian and Wisdom home-schooling file. It looks like the government will now be in yet another complicated legal battle, that will take, actually, months to resolve, while thousands of families' and children's lives have been thrown into uncertainty. It's not acceptable. Where everyone agrees that taxpayer dollars need to be spent wisely, parents are asking why there weren't more interim measures taken to avoid the frustration and anger created by this closure. Surely an administrator could have been appointed to run the school board. Can the Premier please explain why this wasn't done?

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, our government supports the ability of parents to choose the best form of education that they would like to give to their children. However, it is important that when public dollars are involved, those public dollars are expended in alignment with the law and with the rules that have been set out. So when we find that that is not the case, it would be irresponsible of us to allow these children to continue to attend places where the very public dollars that are dedicated to their education are not getting to them. Our government has worked closely to come up with . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Jean: This board has nearly one-third – one-third – of Alberta's home-schooling population. That's 3,500 children. Many are asking if a public board would have received the same harsh

treatment for accusations of misallocated funds. It's like shutting down two large public high schools in mid-year. Barbara Duteau, one of the parents impacted, feels that the government has actually very much mishandled this file. She wants any problem with administration fixed and believes a solution exists outside of court. Once again, can the Premier please explain why they did not do all they could to ensure students' lives would not be thrown into chaos? Because they are.

The Speaker: The Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for the question. It's incumbent upon a government to make sure that public money is being spent where it's meant to be spent and that there's transparency there to see that. The home-schoolers by definition are being schooled at home, so they continue with their studies. They sign up with another affiliate, and they get the money that they deserve, that they're entitled to to make sure the kids get the education they deserve.

Mr. Jean: Mr. Speaker, there were other options available, not just shutting down a school system in mid-year.

The allegations raised by the government are alarming and need to be resolved. No one disputes that. But the fact is that thousands of Alberta parents and children right now are nervous about parental choice being eroded throughout our educational system. They want assurances from this Premier that the parent-driven models of education they have chosen for their children will be protected and always be in place in Alberta. Will the Premier please reassure Albertans right now that her government is not on a mission to wipe out home-schooling in Alberta?

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, part of the reason that on the day the announcement was made, the officials from Education got on the phone and did a telephone town hall to all these parents to give them other places where they could continue their home-schooling was because our government is committed to allowing them to continue their home-schooling in a way where they receive the public dollars to which they are entitled. That is exactly what we did because we are absolutely committed to supporting those families and the choices that they have made. [interjections]

Speaker's Ruling Decorum

The Speaker: Now, I know, hon. members, that it is Halloween and you want to knock on doors and you're expecting to get a candy bag tonight, but if you are all speaking at the same time, the individual in the house won't be able to hand out the candy because they're not sure why you're there. Please contain that till you're able to knock on doors tonight.

The leader of the third party.

Job Creation and Retention

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, all over Alberta people are concerned about their jobs. They're looking for leadership from this NDP government, and so far there's been none. This morning Jack Mintz said that this government is going to need a specific set of policies to attract private investment to Alberta or else – and I quote – we're not going to get the jobs back in this province. To the Premier: since you must hear the same concerns in your office that I hear in mine, are you ready yet to reverse policies like the \$15 minimum wage, the early shutdown of coal plants, the carbon tax,

and cancellation of contracts, all of which have driven jobs and investment out of Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In fact, our government has been working collaboratively with a number of leaders in industry to do exactly the opposite. What we are doing is trying to bring more investment to Alberta through a number of innovative programs. This session you'll be hearing about tax credit programs, asked for by business leaders, that would incent investment and incent innovation. We've worked with ATB and AIMCo to make more capital available. We are making more investment income available. We're doing everything we can, and we're pairing that with massive investment opportunities in capital and in . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker, people are starving because it's not working.

This government recently increased its use of the term "person-years of employment" to cover up the fact that their policies are costing more jobs than they are creating. When they opened the northeast Anthony Henday, for example, a PC-started project, they said that it created 10,000 person-years of work, which is true. Of course, Albertans know that that's a thousand jobs for 10 years or 2,000 for five years, not really 10,000 jobs at all. Meanwhile over a hundred thousand Albertans have lost their jobs. To the Premier: will you speak to Albertans in plain language about how you plan to replace those hundred thousand jobs?

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

Ms Notley: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me begin by saying, of course, that our government is acutely aware of the number of families in Alberta who are hurting as a result of job losses caused by the drop in the international price of oil, over which we have no control. Notwithstanding that, we know that it's our role to work with them. So we're not going to cut services. We're not going to add more job losses. We're not going to do any of that stuff. What we are doing is ensuring stability in public services while working on a number of different initiatives to create and generate employment, and we will continue to do that.

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker, they're in denial of the fact that their policies are failing Albertans.

The Premier and her ministers like to drag out the old chestnut that opposition parties will lay off teachers and nurses. So here's an easy question for the Premier on the first day of session. Given that your government ministers and MLAs are the only ones talking about firing front-line workers, will you commit today to not lay off or reduce the hours of teachers or nurses during this term of office?

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, I really have to take umbrage with the premise of the member opposite's question. Quite clearly, the budget that the member opposite ran on in the last election had a billion dollars being lost and involved not hiring something like 1,100 teachers, so for him to suggest that we are somehow going to reduce teachers makes no sense. We are supporting public services. We are funding enrolment increases. We are maintaining public services, and we'll continue to do that.

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

Opioid Use Prevention and Treatment

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Last week Alberta Health finally heeded the calls of public health and mental health experts, social agencies, police, and, yes, the opposition by making meaningful changes in the way the opioid epidemic is being handled in Alberta, now more than one death per day in Alberta. But there can be no assumptions that this crisis is abating: the still increasing numbers of dead, increasing ER visits, and months-long wait times to get into treatment. To the Associate Minister of Health: given that the Valuing Mental Health and addictions report 10 months ago highlighted our inadequately funded and dysfunctional system, when will Albertans hear on the progress . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.
The Associate Minister of Health.

2:20

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Since the Valuing Mental Health report was adopted by our government, we've worked very strongly on a number of the key issues, including working in partnership with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities on a comprehensive opioid addictions plan. That plan now includes support for the research around supervised consumption services across our province as well as an expansion of the opioid dependency treatment in order to help save lives.

Dr. Swann: Mr. Speaker, given that thousands of Albertans with opioid addictions currently wait several months on average to get into addiction-specific treatment, when will we see timely, integrated access to medical, mental, and social supports for these people?

The Speaker: The associate minister.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. When dealing with an opioid addiction, there are particular treatment methods that have been found to be most effective, and those are the opioid dependency treatments. Our government has invested in additional programs across AHS, including several specialized clinics, one of which opened a few months ago in the Cardston area and serves the surrounding First Nations reserve.

The other thing we're working on is working with family doctors across our province so that as specialized opioid dependency clinics are able to stabilize those patients, their patients are going to get transferred back into the community, where they will receive the treatment that they need.

Dr. Swann: You've got a lot to catch up on, Minister.

Given that your own data show that First Nation citizens have twice the rate of opioid prescriptions, five times the rate of emergency department visits for opioid addictions, and a recently eliminated federal program for HIV prevention across this country, when will we see evidence that Alberta Health Services and Health Canada are going to address this ongoing devastation among our First Nations?

The Speaker: The hon. associate minister.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Our government has been working closely with our federal partners on this issue. We know that enhancing access to naloxone will reduce deaths from fentanyl and overdoses within indigenous communities and have been working with our

indigenous communities, both on- and off-reserve, to ensure that naloxone kits are available where they're needed and that there are trained people available to help people who are experiencing an overdose.

We know that access and system navigation are issues for many First Nations people, and we're continuing to work on this. We have provided a \$1.5 million grant to Alberta Health Services to . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. associate minister.

The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Vegreville Immigration Centre

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour and privilege to represent the community of Vegreville in this Legislature. It's a beautiful, vibrant town of 6,000 hard-working people. Last week that town received sad and shocking news that the federal government plans to close the immigration, refugee, and citizenship case processing centre. It means the loss of 280 family-supporting, mortgage-paying jobs. To the Minister of Labour: what information do you have on this closure?

The Speaker: The Minister of Labour.

Ms Gray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for this question. I think I can say with certainty that all members in this House are deeply concerned about this announcement and its impact on a vibrant community in rural Alberta. There's no doubt that this is the wrong decision for the people of Vegreville. We are asking the federal government to reconsider. Upon learning of the closure, my office contacted Minister McCallum's office in Ottawa to convey the impact that this closure will have on the community and the families who live there.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the loss of 280 jobs would be difficult for any community to face and given that the loss is especially difficult for a smaller rural community of 6,000 people, to the same minister: what can you do to support the efforts to convince the federal government that this decision should be reversed?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Gray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. I'm deeply concerned about the impact that this decision is going to have on the town of Vegreville. I have written to my federal colleague the minister of immigration to express that concern about this decision and to ask him to reconsider. I believe we need to be united in this House that this service needs to remain in Vegreville, where these workers live.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this issue is so important to the community of Vegreville and that the leaders of Vegreville also agree that the decision should be reversed, to the same minister: what support can our Legislature provide to the people of Vegreville in hopes of convincing the federal government to reverse this decision?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Gray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to urge all party leaders to write to the federal government asking for a reversal of

this decision. I also want to congratulate the member for her advocacy on this issue. Thanks to your leadership the NDP Provincial Council voted unanimously to support the town of Vegreville in its efforts to reverse this decision. This issue should transcend partisan politics. We need to get behind Vegreville to preserve these jobs and the benefits they provide to this community.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

Support for Agriculture

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I travelled around rural Alberta this summer, I saw the potential for historic bumper yields. Sadly, Mother Nature disagreed. Summer hail and an early fall snow have caused crops to be destroyed or to lay unharvested on the ground. To the minister: with the potential for insured losses to be in the hundreds of millions, do you have an estimated value for these unharvested and damaged crops?

