



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Second Session

Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, November 7, 2016

Day 45

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta
The 29th Legislature

Second Session

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

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

Party standings:

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

Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly

Robert H. Reynolds, QC, Clerk	Philip Massolin, Manager of Research and Committee Services	Paul Link, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
Shannon Dean, Law Clerk and Director of House Services	Nancy Robert, Research Officer	Gordon Munk, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
Trafton Koenig, Parliamentary Counsel	Brian G. Hodgson, Sergeant-at-Arms	Gareth Scott, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
Stephanie LeBlanc, Parliamentary Counsel and Legal Research Officer	Chris Caughell, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms	Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>

Executive Council

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

STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

Chair: Mr. Coolahan
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Schreiner

Cyr	McKitrick
Dang	Taylor
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Chair: Mr. Sucha
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schneider

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

Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Chair: Ms Goehring
Deputy Chair: Mr. Smith

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

Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

Chair: Mr. Shepherd
Deputy Chair: Mr. Malkinson

Cooper	Littlewood
Ellis	Nixon
Horne	van Dijken
Jabbour	Woollard
Kleinsteuber	

Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Chair: Mr. Wanner
Deputy Chair: Cortes-Vargas

Cooper	McIver
Dang	Nixon
Fildebrandt	Piquette
Jabbour	Schreiner
Luff	

Standing Committee on Private Bills

Chair: Ms McPherson
Deputy Chair: Mr. Connolly

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

Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

Chair: Ms Fitzpatrick
Deputy Chair: Ms Babcock

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

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

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

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

Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Chair: Loyola
Deputy Chair: Mr. Loewen

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

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, November 7, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Let us reflect, each in our own way. As Canadians and as Albertans let us give thanks for the diverse culture, traditions, and the heritage in which we share. Allow us to be inspired by the diversity of this province, motivating us to act for the betterment of our society. Let us understand that differences more often than not bring us together.

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: Thank you.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

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

Mr. Horne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise today to introduce to you and through you 37 students from Muriel Martin school in St. Albert. Joining them today are Mr. Richard Pawsey and Michelle Kennett. If they could rise today and receive the warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Infrastructure and of Transportation.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to other members of this Assembly 17 hard-working people from Alberta Infrastructure's asset management branch. This team works with all government of Alberta departments to provide day-to-day administration and collection of rent from more than 33,000 parking stalls across the province for government employees, agencies, boards, and commissions. They also maintain the inventory and they report over 16,000 government-owned and -supported buildings, 13,600 land titles, and 6,700 other sites. We couldn't do it without them. I appreciate their work very much, and I would ask them to please stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Hon. members, are there any further school groups to be introduced today? No?

The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all Members of the Legislative Assembly visitors from my constituency of Edmonton-Strathcona. Brandi Kobes and Stephen Trott are both students in the Faculty of Agricultural, Life and Environmental

Sciences at the U of A. Brandi has come from rural Saskatchewan to work towards her degree in human ecology and is interested in a career that involves community development. Stephen Trott is from Illinois, here to study agriculture business. Stephen is interested in advancing the agricultural sector while pursuing a career in public service. I would now like my guests to stand, and I'd ask the members of