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

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and the member for the question. I absolutely share his concerns about this year. It's been a real heartbreaker of a year. We've seen really dry conditions moving into some pretty good rains, potentially a bumper crop, as the member mentioned. I'm confident that their suite of insurance products through AFSC are robust and that they will be able to supply the needs of the farmers who aren't able to get their crops off because of the high moisture content.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Given that Bill 6 is one of the most contentious bills ever brought forward by this government and given that round-table consultations for employment standards and labour have just finished and OH and S ones have barely begun, again to the minister: with so much uncertainty around this legislation already, do you have a firmer timeline for these Bill 6 regulations other than late 2017?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question, added as a supplemental to the crop question he asked earlier. You know, we've had the opportunity to have our tech working groups. They've worked very hard. I'm very proud of the work they have done. I'm happy with the work they've done. All along we've been saying that we'll take the necessary time needed to make sure that we get this right, and I'm happy with the timeline we've had and the work they've done.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Given the overwhelming burdens farmers have faced this year with hail, unharvested crops, falling cattle prices, and feedlot closures due in no small part to this government's ideological policies, here is the \$64,000 question. Again to the minister: why, at the end of harvest and the beginning of session, have you planned your junket to Asia while farmers and ranchers are suffering from conditions out of their control?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the member for the question. I'm hoping that the member realizes the potential that China and other overseas markets have for our producers in Alberta. I will not apologize for doing the work that this government can do to increase those markets right across the world and for having the opportunity to do so. That AFSC will somehow not be able to issue their insurance products because of standing markets is nonsensical.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Home-schooling

(continued)

Dr. Starke: Mr. Speaker, last week Alberta Education revoked Trinity Christian School's accreditation amidst serious allegations of financial misconduct. Now, to be clear, our caucus does not condone the alleged activities, and we support the actions taken to protect Alberta taxpayers, but this closure has left roughly one-third of Alberta's home-schooled students, 3,500 children, without an accredited program. Despite assurances from Alberta Education that they are doing everything they can to assist these families, I'm hearing that quite the opposite is true on the ground. To the Minister of Education: can you assure this House that these families are being provided with the option to continue home-schooling their children?

The Speaker: The Minister of Education.

2:30

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for the question. It's very important for everyone to understand that we do support home-schooling here in the province of Alberta, and we will try to facilitate as easily as possible those families that were with Trinity and can register with another affiliate. We have Alberta Education on the ground, and if there's any discrepancy or any rough spots, I'm glad to hear about that so that I can help to facilitate these students getting the money they deserve for their education.

Dr. Starke: Well, Mr. Speaker, I can assure the minister that there are all kinds of rough spots and that we'll be in touch with him.

Given that this investigation has been ongoing since even before you took office and given that you've been aware of this situation for quite some time and given that home-school students and families are experiencing understandable anxiety, stress, and confusion two months into the school year, to the minister: why wasn't this action taken in the summer months rather than during the school year?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for the question. I know that this is not an easy thing to do, and I did it with a heavy heart, certainly. When I did receive the information, we went back to make sure that we did look at the numbers and audited again. It was a double check to make sure that we were in keeping that the irregularities that we saw were coming through on multiple audits, including on-site audits, so it was my duty to act because, after all, this is public money. I'm glad that the member recognizes that and home-school . . .

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

Dr. Starke: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: given concern over the NDP's past opposition to parental choice in education and to home-schooling in particular and given that the abrupt action taken partway into a school year clearly shows a callous disregard for the educational well-being of home-schooled students and given that this further raises questions as to the NDP's commitment to home-schooling as a viable option for student education, will the minister stand today in the Assembly and tell Albertans: does he support home-schooling, or does he plan on ending home-schooling in our province?

Mr. Eggen: Well, I think, Mr. Speaker – thanks for that question – that I made it clear in my second comment that we do support home-schooling here in the province of Alberta to the tune of \$1,670, I believe, per student, and it's important that that money gets to the education that these kids need. If someone is registering – they can register at their convenience with an affiliate – it's not difficult to do. You know, all of these notions about anything else: there are certain groups, I believe, that are throwing gasoline on the fire, making it even more difficult to communicate because they're simply telling half-truths.

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

Human Trafficking

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The NDP just can't seem to help themselves when it comes to spouting the importance of the NDP world view. We've seen it with the Leap Manifesto; we've seen it with the hiring of someone who refers to our province's oil sands as Mordor, and now we're seeing it with the very deeply troubling comment about the very real issue of human trafficking. The executive director of Progress Alberta and a close friend of the NDP trashed the Wildrose for raising awareness of the obvious and increasing number of victims. He called human trafficking a debunked fantasy. To the Minister of Human Services: does this minister also buy into the NDP world view of belittling those who suffered . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Mr. Mason: For the opposition to try and hold this government responsible for the tweets of any individual, regardless of their political views, is absolutely absurd. Can you imagine if we held them accountable for the tweets of their supporters? Oh, my goodness, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: I believe, Chestermere-Rocky View, first supplemental.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you. Well, thank you for that answer for these families that are suffering.

Given this horribly out-of-touch comment about this debunked fantasy of human trafficking, it's now time to shine a light on how serious this problem of human trafficking is in Alberta. Given that the executive director of ACT Alberta, a group that works to fight human trafficking, says that there's been an explosion in the number of cases reported and given that human trafficking threatens the safety and security of our communities, what steps is this government taking to address this growing problem in our province?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for what is really a very important question. Our government is

committed to ensuring that we fight all forms of crime. We have met with ACT Alberta, and we are aware of their concerns about the increase in human trafficking. One of the most fundamental principles in ensuring that people are not vulnerable to this sort of human trafficking is ensuring that they have access to necessary government services, to jobs that pay decent wages, and things like that. Our government is absolutely committed to supporting those things.

Mrs. Aheer: Given that we need to ensure that men, women, and children are not trafficked for the purposes of labour exploitation, sexual exploitation, or the removal of organs and given that recently in Okotoks a 23-year-old woman was charged with human trafficking for exploiting teenage girls aged 13 to 16 whom she met on social media, what specific initiatives are in place right across our province to protect those that are being recruited for human trafficking on social media?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the very important question. In the last budget our government supported the ALERT team. That team includes the ICE team, the integrated child exploitation team. They work with all different police services across this province to ensure that everyone is sharing information and to prevent people from being solicited or trafficked online.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Calgary-Foothills.

Energy Policies

Mr. Panda: Thank you Mr. Speaker. Two weeks ago Enbridge announced cuts to 5 per cent of their workforce, laying off another 530 positions. This round of layoffs is more pain and suffering for hard-working Albertans. In Calgary we have a 9.5 per cent unemployment rate, the highest in any metropolitan region in Canada, and expected to reach double digits by Christmas. In light of these sobering statistics will the NDP government postpone the risky carbon tax, that will only hurt Calgary families?

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The minister of economic development.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll thank the member for the question. There's no doubt that the sustained international price of oil is having a significant impact on all families and communities and workers across this province. That's why our government this spring introduced our Alberta jobs plan budget, which has a number of initiatives to help set the right conditions to support businesses and industry and get our economy back on its feet. There are a number of things that we've done in the areas of access to capital, support for start-ups and small businesses as well as helping businesses expand markets.

Mr. Panda: Given that the NDP has created an economic environment where people are unable to give, which has led to the shelves of the veterans' food bank in Calgary being empty, and since on November 5 I am holding my annual veterans' food bank drive – and I hope MLAs on all sides will support this because the need is so great now – and given that when the carbon tax comes into effect it will hurt the charities even more, will the NDP

government acknowledge the damage their policies are having and cancel the charity-punishing carbon . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. minister of economic development.

Mr. Bilous: Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll thank the member for the question. Again, what the opposition needs to recognize or acknowledge is that when you are a province that has been overreliant on one commodity with one buyer for one price for so many years, when we have a collapse in that price, we are going to be hit harder than most other jurisdictions, which, quite frankly, is the case. We understand and sympathize with Albertans that are going through a very difficult time. This is why we've introduced a number of initiatives. Quite frankly – I will tell you more shortly.

2:40

Mr. Panda: The list of NDP policies that are hurting Calgarians goes on and on and on. Given that this summer they have launched a risky and expensive lawsuit against Enmax, which is owned by the city of Calgary, and given that they have begun an accelerated coal phase-out that will hurt hard-working Albertans and given that once fully implemented the average family will be paying a thousand dollars more because of the carbon tax, what will it take for the NDP government to use common sense, not ideology, and cancel those policies and drop lawsuits?

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The minister of economic development.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to clarify. First of all, our government's climate leadership plan puts Alberta at the forefront when it comes to doing our part regarding the environment. This is not only what a responsible global citizen does. There is an incredible amount of opportunity within our green jobs and transitioning workers from that phase-out of coal. We are investing in innovative solutions, working with business and industry as well as with not-for-profits. We have an advisory committee that is informing our government on how to help with this transition, but quite frankly . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

The Member for Calgary-North West.

PDD Service Delivery

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Human Services has been asked time and time again about his plan to deal with the wait-list for PDD. The community is still waiting to hear answers. The wait-list is still growing. We've heard one plan from this government, that is to put PDD clients up for bid by service providers, potentially even those from out of the province. To the minister: is it still your government's plan to openly tender supports to the lowest bidder anywhere you can find them?

The Speaker: The Minister of Human Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Member, for the question. I will begin by saying that our government is committed to working with the sector to ensure that they are listened to and their perspective is reflected in our policies, unlike – I know the members won't appreciate it when I remind them of their record – imposing solutions like PDD safety standard 8, supports intensity scale. I have been engaged with the sector over the last year and a half to deal with . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Ms Jansen: Yeah. I like that, "working with the sector."

Given that when asked about procurement previously, the minister said that he had consulted with the community, and when I asked him about that consultation, he said that if I wanted to know what the community thought, I could ask them myself. Well, guess what? I did, and they didn't like it. Again to the minister: are you going to exempt the PDD community from this humiliating process? And guess what? They don't feel consulted at all.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Member, for the question. One thing I want to clarify is that we are not auctioning PDD services. It's misinformation, and it's wrong. We will not auction PDD services. That's not happening. I have been working with the PDD community. Over 2,000 Albertans participated in our consultation around safety and inclusion. Whatever they will tell me, I'm . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

I'd just remind the member about no supplementary preambles.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that a major platform of this government has been to increase the minimum wage and they've been lauding it from coast to coast and given that the government has not offered PDD providers more funding to increase their own workers' pay to meet the new minimum wage, to the minister: did you forget to budget the minimum wage increase for PDD service providers, and if not, why does the minister believe that disability workers don't deserve a living wage? That's right. A \$10 minimum wage . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member, please.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. We have increased funding for PDD by \$22 million as opposed to cutting \$40 million back when you were in government. In terms of relationships going forward, we are working with the advisory committee which is looking at how we will fund the PDD services. We are in complete consultation with the PDD community, advocates, and service providers.

Thank you.

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

Economic Development

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Economic Development and Trade: given that we are all painfully aware of the way the sustained low oil price has impacted our province, can you please give an update as to how your economic development policies have led to jobs for Albertans?

The Speaker: The minister of economic development.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for the question. I'll start off by talking about how the more than \$34 billion that our government is investing in infrastructure is the largest infrastructure spend in Alberta's history and will sustain and create about 10,000 jobs a year for the next three years. The summer temporary employment program employed about 2,700 students this summer. That had been cut by the previous government. The Alberta Enterprise Corporation investments have supported about 1,100 direct and 1,400 indirect jobs. The modernized royalty framework has led to . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Hon. member, your first supplemental question.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again to the same minister. There are a number of small businesses in my constituency facing the challenge of today's economic climate. What are you doing to support entrepreneurs and small-business owners so that they can access the supports they need to maintain and grow their businesses?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for the question. I want to start off by thanking the member, who's been an incredible advocate for small businesses in her riding as well as around the province.

Our government has been meeting with business leaders, industry leaders, and entrepreneurs around this province, and there are a number of initiatives. We've reinstated self-employment training programs. We have provided over \$10 million for small-business incubators throughout the province. We've also reduced the small-business tax by 33 per cent in this province, and that will take effect on January 1. [interjections]

The Speaker: You're not going to have time to go out there.

Hon. member, your second supplemental question.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister. We know that access to capital is crucial for many of these SMBs. How is your ministry ensuring that capital is available to them?

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for the question. First, last fall we increased ATB's capacity to lend to small businesses by \$1.5 billion. I signed a historic MOU with the Business Development Bank of Canada in March of this year where BDC is committed to providing \$1 billion in new business loans. We also will be introducing legislation in this very House for two tax credits, the Alberta investor tax credit and the capital investment tax credit, that provide incentives for Albertans to invest in Alberta companies to help grow our economy.

Health Care Decision-making

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, last week doctors from the Red Deer hospital came forward to ask the NDP government why central Alberta is being overlooked for cardiac catheterization services. Quick access to cardiac care saves lives in the event of a heart attack. In fact, we could save 30 lives per year. We could shorten hospital stays, cut down on transportation costs, and improve quality of life. Is the minister going to commit to getting the community what it so acutely needs?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. Albertans, no matter where they live in our province, deserve to have the right care in the right place at the right time and, of course, with the right information. I've had the pleasure of working with AHS and with the Red Deer local community. I'm actually meeting with a number of the local advocates for this specific project on Tuesday, I believe – it is this week, for sure – and we're going to continue to make sure that we're making decisions in the best interests of all Albertans. I understand local desires among community, but we need to look at a province-wide system.

2:50

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, given that other patients, families, and community leaders support this while health professionals across the province are calling for better access to heart attack care and given that donors are willing to contribute millions towards getting cardiac cath for Red Deer and seeing that every part of the province pays into the system with their tax dollars, will the minister respect the local priorities of Albertans, restore true local decision-making in health, and let people do what is best for their communities?

Ms Hoffman: I'm really proud of the ongoing working relationship we have with folks in the central zone. In terms of Red Deer in particular, we've done work to expand access to operation capacity in that facility and we're certainly building on the cancer corridor, Mr. Speaker, because it's important that no matter where you live in the province, once again, you have access. Making sure that we take our time to do proper consultation, that there's something done on a system-wide or province-wide basis, is an important value, and it's one that I'm proud to live by.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this summer has seen the NDP embark on some truly bizarre priorities in health care and since their fascination with centralization and AHS control will cost us hundreds of millions extra to deliver laundry and lab services, when will our two ministers of Health stop letting their NDP world view cloud their judgment and start finding innovative ways to improve efficiency, access, and care for patients?

Ms Hoffman: Déjà vu, Mr. Speaker. I'm thrilled to be back and to have the opportunity to respond to the allegations that were expressed from the member opposite.

We do not make decisions on an offhand basis, in a campaign style, much like what was done by the now third party under the former government, what seems to be what's being advocated for by the members opposite. Certainly, we aren't planning on moving forward with billions of dollars of proposed cuts that would impact patient care all across our province. We're being stable, responsible, and we're moving forward with the mandate Albertans gave us, Mr. Speaker, and I'm proud to do so.

The Speaker: Hon. members, in 30 seconds we will continue with Members' Statements.

Members' Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Orange Shirt Day

Ms Jabbour: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was the first day of school. Like children everywhere, Phyllis Webstad was excited. She was six years old, and grade 1 held such promise: learning new things, making friends, enjoying new adventures. Like children everywhere, she got dressed for her first day of school in her very best. Her grandmother had bought her a beautiful orange shirt, and Phyllis wore it with pride.

For far too many First Nation children like Phyllis, however, the reality was quite different. School became a place where culture and language were stripped away, a place of separation from parents, from family, from everything familiar, a place of pain, isolation, and loss. Beautiful clothing, lovingly made by grandparents in

honour of the first day of school, was garbaged. Hair was chopped. Children were bathed in chemicals to cleanse them of their aboriginal taint. Phyllis never saw her orange shirt again.

As these children learned the realities of the school they were forced to attend, some tried to escape, to run home to family and loved ones. We know the stories of Chanie Wenjack, Phillip "Bean" Swain, and Roderick Taypaywaykejick, who lost their lives in the frozen wilderness far from home. Many others died at school, often from unknown causes. Their parents never saw them again. Others endured years of unimaginable abuse and neglect.

Although most children managed to survive this experience, residential schools left profound and lasting generational scars. Children returned home to an environment and a culture where they were lost and unable to adapt. They often coped with alcohol and drugs, and when they had children of their own, they did not know how to parent them.

On September 30, Orange Shirt Day, people across Canada and children in our schools wear orange to remember the thousands of children who were once told that their lives, their culture, their language, their heritage did not matter. We share their story not only in recognition of the harm the residential school system did to innocent children like Phyllis but to encourage awareness and compassion and support for healing. Orange Shirt Day is an opportunity to unite together in a spirit of reconciliation and hope to affirm our commitment to future generations of children that every child matters.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to seek unanimous consent of the House to continue with the daily Routine past 3 o'clock.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Bovine Tuberculosis

Mr. Loewen: Mr. Speaker, this has been an extremely trying year on farmers and ranchers. Heavy rain, hail, and early snow have harmed crops, many of which are still left in the field. Beef prices are falling, feedlots are closing, and now we have a confirmed case of bovine tuberculosis from a herd near CFB Suffield, in southern Alberta. This disease has the ability to be passed from cow to cow, from wild game such as elk to cow, or to humans in rare cases.

While this does not affect Canada's rating as being a TB-free country, this incident could be catastrophic to some ranches' viability. Once the cow has been traced to its source, that herd and all animals on that ranch are quarantined. The source herd will be destroyed for safety reasons, and compensation will be paid. Any commingling of cows will mean other herds may also need to be quarantined as well.

It is now reported that approximately 30 herds may be under quarantine, which presents major financial burdens for those affected. Numerous ranches have these cows and calves presold, and if they are forced into quarantine, they can't fulfill the contract nor can they be sent to feedlots. The onus to continue to care and feed for these herds falls entirely on these ranch families, all of this without their regular income from sales, never mind not having adequate corral space, feed, and water to care for these animals that they normally would have sold by now. This is an animal welfare issue, Mr. Speaker.

As if this is not bad enough, this area is also known for its hunting. Rumours and fears of this TB incident are already rampant in the hunting and outdoors communities, and the lack of accurate information from Environment and Parks to these communities is troubling.

The U.S. has had its share of bovine TB cases over the years, with dozens of such events being reported. While this is not a disastrous trade issue, producers do need some real clarity of the process from this government. This government needs to work closely with the federal government on this serious matter and present their plan to these affected ranchers now.

Thank you.

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

Hon. Peter Eric James Prentice, PC, QC

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus and, indeed, Progressive Conservatives across this province to remember the hon. Jim Prentice. Like all of us here and all who knew him, I was truly shocked when I heard the news of the tragic incident that claimed Jim's life.

My thoughts immediately went to his wife, Karen, their daughters, and grandchildren. They shared him with the public as their husband, father, and grandfather served his country and his province with such distinction, and they had just recently got him back, so to speak. I know that in the 17 months since he retired from public life, they enjoyed the extra time they had together. In fact, when I spoke to Karen last week, she told me just how much she enjoyed that time out of the public spotlight. I know that all Albertans and Canadians join us in thanking the family for sharing Jim with us all those years.

Mr. Speaker, Jim Prentice was a great many things: husband, father, grandfather, capable cabinet minister, trusted adviser, business leader, First Nations advocate, environmentalist, friend, and mentor. But above all of this, he was at his core a public servant. While he was also a skilled politician, he knew when to put partisanship aside for the betterment of the people he served. Jim had an ability to put differences aside and work with anyone, even when it wasn't easy, if the job was important to get done. That's why over the past few weeks we've heard politicians of all stripes describe him first and foremost as a gentleman. Jim spent only a short time in this Chamber as Alberta's 16th Premier, but it was clear that he had a profound impact on all those who had the honour of serving alongside him.

Mr. Speaker, our thoughts and prayers are with Jim's family as well as with the families of the three others who lost their lives in the incident as they mourn this tragic loss. All Albertans join them in their grief today.

3:00

The Speaker: Hon. member, as I indicated in my introductory remarks, at some point in the future, in consultation with the family a more formal opportunity will be presented for that.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Education System

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to tell you about a series of consultations I held at the elementary schools of Edmonton-Manning this fall. Here in Alberta students begin to learn about local government in grade 6; they learn about the history and

process of democracy. I visited the elementary schools of Edmonton-Manning to encourage students to brainstorm, with myself, their teachers, and their families, ideas to make this province a better place for Albertans now and for generations to come.

Mr. Speaker, the grade 6 students from my constituency have demonstrated an eagerness to engage in the democratic process and become future leaders in their community. These young students and all Albertans, regardless of their age, can enact change, and it is my belief that the leaders of tomorrow need to be encouraged and supported today. Therefore, it is our responsibility to guide them to what engages their minds so that they are better able to discover their unique genius and contribute that to the community they live in, for the mind is not a vessel to be filled but a light to be kindled, a light to illuminate the path forward for all of us.

Mr. Speaker, education is the passport to the future. Tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today. I am proud to be part of a government that is investing in our schools and recognizes that education is the cornerstone of a healthy economy. We need to be future-ready, and the future starts today.

Thank you.

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

Soccer Without Boundaries

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is good to be back in the Legislature. Today I want to talk about a man and his mission to provide a place for children to belong, a place to feel safe, and a place to have fun through sport. Jean Claude Munyezamu found inspiration in volunteerism both at home and abroad to found Soccer Without Boundaries. Soccer Without Boundaries is an award-winning organization aimed primarily at immigrant and low-income children throughout Calgary. Running year-round, the program stands on the strength of its wonderful volunteers – coaches, assistant coaches, and helpers – as well as those who donate soccer gear. This organization is an example of the generous spirit found throughout Alberta.

A variety of programs are offered and are designed to instill a sense of ownership, belonging, and pride in community in those children who are so often left to their own devices for many hours of the day. Mr. Speaker, by giving these children a safe, fun place to be after school and on weekends, Soccer Without Boundaries plays a key role in keeping children out of trouble. As you know, idle hands are the devil's playthings. I am so glad that the children of Calgary-Currie have these angels from Soccer Without Boundaries on their side, keeping them engaged in productive and constructive pursuits.

I was also privileged to join Jean Claude and Soccer Without Boundaries at their end-of-summer barbecue, where a simple children's sporting event brought out the entire community. It was a family affair, Mr. Speaker, and it was a community affair.

To Soccer Without Boundaries and everyone who makes it possible, thank you.

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

Wildrose Education Policies

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud to be a Wildrose member. As the Leader of the Official Opposition said over the weekend at our AGM, we are unapologetic in our love for Alberta, and we fight for our policies and principles because they have proven time and time again to be the foundations of a society

where all can benefit. Wildrose is a member-driven party; we take direction from Albertans to lead and direct our work.

I'm proud that our members' past policies show Albertans that our party will always be on their side, policies like repealing the carbon tax and Bill 6, giving Albertans two free hours of parking at hospitals, and affirming our commitment to parental choice and parental rights. Wildrose has a bedrock education policy that reads:

[We] recognize that parents are the primary decision-makers for their children and their children's education, and protect parents' right to choose the education their child receives whether it be through public, separate, public charter, private school or homeschooling.

It rightly recognizes the supremacy of parents to be in charge of their child's education while recognizing the substantial effort and work that teachers across our province do every day to support our children.

When I talk to Albertans across the province, they tell me time and time again that they are worried about steps the NDP is taking to erode parental rights across this province. They see a government that tries to interfere with and amend private members' motions intended to protect parental choice. Parents have watched the government reject the application for a new charter school to help special-needs students. The only step they are seeing the government take to consult parents on new curriculum is a vague and misleading online survey.

Albertans deserve better. They can know Wildrose will always stand for a world-class education system. Wildrose is steadfast in supporting parental choice in educational opportunities.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees

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

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As chair of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices and in accordance with section 4(2) of the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act I would like to table five copies of the following report: Elections Alberta 2015-16 annual report on the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act. Copies of this report will be provided to members.

Introduction of Bills

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

Bill 24

Forest and Prairie Protection Amendment Act, 2016

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today to introduce Bill 24, the Forest and Prairie Protection Amendment Act, 2016. Bill 24 will strengthen Alberta's legislation that supports wildfire prevention and firefighting activities. The measures include improved authority to restrict high-risk activities during hazardous fire conditions and tougher penalties for violations of the act. The bill will also further enhance wildfire-fighting efforts by clarifying operational processes, roles, and responsibilities. The devastation in Fort McMurray earlier this year is a solemn reminder of the incredible damage that wildfires can cause. Our government is committed to the protection of Albertans and their communities from the threat of wildfire, and this bill will enhance the tools

available to help keep our communities safe. I urge all members of this Assembly to support this important legislation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 24 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: Hon. members, I have six tablings today. I rise to table five copies of the office of the Child and Youth Advocate's special report *Voices for Change: Aboriginal Child Welfare in Alberta*.

Secondly, in my capacity as chair and pursuant to section 39(3) of the Legislative Assembly Act I would like to table with the Assembly five copies of the following orders, which were approved at the September 26, 2016, meeting of the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services: Revised Members' Services Modernization of Language Amendment Order, No. 1, being order 05/16; and Transportation Amendment Order, No. 13, being order 06/16.

In addition, as chair I would also like to table five copies of the October 2016 Special Standing Committee on Members' Services subcommittee on family-friendly workplace practices and policies final report, titled: *Review of Family-Friendly Practices and Policies for Legislators*.

3:10

I have received a resolution from the National Assembly of Québec as it relates to the federal health transfers. They request that this motion be brought to the attention of all members of the Assembly, of which I am now tabling five copies.

I am tabling a copy of a news release from earlier today announcing the appointment of the Electoral Boundaries Commission. This five-member commission was required to be established by October 31, 2016, pursuant to section 5(1) of the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act, which was amended by Bill 7, approved by the Assembly last spring.

Finally, further to the purported question of privilege that was raised on June 6, 2016, I would also like to table five copies each of recent correspondence on this subject: firstly, my memorandum of October 11, 2016, to the Government House Leader; the Government House Leader's response, dated October 21; the Official Opposition House Leader's e-mail, dated October 24; his letter of October 25; and an e-mail dated October 25 from the Progressive Conservative House leader. I will give the pages an opportunity to circulate the documents.

Privilege

Obstructing a Member in Performance of Duty

The Speaker: Hon. members, you will recall that near the end of the spring sitting, on June 6, 2016, the Official Opposition House Leader raised a question of privilege concerning government radio ads and whether those ads presumed a decision of the Assembly on Bill 20, which had not yet passed through the stages of the Assembly. I heard arguments from the House leaders for the government and the Official Opposition and the third party on June 6, 2016. The Assembly adjourned for the summer at 11:51 on June 7.

During debate on the purported question of privilege the Government House Leader objected to the Official Opposition House Leader making arguments with respect to a government website, climate.alberta.ca, as this website was not referenced in the

notice submitted to my office. I have determined that as the radio advertisement in question referenced specifically the website climate.alberta.ca, it was open to the House leader to make arguments as part of his presentation that the website as well as the radio ad contained content that constituted a breach of privilege.

In an effort to expedite the process over the period of adjournment, I offered the Government House Leader the option to make written submissions to me concerning the website. The other House leaders were to be copied on the Government House Leader's written submissions, which were received by my office on October 21, 2016, and which have now been tabled for the members. My office forwarded the Government House Leader's submissions to the other House leaders for comment. Given that the Government House Leader has now had the opportunity to comment on the website content, which, I note, supplements his arguments made in the Assembly on June 6 and can be found at pages 1476 and 1477 of the *Hansard* for that day, I will now ask if anyone else has anything new to contribute to the debate.

The hon. Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Cooper: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate you tabling some of the information in the Chamber today. As you will note and as members will read the correspondence with enthusiasm, I'm sure, it will be noted that I take these points of privilege very seriously, so I'm glad that they're being done in an open way, where all members are able to provide comment on what is a very serious matter.

I would just like to reiterate the position that the website as well as the radio ad were clear breaches of privilege. They presumed the passage of the legislation. I think that it is of critical importance that we see the government being respectful of the Assembly and respectful of the privileges that each of us enjoys in this House. I encourage you to recognize that the government hasn't addressed the issue of the website. As such, you mentioned that it would be included in the ruling, but I encourage you to rule that this, in fact, was a breach of privilege, and if you see fit, I would be happy to move it to the standing orders, privileges, and printing committee following your ruling.

The Speaker: Are there any other members who would like to speak to the point of privilege?

Thank you, hon. members and Opposition House Leader. I have been attentive to your comments, and I would intend to take some time to consider them further. I hope to be able to do that very, very soon.

Orders of the Day

Written Questions

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

[The Clerk read the following written questions, which had been accepted]

Debt-servicing Costs

Q15. Mr. Clark:

What has been the impact on Alberta's projected debt-servicing costs since the downgrade in the credit rating by Standard & Poor's, and what has been the impact on the debt-servicing costs since the notice of a credit review by Moody's and by Dominion Bond Rating Service during the 2015-2016 fiscal year?

Bond Yields

- Q16. Mr. Clark:
What has been the impact on Alberta's provincial bond yields since the downgrade in the credit rating by Standard & Poor's, and what has been the impact on the debt-servicing costs since the notice of a credit review by Moody's and by Dominion Bond Rating Service during the 2015-2016 fiscal year?

3:20 Trip to Toronto and New York

- Q17. Mr. Fildebrandt:
What are the deliverables from the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance's trip from April 25 to 29, 2016, to Toronto and New York?

Trip to Washington, DC

- Q18. Mr. Cooper:
What are the deliverables from the Premier's trip from April 27 to 29, 2016, to Washington, DC?

Alberta Health Services Overtime Payments

- Q19. Mr. Barnes:
What was the total cost of overtime payments to all part-time employees of Alberta Health Services for the fiscal year 2015-16?

Surgery Postponement

- Q20. Mr. Barnes:
For the fiscal year 2015-16 how many surgeries were postponed in each Alberta Health Services high-volume surgery site due to system capacity issues?

Alberta Health Services Employee Earnings

- Q22. Mr. Barnes:
As of April 1, 2016, how many Alberta Health Services employees were earning more than \$200,000 per year in annual salary and total benefits combined?

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

Disaster Recovery Program Claims

- Q11. Mr. Clark asked that the following question be accepted.
How many disaster recovery program claims arising from the 2013 flood event that were previously approved have since been deemed ineligible?

Ms Ganley moved that Written Question 11 be amended as follows:
How many disaster recovery program claims from the 2013 flood event have been deemed ineligible, and why were they deemed ineligible?

[Debate adjourned on amendment May 16: Mr. Clark speaking]

Mr. Clark: Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I will just take a few brief moments to recap some of the comments that I've made previously on this I think important question, but before I do so, I just want to welcome back all of my colleagues in the Assembly. It seems far too long, my friends, since we've all been together, and I look forward to a good few weeks of being together.

Now, the government has proposed an amendment to this which amends out the words "previously approved." I can tell you, Madam Speaker, that we know that 2,647 claims were deemed

ineligible. What this amendment seeks to do is to provide the Assembly with information that is already publicly available and fundamentally changes the information that I was seeking in this question. The information I'm seeking in this question comes from a number of very specific incidents in my own constituency but also in High River and other parts of the province where Albertans were approved for disaster recovery program funding and then subsequently disintitiled from that. Now, I'd like to know how many there were. I'd like to know why. I think that's in the public's interest.

Now, I certainly hope that the vast majority – and I understand this to be the case, the vast majority – of claims for damage resulting from the Wood Buffalo wildfires are in fact covered by insurance or are eligible for insurance and therefore would not be eligible for the disaster recovery program. However, should there be claims arising related to the devastating wildfires or in the future when claims arise out of disasters unforeseen but, unfortunately, seemingly common in Alberta, it is very important for all of us in this Assembly, and through us to the people of Alberta, to understand why it would be that claims would be declined after having been approved.

I know of at least one case of that happening, and I know others have given me anecdotal evidence of that happening, and if, in fact, that's happening, we ought to know about it. I'd like to make sure that the Alberta Emergency Management Agency and all of the folks in Municipal Affairs who are responsible for this important program understand fully how it's working and also, especially and most importantly, understand how it's working from the perspective of the end users of the program.

Taken to its logical extreme – and this is, in fact, a scenario that was facing one of my constituents. She had been paid a sum of money under the disaster recovery program and then through appeal found that Municipal Affairs and the government were actually trying to claim that she, in fact, was not eligible for those funds. The money that she had received, which is not a substantial amount relative to the damage that she had, was long spent on the recovery process. Now, should she have found and had the Municipal Government Board found through the appeals process that, in fact, she was not entitled to DRP, having already spent the money, she would have been on the hook to give that money back to the government.

When we put people in situations like that, having faced a devastating natural disaster, I'm sure the members of this Assembly can well understand why we'd like (a) to know how often that happens and (b) to shine a light on why that might be happening. That puts Albertans in a very, very difficult position.

I would really encourage this government to reconsider their amendment because we certainly care about the people who have received this funding. I worry very much that if we find in Fort McMurray and Wood Buffalo that there are DRP claims forthcoming, they would be handled with the knowledge of why it might be that someone would be deemed eligible at one stage and then, in this case 18 months later, the government potentially deciding: we made a mistake; we actually don't believe you should be entitled to DRP.

If it's not very widespread, that would be wonderful. I'd love to know that. If it is widespread, that's not a good thing, but we need to know that. So I would again encourage this government, please, to reconsider your amendment and to revert to my original question of: how many that were previously approved have since been deemed ineligible? I think that's in Albertans' interest.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Further speakers to the amendment? Hon. member, go ahead.

Mr. Stier: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and good afternoon. I won't take too long on this matter, but it is one that is home to my heart as well. We've had an awful lot of issues dealing with the flooding in the past few years in southern Alberta, and certainly the differences of opinion on some of the investigations have put residents into situations where they become victims of all kinds of different rules and so on. It's been a fight for a lot of individuals, with some heartbreaking situations.

So it surprised me, frankly, when this was drawn to my attention because it seemed to me that the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow had asked a very important question, and I think we know what that question was. It was: "How many disaster recovery program claims arising from the 2013 flood event that were previously approved have since been deemed ineligible?" That is such an important question because there were a lot of people that struggled through this situation, got to a situation where they thought they were going to have some final reconciliation, and then suddenly it changed.

You know, to now see that they've struck out the "previously approved" section and reworded it and brought it back to say instead: "How many disaster program recovery claims arising from the 2013 flood event have been deemed ineligible, and why were they deemed ineligible?" That is a totally different thing.

I reiterate and agree with all that's been said by Calgary-Elbow. This is not the same question. If anything, if it were me and this question was to be amended, it could have been worded more strongly. But this "previously approved" situation does need to be addressed, and I would hope that that would be something that the House would agree with.

Thank you.

3:30

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Associate Minister of Health.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Madam Speaker. You know, it's been a long summer, so I think it's worth while to remind members what the amendment is. The original question, as noted by the Member for Calgary-Elbow, was asking simply: what was the number of claims that had been deemed ineligible after being previously approved? The amendment that had been put forward by my ministerial colleague was to say not just how many claims had been deemed ineligible but why they were deemed ineligible. Frankly, I think that the amendment goes to providing a little bit more information to Albertans about the application of this program, how it's been used, and ensuring that Albertans understand where that money is going.

Amending this question allows for a better response, more accurately reflecting the two-stage process that all DRP files go through. The first stage, of course, is determining whether an application can be accepted under the established program criteria, things such as whether the losses occurred during the prescribed timeline of the event, whether the applicant owns the property in question, and if the losses were uninsurable in nature. The second stage of the process determines whether the items being claimed are eligible for reimbursement under the disaster assistance guidelines, and that can include lost or damaged items, cleanup hours and expenses, repair and replacement of structural damage.

Additionally, it's important to remember that funding under the disaster recovery program cannot be provided if other sources of funding are available to that applicant. So it's not meant to duplicate other forms of financial assistance that may be covered.

The 2013 program received more than 10,600 private-sector applications, and more than \$144 million has been provided to individual Albertans with respect to this disaster. All of those applications have been carefully considered. It's important, I think, to show not just how many claims have been re-evaluated but also the reasons for that to ensure accountability and transparency for Albertans.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any further speakers to the amendment?

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on the amendment carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:33 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, S.	Kazim	Phillips
Babcock	Kleinstauber	Piquette
Carson	Littlewood	Renaud
Coolahan	Loyola	Rosendahl
Cortes-Vargas	Luff	Sabir
Dach	Malkinson	Schreiner
Dang	Mason	Shepherd
Drever	McKitrick	Sucha
Feehan	McPherson	Sweet
Fitzpatrick	Miller	Turner
Goehring	Nielsen	Westhead
Hinkley	Payne	Woollard
Horne		

Against the motion:

Aheer	Gotfried	Starke
Barnes	Hanson	Stier
Clark	Hunter	Strankman
Cooper	Loewen	Swann
Cyr	McIver	Taylor
Drysdale	Orr	van Dijken
Gill	Rodney	

Totals: For – 37 Against – 20

[Motion on amendment carried]

3:50

The Deputy Speaker: Now we're on Written Question 11. Are there any further comments on this?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow to close debate.

Mr. Clark: Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I voted against the amendment, obviously, and am disappointed that it passed. I just want to say this, that what this written question now will answer are things that we already know. Information is already publicly available. We know that 2,647 Albertans were deemed ineligible, but we also know that there are certain criteria by which the disaster recovery program applies. The hon. minister had enumerated some of them: whether the damage happened during the course of a disaster, whether someone was an owner or a landlord, whether the losses were uninsurable. Those things we know. So we're going to find out – I actually suspect that if I dug deep enough on some of the government's websites, I may even be able to find out those specific breakdowns right now.

The reason I had asked the original question was because certain Albertans, including a constituent of mine, were originally approved for the disaster recovery program in relation to the 2013 floods and were then subsequently told that they were going to be disentitled or unapproved, if you will, and declined. If this is rampant, if this is something where Albertans are being approved for a program and then later on are told, "Sorry; actually, we made a mistake, and we think you're not approved," that's something worth knowing. So that's why I'm very disappointed that the amendment has gone ahead, and I cannot support the written question as amended because it no longer conveys the spirit which I was intending to capture with the original question.

So I would encourage all members of the Assembly to vote down this written question because it is not what I was intending at all and frankly does not, I believe, give any new information to Albertans which is not already publicly available.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

[Written Question 11 as amended carried]

Blood Plasma Costs

Q21. Mr. Barnes asked that the following question be accepted.
For each of the fiscal years 2013-14, 2014-15, and 2015-16 what was the per unit cost of blood plasma purchased by Alberta Health Services, broken down by each supplier?

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Madam Speaker, for allowing me to introduce this written question. This issue of where we source our blood products entered the public discussion earlier this year when a donation supply company announced it would like to offer its services to Albertans. Donors would be compensated a small amount for their time to donate plasma blood, a product in high demand and limited supply.

Madam Speaker, I'd like to tell the House why Canada does buy plasma. Canadians need plasma for two main purposes: transfusions, requiring about 50,000 litres annually; and, secondly, manufacturing plasma protein products, requiring 1.1 million litres of plasma a year. Currently Canada is a volunteer blood donor only country and collects about 190,000 litres of plasma a year, more than enough to cover transfusion needs, but not anywhere close enough to cover plasma protein products.

The minister doesn't seem keen on this idea, but there are a couple more facts that should be known here. First of all, as many patient advocacy groups in Canadian Blood Services itself have said, we rely heavily on paid donation services to meet global demand for blood plasma and manufactured blood plasma products. To meet our demand, the demand I just mentioned, we rely on imports from jurisdictions that do allow and do use paid plasma donations. Canadian Blood Services has increasingly accessed paid sources from North America and Europe, including Germany and Austria.

Madam Speaker, in 2013 Canadians paid \$670 million for this plasma; \$670 million. In a public statement from this year Canadian Blood Services said, "Drugs made from plasma donated by paid donors are just as safe as those made from plasma from volunteer donors." "Access to the commercial paid plasma market is essential in ensuring enough supply so that Canadian patients," Albertans, our friends and our neighbours, "continue to receive the life-saving therapies they need."

Now, having said these things, I thought it was informative that during our last go-round with Health estimates the Minister informed us that part of the reason for our very large increase in spending on the blood services line item was due to an increased cost in buying it from abroad. Madam Speaker, the weak Canadian

dollar has been identified as a contributing factor by the minister. Even worse, over the past two years the line item has grown by nearly \$30 million, or about a 23 per cent increase. I certainly accept that her answer was the truth given how the growth in this line item seems to correspond with the general trend of the Canadian dollar's value.

We know that blood plasma from paid donors is safe and essential. I think it is absolutely essential that Albertans know where our blood products come from and how much they cost us. Is this an area of health where we could be doing things more efficiently? Is this an area where we could be keeping the money in our country and in our province?

Madam Speaker, I understand that the government will be amending this written question. I hope that the result of the amendment will be good information for the public, transparent so we can better understand our blood supply in detail, including all that it costs and where it comes from.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Associate Minister of Health.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I move that Written Question 21 be amended as follows: by striking out the phrases "each of" and "per unit," by striking out the word "plasma" and substituting the phrase "components (red blood cells, platelets, and plasma)," by striking out the phrase "Alberta Health Services, broken down by each supplier" and substituting "Alberta Health for use in Alberta, and for the same fiscal years, what was the cost of plasma protein products, broken down by product?"

The amended question would read as follows:

For the fiscal years 2013-14, 2014-15, and 2015-16 what was the cost of blood components (red blood cells, platelets, and plasma) purchased by Alberta Health for use in Alberta, and for the same fiscal years what was the cost of plasma protein products, broken down by product?

I'm proposing these amendments in order to provide a more readily compared product and spend by category. The cost of transfusable plasma alone cannot be accurately calculated because the transfusable product line is a negotiated cost between Alberta Health and Canadian Blood Services, that includes an allocation of operational costs for the national blood program. Plasma costs as reflected in the product line reflect a calculation based upon an awarded market share contract between the manufacturer and Canadian Blood Services. This calculation is then combined with the actual utilization by the province to generate the price per unit. This is a complex breakdown that does not yield results for unit costs that can be accurately compared year by year. It is, however, possible to report product total spend per purchased product per year, separated into blood components. Again, that's red blood cells, platelets, and plasma.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Cypress-Medicine Hat, do you wish to speak to the amendment?

4:00

Mr. Barnes: Yeah. Thank you, Madam Speaker. I've had a chance to read it. I appreciate some of the clarification around the language, but the amended version does seem to be missing one key element captured by the intent of my original question, and that is the source.

I appreciate knowing the cost of all types of blood products by fiscal year. We did already, however, have a sense from the government's Health estimates of how considerably they have been rising. If it is true that we indeed have been paying more, specifically for international blood plasma products, I would hope

that the government could provide where they originate and figure out exactly how much of this is attributable to the falling Canadian dollar. Perhaps the information the government intends to provide us will in fact list products by supplier and source. I certainly hope it does. I certainly think that this is a key requirement so Albertans know the truth and the facts as to where their blood is coming from, how it is accessed, and what it costs. Albertans deserve to know more of the ins and outs of their health system.

Madam Speaker, in the hope that this information the government intends to provide will in fact list the products by supplier and source, I will accept the amendment and ask the House to do the same and hope the government will actually be legitimate in increasing transparency.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills on the amendment.

Mr. Cooper: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I might just say that I appreciate the government's willingness to seemingly try and do their best to provide more information not just on the plasma side but on all types, including red blood cells, platelets, and plasma purchased by Alberta Health Services. I think that's a nice gesture to try and provide the opposition with some additional information.

However, one thing that I perhaps am more concerned with or certainly not quite as reconciliatory on as my colleague is around this issue of supply. It's unfortunate that in the minister's comments around what changes they would like to see amended to the question, the minister didn't provide a very robust answer as to why they have no desire to provide the information around supply – the suppliers, the types of suppliers, the amount of money that's spent at each supplier – which I think would have come in the initial question because it was very prescriptive in “broken down by each supplier.” We have a wide range of suppliers here in the province, and it's important that Albertans have a clear understanding of this critical piece of our health system.

It would have been great to hear from the minister exactly why they're unable to provide or, as my guess is, Madam Speaker, unwilling to provide the information around the supplier because if we look at the health system generally, we see a real challenge between the current government and private service providers. We've seen that in linen and we've seen that in other places, lab services, where the government has this real desire to centralize. All that my colleague was asking for is a real understanding of where the resources are going, to what suppliers.

The great thing about information, Madam Speaker, is that it shines light on situations for Albertans. There may very well be a number of Albertans that are concerned or would like to be reassured on the places that we're spending money when it comes to suppliers of these very, very important products. For the minister just to say, “Hey, listen; don't worry; we're going to provide you with all this extra information” – I'm paraphrasing here – but to not answer the entirety of the question, it seems that we're going to see a pattern this afternoon of the government making amendments to questions to provide the answers that they would like us to have but not provide the information that they would prefer we didn't have.

This is not the type of transparent, open government that this government was elected on. This is not the type of government that the hon. member or the Minister of Infrastructure and of Transportation – when he was on this side of the House, he used to rise and speak on issues just like this, about the opposition and Albertans needing to have access to the information that is rightfully theirs.

So while I again say thank you to the minister for providing the information that we didn't ask for and clarifying the language so that we could get the information around that particular issue, they're still hiding information around the supply, and that should be a concern to every member of this House. I'll be happy to support my colleague in accepting the amendment, but know that this is not the right path for us to begin going down around this very important private members' business, amending questions so that the government can provide the House and the opposition the answers that they would like us to have, not the answers to the questions that were asked.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment?

[Motion on amendment carried]

The Deputy Speaker: We're back on the written question itself. Are there any further members wishing to speak to the question as amended?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat to close debate.

Mr. Barnes: Thanks to my colleague for again pointing out to this House and to all Albertans how crucially important transparency is. The number of a 23 per cent increase and \$30 million more for just Albertans, money that could go elsewhere – I would hope that the hon. minister and the government do actually go the step that they've left possibly open and actually provide this information for Albertans so we can have a clear, concise look at an important element of our health system.

Thank you.

[The voice vote indicated that Written Question 21 as amended carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:08 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Goehring	Payne
Anderson, S.	Hanson	Piquette
Babcock	Hinkley	Renaud
Barnes	Horne	Rosendahl
Bilous	Kazim	Sabir
Carson	Kleinstauber	Schreiner
Clark	Littlewood	Shepherd
Coolahan	Loewen	Strankman
Cooper	Loyola	Sucha
Cortes-Vargas	Luff	Swann
Cyr	Malkinson	Sweet
Dach	McKittrick	Taylor
Dang	McPherson	Turner
Drever	Miller	van Dijken
Feehan	Nielsen	Westhead
Fitzpatrick	Orr	Woollard

Against the motion:

Ellis	McIver	Starke
Gottfried	Rodney	

Totals:	For – 48	Against – 5
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[Written Question 21 as amended carried]

Motions for Returns

[The Clerk read the following motions for returns, which had been accepted]

Ministerial Meeting with Credit-rating Agencies

M36. Mr. Fildebrandt:

A return showing copies of all documents prepared for the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance in preparation for meeting with Standard & Poor's, Dominion Bond Rating Service, and Moody's Investors Service in Toronto on April 25, 2016.

Alberta Health Services Severance Payments

M37. Mr. Barnes:

A return showing a list of all severance payments made to Alberta Health Services employees at the management and executive levels, broken down by each individual position, for the fiscal year 2015-16.

Ministry Legislation Plans

M18. Mr. Cooper moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of the most recent three-year legislation plan for each ministry.

[Debate adjourned May 2: Mr. Mason speaking]

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any further members wishing to speak to this motion?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills to close debate.

Mr. Cooper: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd just like to take a little bit of a trip down memory lane, if you will. I know it's hard to believe that these very important questions... [A cellphone rang] That is like a total party foul. A phone ringing in the Assembly? How could it be?

The last time that this particular question was debated was way, way, way back, on May 2, and I will quote very briefly from *Alberta Hansard* of May 2, 2016, pages 782 and 783. Madam Speaker, this is a very, very important question. The people of Alberta have the right to know what the plans of this government are, and the reason why they ought to know what the plans of the government are is because, seemingly, day in and day out they surprise Albertans. They ran on one thing, and in many respects have introduced significant pieces of legislation that they didn't campaign on. Albertans deserve the right to know what, in fact, are going to be the plans of this government. That's why I moved the question.

Unfortunately, the Government House Leader rejected that question. You know what? He said: we want to keep our plans secret, and we're not going to provide information to Albertans that they deserve to know. In fact, he insinuated in his remarks that by me drafting the question, it was sheerly political. The quote here, Madam Speaker, is:

Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. While I hate to disappoint the hon. Official Opposition House Leader on this point, I know he had a sense that we might be rejecting it. Might I suggest that he probably drafted a question that he knew would be rejected.

I take some offence to the fact that he would go as far as to say that I drafted a question intentionally that he would reject when merely what our side of the House makes an effort to do is to get information that's important to Albertans.

4:30

The plans of this government, I can tell you, are important to Albertans. While many, many, many, many Albertans disagree with the plans of this government, they do have the right to understand what the future holds with respect to those plans. Worse yet would be no plan at all. Sometimes the lack of preparedness of the government makes me think that maybe there isn't a plan, which may in fact be worse.

Now, Madam Speaker, the government has the right to inform Albertans of the direction it's taking, and that is merely what the three-year legislative plan would do. It would give Albertans a sense of what is next, what they can be planning for, preparing for. It is more than a little disappointing that the government – perhaps it has a secret agenda. The problem is that we don't know. They could alleviate a lot of concerns of Albertans and certainly a lot of concerns of opposition members if they would just do the right thing, provide the information to the House and provide the information to Albertans so that we can ensure that this government has the best interests of Albertans.

[Motion for a Return 18 lost]

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

Health Electronic Record System

M20. Mr. Barnes moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of internal working documents or reports prepared by or on behalf of the government from May 22, 2015, to March 7, 2016, pertaining to the review conducted by the Ministry of Health into creating an electronic record/information-sharing system, as referenced during consideration of the Ministry of Health's main estimates on November 16, 2015.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Well, this is a very, very important topic and, of course, an ongoing topic of importance for Albertans and for our province, that was conducted and carried on through the previous government, the previous administration. To date I understand that somewhere between \$800 million and a billion dollars has been spent on Netcare electronic records, and the oversight, the accountability, and the effectiveness makes one wonder. My hope would be that the government would accept this motion to ensure, you know, secondly, that we can get value for our tax dollars but, most importantly, that we can help Albertans, that we can make our system better, that we can make it so the technology and the expertise that are available in many, many other jurisdictions and many other organizations have an opportunity to help Albertans.

I want to talk about a couple of examples. I've heard from, as I think many in this House have, Albertans whose adult children – adult children – unfortunately passed away or sicknesses worsened because of a situation in our system where we didn't have patient-facing, patient-interfacing electronic health records. Information was not available. Information wasn't conveyed. People weren't made aware of or didn't have the access themselves to understand or to know what the initial diagnosis was or the secondary diagnosis. They didn't have the ability to see that an appointment from a GP to a specialist wasn't happening in a timely manner and were not understanding the system, not able to have the interface, not able to have the contact. My goodness. The fact that it's costing Albertans their lives is not acceptable.

I want to talk about the efficiencies and the effectiveness for a second. Alberta Innovates, actually right over here at the Matrix

Hotel, brings in speakers from around the world from time to time, and I've been to a few of them. A short time ago they brought in an administrator of six hospitals in California and Arizona that have wonderful electronic health records. The effectiveness is what I want to talk about a bit. The administrators, the managers in the system, would take a look at the success or the areas of help that different health care professionals needed or were working with, and they would use best practices. They would share this information in a way that electronic health records made possible by making the information more timely and, you know, more pertinent.

Madam Speaker, this is the kind of thing that can save Albertans' lives, can make Albertans' quality of life better. This is the kind of thing that can get us more value for the money, the 21 and a half billion dollars that we're putting into our system now. It's being done in many other jurisdictions. Previous administrations and this one have spent \$800 million to a billion dollars, and we didn't get best practices. We still lack a truly comprehensive patient-facing side where Albertans could easily and securely access much of their own information, and we lack the best practices in sharing this information so that all health care professionals can get better and Albertans can benefit.

Of course, I see that the government has now added a \$400 million line item to the capital plan to address some of these issues. I assume that the major capital spend in this area was accompanied by some sort of thorough internal ministry review of progress, needs, and goals. And because it's Albertans' system, because it's Albertans' health – our families, our friends, our neighbours, our community – because it's our money that goes in there, the intent behind this motion was to ensure that the government is putting in the oversight to make sure that we get the best we can for our money, especially given the enormous expense of the past and the projected future spending. I think it's only right, Madam Speaker, that we see how the dollars will be used and how they will be prioritized towards an electronic health record system, making it better.

We've also spoken extensively about performance measures and accountability metrics, and timelines for major projects are part of this. What are the timelines going to be, especially in technology, where we're behind some other jurisdictions and it changes so quickly? This House and, through us, 4.3 million Albertans deserve to see what this government hopes to accomplish and when.

Madam Speaker, I would ask the House to accept my motion for a return. Let's ensure that Albertans get the quality of health care we deserve, especially for the money we spend on it.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Associate Minister of Health.

4:40

Ms Payne: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I move that Motion for a Return 20 be amended as follows: by striking out the phrase "internal working" and by adding "excluding documents that constitute confidential advice to the minister" after "government," so that the amended motion for a return would read as follows.

Mr. Barnes moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of documents or reports prepared by or on behalf of the government, excluding documents that constitute confidential advice to the minister, from May 22, 2015, to March 7, 2016, pertaining to the review conducted by the Ministry of Health into creating an electronic record/information-sharing system, as referenced during consideration of the Ministry of Health's main estimates on November 16, 2015.

Madam Speaker, I'm proposing this amendment to reflect our responsibilities under FOIP section 22(1) regarding cabinet and Treasury Board confidences. That section states:

The head of a public body must refuse to disclose to an applicant information that would reveal the substance of deliberations of the Executive Council or any of its committees or of the Treasury Board or any of its committees, including any advice, recommendations, policy considerations or draft legislation or regulations submitted or prepared for submission to the Executive Council or any of its committees or to the Treasury Board or any of its committees.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat on the amendment.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you again, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the associate minister for rising. Each party here acknowledges the importance of our commitment to a publicly funded health care system. As such, I want to challenge all members here to really consider who owns the health system. It isn't the government. It isn't the Ministry of Health. Of course, it isn't Alberta Health Services. It's the people. It's Albertans. It is our system. It is 4.3 million Albertans' system, and this system is ultimately accountable and beholden to the people and not the other way.

I find it interesting that under the umbrella of this public system, the internal working documents will not be provided and that there is a drive to defend secrecy and a push for less transparency and not more. Madam Speaker, it's especially important when we think of the accountability and the oversight that the already \$800 million, soon to be somewhere around \$1.2 billion, that has gone into this system has not achieved what other jurisdictions have achieved with less money, has not achieved everything we need so that some Alberta families suffer grave, grave consequences. Accountability and oversight depend on transparency between the government and the public. The information must flow to the owners of the system, all of us, and that is not just those in the House.

I found the associate minister's comments on FOIP interesting. My goodness. I think of how long it takes to get a FOIP request back. I look at, you know, how much it costs. Sometimes you can prove it's in the public interest and get your money back; sometimes you can't. Either way it's a time and a money constraint. Madam Speaker, FOIP is typically a tool of last resort. It's typically a tool of last resort to access information that is not already available. Besides, it's not the FOIP rules that we're discussing here today. What we're discussing is how transparent governments should be. In theory, with more voluntary openness from government FOIP should be less necessary. FOIP exists to access the information government, obviously, doesn't want to get out in the first place. Fortunately, a lot of times it comes out, so people can have a better look at the system and what their tax dollars get them or don't get them.

This government could just step up to do the appropriate thing by offering all Albertans, through the powers vested in this House, a greater degree of transparency, control, and accountability over their systems. But the government has decided to not provide some internal working agreements that, Madam Speaker, could go a long, long way – a long, long way – to ensuring that Albertans with expertise in this area, Albertans that have families and friends that have paid a huge price because we haven't been as good as we could have been could go some distance and make that happen.

Madam Speaker, I will be against the amendment, and I would hope and encourage the government to be more open in their dealings.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other speakers to the amendment? The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to this very important question. As I alluded earlier, we are continuing to see a trend of the government answering the questions that it would like to provide the answers to and not the questions that are asked by members of this House and a real deflection of getting information out to Albertans.

As my colleague so eloquently spoke about, the importance around these electronic records and information-sharing systems and the great expense to very little results that we've seen thus far – the minister referenced the fact that there was a review under way. It's my guess and expectation of Albertans that they should be privy to the information that's included in that review. While I know that we've heard from the Minister of Health that they prefer to operate in voice mode, the very fact that – I mean, it's unlikely that any of these documents that they're claiming caucus confidentiality on actually exist because they likely operated in voice mode anyway. The real point here, Madam Speaker, is that these are very important pieces of information that ought to be produced and provided to the House.

Madam Speaker, I might just point out that while the government would like to use the FOIP legislation as cover, it in fact isn't required to apply to an Assembly's ability to require the attendance of a witness or order the production of documents. I would just, you know, like to briefly point out in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition, 2009, page 136:

The Rights to Institute Inquiries, to Require the Attendance of Witnesses and to Order the Production of Documents.

By virtue of the Preamble and section 18 of the Constitution Act, 1867, Parliament has the ability to institute its own inquiries, to require the attendance of witnesses and to order the production of documents, rights which are fundamental to its proper functioning. These rights are as old as Parliament itself . . .

The only limitations, which could . . . be self-imposed, would be that any inquiry should relate to a subject within the legislative competence of Parliament, particularly where witnesses and documents are required . . .

Then it goes on to talk about the penal jurisdiction of Parliament, of contempt.

This dovetails with the right of [the] House of Parliament to summon and compel the attendance of all persons within the limits of their jurisdictions.

It's critically important.

The fact of the matter is that the government has the ability to produce the documents that the Assembly has asked for, and all that needs to happen is that the government members need to say: "You know what? This is important to Albertans, and the Assembly is going to require the production of documents."

But my guess, Madam Speaker, is that while we are clearly on private members' business, government members on that side of the House will choose today to not respect the tradition of the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* and not require the government to produce the documents because the Assembly has summonsed them and that they will agree with the associate minister and say: "Oh, you know what? There's the FOIP Act, so we, you know, don't really want to provide the opposition members with the information that they asked for."

4:50

I think it's unfortunate. I think that Albertans expect better from this new government. I know that when this government was

elected, they were elected on a ticket of transparency, of openness, and what we're seeing is the same thing that we saw from the dying days of the previous, third-party's government. It's more than a bit disappointing. I will be pleased to support my colleague in his efforts to get information that Albertans so richly deserve.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow on the amendment.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I rise to support my colleagues on the opposition side here and speak against the amendment. The information that the hon. member is seeking is of urgent interest to the people of Alberta. The project which we are discussing here, the electronic health record project, has been going on for far too long, has cost far too much money, and Albertans are left wondering why it is that we can transact business online with our banks, our most sensitive, private financial information, with great ease from anywhere in the world, yet this government is still unable to put together an electronic health record. Now, I don't deny for one second that there are many considerations around security and privacy, that are absolutely urgent, to be dealt with, but this is not the first time something like this has been done.

While I am sure the government has an instinct to try to hide as much of that behind freedom of information or perhaps the lack of freedom of information as they possibly can, it is disappointing that when a party moves from this spot in the Legislature where I stand currently to that side of the Legislature, they seem to adopt an entirely different mindset. I can assure you, Madam Speaker, that when I move to that side of the house, I will be as open as I possibly can. I will do that following the next election, when the people of Alberta select the Alberta Party as their next government.

But in all sincerity, I think that open data and open information ought to be a hallmark of government. Far too much information is hidden behind freedom of information. Again, it seems to be the freedom to withhold information for the government for their own purposes. I would like to see a model where information in government is open by default and only closed in rare exceptions. I think Albertans would not only find that there's a lot of very interesting information hidden behind there, but I think it makes for far better government. You might be amazed by what the people of Alberta could do with that open data. They could write apps; they could come up with all kinds of ideas and ways of making government more efficient and more effective if only you would listen.

This is a situation, a scenario which is calling out for the government to be more open, and I'm profoundly disappointed that the government chooses to amend questions to suit their interests rather than the public interest of the province of Alberta. So I will vote against this amendment. I encourage all members on the government side to perhaps surprise everyone on Halloween and scare their House leaders and vote against this amendment and support the importance of open data and open information.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on the amendment carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:55 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, S.	Horne	Payne
Babcock	Kazim	Piquette
Carson	Kleinstauber	Renaud
Coolahan	Littlewood	Rosendahl
Cortes-Vargas	Loyola	Sabir
Dach	Luff	Schreiner
Dang	Malkinson	Shepherd
Drever	Mason	Sucha
Feehan	McKitrick	Sweet
Fitzpatrick	McPherson	Turner
Goehring	Miller	Westhead
Hinkley	Nielsen	Woollard

5:10

Against the motion:

Aheer	Hanson	Starke
Barnes	Loewen	Strankman
Cooper	McIver	Swann
Cyr	Orr	van Dijken
Ellis	Rodney	
Totals:	For – 36	Against – 14

[Motion on amendment carried]

Motions Other than Government Motions

The Deputy Speaker: I'll recognize the hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View, followed by Calgary-West.

Cyberbullying Awareness

507. Mr. Dang moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to take steps to increase awareness in Alberta's schools of the effects of cyberbullying.

[Debate adjourned May 30: Mr. Smith speaking]

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to speak in favour of this important motion. According to a 2016 Angus Reid poll one-third of Canadians who use social media have been harassed or bullied online. For members of the LGBTQ-plus community and for visible minorities these numbers are even higher, with 58 per cent of respondents that identify as members of the LGBTQ-plus community reporting online harassments and 38 per cent of visible minority respondents experiencing harassment. These statistics are appalling, but it's even worse for Canadian youth. According to the Ipsos-Reid survey more than 50 per cent of Canadian teenagers reported negative experiences on social networks.

Canadians are facing sweeping sociological problems, and our leaders are failing at a structural level to give our youth the tools that they need to grow into socially responsible and well-adjusted adults. Bullying during youth can have a wide range of negative effects well into adulthood. Bullying can lead to depression, aggressive behaviours, low self-esteem, social anxiety, loneliness, isolation, stress-related health problems, school absenteeism, academic problems, and, tragically, too many teens are contemplating, attempting, or committing suicide in response to the strain of intense cyberbullying.

The world that our children are growing up in is becoming increasingly complicated. Our children are increasingly connected online. The value that our youth place on online connections is also ever increasing. In cases of intense cyberbullying the comment to

“just turn it off and go outside and play” isn't a solution. Teens use their computers for homework, to interact with their friends, to play games, to stay in touch with distant relatives. It's not just a choice to go online, but to some degree it's a requirement of modern life.

As this race to embrace new, constantly evolving technologies moves forward, Canadians are becoming increasingly vulnerable. Social media is a world in itself, and that has changed so rapidly and continuously defies conventional social boundaries. As a mother of two young men I'm acutely aware of the asymmetry of information between even myself and my sons when it comes to technology, and I know that I'm not alone. There's a significant information asymmetry at times between students and their parents or their guardians or their teachers or authority figures. This divide in technical expertise can leave some adults completely in the dark when it comes to our children's online realities. We need to give our teachers, parents, and students the tools to deal with online bullying.

It's really important that young Albertans know how and when to remove themselves from online conversations that have turned unhealthy. Our youth need to learn to identify these conversations and how to communicate their issues with a trusted adult or anonymously through the Kids Help Phone. Those adults that the youth confide in need to have the technological literacy to ask the right questions and offer real solutions. Our youth need to know how to track these conversations through screenshots or just to simply write things down. Our youth need to be educated in what constitutes a criminal offence, like a threat or even sexual exploitation, and, even more importantly, to whom and how to report these offences. Many social media sites offer options to users to report bullying, as do telephone service providers, and our youth need to know what their options are for dealing with these cyberbullies.

I think probably one of the most important things that our kids need to be taught is the role of the bystander and how that can help. When they see victimization, they are able to act on that as a bystander. Cyberbullying occurs in a variety of ways, as we know. There are websites that mock individuals or the posting of embarrassing videos or photos. According to the Red Cross 85 per cent of bullying incidents happen in front of other people. According to research by the Kids Help Phone 60 per cent of the time that bullying will stop within 10 seconds when someone steps in. This is the type of information that our youth need to be empowered with.

There is a recent story about a team of Alberta high school students, and they developed an app that was designed to curb cyberbullying, called the Sentiment Keyboard. It was developed by Jacob Reckhard, Christopher West, and Ibrahim Elmallah. The app was designed to detect negative language, and it gives the sender the option to reconsider their choice of words, and the algorithm actually analyzes the sentences and formulates a total negativity score. The Sentiment Keyboard was created to add a layer of awareness, encouraging the user to think about the impact that their words might have on others. It actually places the responsibility on the person who is using those words, and it also empowers the writer to make better choices by having that added layer of conscience.

It was a very inspiring story to read, and I think it speaks, more importantly, to empowering our youth to make good decisions. The youth actually – I mean, they're the ones who are promoting this. They are very much our teachers in this. They want to do more, and we need to help them with the tools to do more. I believe that together we can make a positive impact and increase awareness in

Alberta of the effects of cyberbullying, and what can be done to help them is an important step.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-West, followed by the Minister of Human Services.

5:20

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am pleased to stand today to support Motion 507, which encourages the government to take steps to increase awareness of cyberbullying and the effects of this unsavoury practice in Alberta schools. I have watched this issue evolve from my time as an officer on Alberta streets, where at first I used to deal with basic uttering threats and bullying complaints. This behaviour then moved to the Internet, where bullying became prevalent, especially on Facebook and then Twitter. It was during this time that complaints about threats increased exponentially.

Now what I see is that bullying has gotten completely out of hand, in politics, too, as many of us know. Through fake online accounts people can abuse and manipulate others anonymously. I often wonder if cyberbullies even realize that their targets are people with feelings and families. It has become so serious that citizens, most notably young people, have committed suicide because the attacks have injured and humiliated them to their core. Something has to be done to gain control over this societal scourge. There is no one solution, but there are various avenues that we can take, and they involve – I know that I'm sounding like a broken record – three key pillars: education, prevention, and intervention.

Motion 507 suggests that we focus education and prevention programs on children, and I agree. Teaching children about cyberbullying is critical because they are at such an impressionable stage in their development. Educating them may help them deal with it if it happens to them. It may also curb their interest to engage in it. Furthermore, when we educate our children, they in turn educate their siblings and their parents. Young people who believe in a cause can become our society's most effective lobbyists, and I mean lobbyists in a good way.

Online bullying took most of us by surprise because we did not grow up with the technology and programs that have allowed it to occur and proliferate, but our children are growing up with it. Do we want bullying to become part of their expectations of life? Of course we don't. We must teach them early on that some of the behaviour evident in this world is wrong and hurtful. I would argue that we have an obligation to do this. Because young children are vulnerable and easily influenced, we have a responsibility to keep them safe. We have an obligation to teach them well.

My friend Rick Hanson, the former chief of police in Calgary, was a man ahead of his time. He, for instance, placed police constables in all levels of schools. This step was never about putting a seven-year-old in jail; he did it because when a child is facing a crisis, an officer is available to help that child. Police can tap into a whole complement of support for a child, from health care to social workers to mental health supports and much, much more.

I believe there are few larger responsibilities in our society than ensuring the welfare of a child. It hurts me to see children hurt either physically or emotionally, and because of my time on the streets as a police officer, I have seen too many young people hurt. My experience has taught me that if we can intervene and help a child at a young age, then we are helping society in the long run. When you deal with a 17-year-old who has gotten themselves into trouble with the law, it is difficult to intervene and turn them around. At this age a young person has usually been on a path towards a crisis

for many, many years. But if we reach out to them early, there's more of a likelihood that they will take a positive path, and when that occurs, all of society will benefit.

Through our Education Act we already have policies to curtail and deal with bullying in our schools, and I see Motion 507 as a natural extension of the previous work, and I fully support it. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today and speak in support of Motion 507. Cyberbullying refers to using technology or social media to engage in actions or behaviours intended to cause harm, fear, or distress. Let me begin by saying that such actions or behaviours are unacceptable.

Social media has changed how we communicate with each other, and it has changed the way bullying may occur because social media offers a false sense of anonymity. Some may be inclined to say things through social media which they may otherwise not say.

Cyberbullying can spread instantly and can remain online indefinitely, and there are studies and evidence that shows its existence and prevalence in our society. As many as 70 per cent of youth report having been cyberbullied, and 40 per cent of youth admit to being mean online according to the Canadian study *Cyberbullying: Our Kids' New Reality*. Further, the 2016 prevention of family violence and bullying survey, that was referred to by my colleague from Chestermere-Rocky View, revealed that 58 per cent of Albertans believe cyberbullying occurs in their communities. A couple of things that came out very positive from that survey were that the parents who say that they encourage their children to be respectful of people who are different from themselves have increased by 2 percentage points this year, making it 100 per cent. Also, awareness went up 6 percentage points to stand at 92 per cent.

Cyberbullying takes a toll on its victims, their families, and communities, and it comes with a high cost that we all pay in one way or another socially, emotionally, and economically. Because cyberbullying affects us all, we all have a role to play in ending it. In the same survey 81 per cent of respondents believe bullying prevention should be an urgent priority for the provincial government.

One way to prevent bullying and cyberbullying is by promoting healthy relationships. The province is continuing to develop resources that promote healthy relationships. At the same time we also provide resources for those who are being bullied or know somebody who is. There is 24-hour toll-free bullying helpline at 1.888.456.2323, and alberta.ca hosts an online chat line and numerous info sheets. There are several web-based resources that provide information to school-aged children and youth and their parents. Community-based supports are provided through six taking action on bullying sites that partner parent link centres with local schools to teach children, youth, and adults strategies to address bullying. Funding is provided to train youth to promote healthy relationships through the Shift healthy relationship plus program. Since 2012, 35,600 Alberta youth have graduated.

But we can always do more to promote inclusion and ensure welcoming, caring, respectful, and safe environments for our children. This is why my ministry supports the mental health capacity-building sites provided in partnership with Health and Education. This includes staffing and supports to implement integrated school-based community mental health promotion, prevention, and early intervention programs. More recently we also provided funds to 14 projects through the family and community

safety grant program, totalling \$1.6 million. These projects focus on promoting healthy relationships and prevent bullying.

Madam Speaker, I believe that we all have a responsibility to promote healthy relationships and prevent bullying in our schools, workplaces, homes, and in our community, and our government is committed to doing just that.

Thank you. Thank you very much.

5:30

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

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to speak in favour of Motion 507. I look forward to this whole Assembly supporting the ongoing work that is done by strong, dedicated Albertans. They're already working hard to fight cyberbullying, and we are working together to bring that awareness to that very, very serious, very real problem.

People like my new neighbours, Bailey Dunbar and her mother, Natasha Dunbar: they have taken up the fight because Bailey is a suicide survivor. One day when she came home, she knew that something was wrong with her sister. She felt something in the pit of her stomach. This is her identical twin sister. She came home, and she found that her sister had died by suicide. Morgan was bullied all through school. She was called terrible names. Her mom, Natasha, tried to get her daughter help, but unfortunately she fell through the cracks.

They could remain angry, but they don't. They work. They worked hard by starting Morgan's Mission, a nonprofit that strives to raise awareness of cyberbullying in an effort to save others. They work with the city of Fort Saskatchewan, and just this past September the mayor, Gale Katchur, signed a proclamation from the city to recognize World Suicide Prevention Day. They held a candlelight vigil that night to remember the lost, and they walked and rallied to remind us all that the battle continues.

Natasha and her daughter Bailey struggle at times, but they're often visited by Morgan when a ladybug lands on Bailey's face while waiting for the bus or when Natasha finds Morgan's favourite stone in a purse of hers, that she thought she had lost.

I rise to tell this story because we need to remember who we're fighting for and that we're all connected. Through this, we believe in the values of inclusion, and we believe in the value of having healthy workplaces, healthy schools, and healthy homes and communities. It's these stories that we need to be reminded of, that there is a real cost, a human cost, when we work to do this.

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 8(3) the mover of the motion has five minutes to close debate, so I'll recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-South West.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd like to start off by thanking all the hon. members who spoke today in the House because this is an issue that is so close to my heart. This is an issue that I care so deeply about because this is something that we are seeing every single day in our schools, in our communities, and in our families. When we talk about cyberbullying, we're really talking about promoting healthy relationships and preventing bullying all through our society. As was made clear today, every member of this House understands that probably more than anybody else as we see online harassment throughout our jobs and throughout our lives every day.

When I first came up with the idea for this motion, Madam Speaker, I said: I have to go to the people who are affected by this the most, and I need to talk to them about this. That's why I went to talk to principals. I talked to teachers, I talked to parents, and then I went and talked to students. What I learned when I talked to students was that something needs to change.

Education and awareness are essential, but beyond that, technology has absolutely changed the game of how we see bullying. I say that as somebody who was in school not too long ago, Madam Speaker, but even since then – when I was in school and in my younger years, we used MSN Messenger, and then you'd have to get off MSN Messenger when your sister wanted to make a phone call. Then when I moved into my junior high and high school years, you were on Facebook, you were on Twitter, you were texting. Whatever it was, you were using some form of communication.

When I was in school, I saw every day my friends engaging in so much of this communication, engaging in so much of this discussion, and some of that was negative. Some of that was so negative that I saw my friends struggle with mental health. I saw my friends struggle through making sure they were performing well in their classes and trying to ignore it.

The discussion that says, "Well, just turn off your phone and ignore it" or "Just turn off your laptop and walk away" is not the reality, Madam Speaker. We need to be working with our educators. We need to be working with our parents, our teachers, our friends to be able to have those conversations about: what is cyberbullying? How does cyberbullying affect our students and our peers? That reality is different today, Madam Speaker.

The days of cyberbullying are just beginning. The conversations that we need to develop and have moving forward are just in their infancy right now, Madam Speaker. Technology isn't going anywhere. This is the future, and when I go out and I see my friends still in university right now and they have these conversations – as we move forward, we know that there needs to be a lot of change. Last week there was a suicide attempt at the University of Alberta. Last year one of my friends committed suicide at the University of Alberta. What we see every single day when we go out into our classes and into our friendships and our relationships is that we need to take action.

That's why I do want to thank everybody who commented today because these are the issues that are going to be affecting our youth for years to come. These are the issues that we as government and we as educators and people that care really do need to act on. It's really my pleasure to be able to introduce this to the House today, and it's one of those issues that is, I think, going to make a difference for Albertans across this entire province and something that we need to lead on as a province.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

[Motion Other than Government Motion 507 carried]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. On that very positive and constructive unanimous note I think we may as well not tempt fate and call it 6 o'clock. So I move that we adjourn until 10 o'clock tomorrow morning.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:38 p.m.]

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For inquiries contact:

Managing Editor

Alberta Hansard

3rd Floor, 9820 – 107 St

EDMONTON, AB T5K 1E7

Telephone: 780.427.1875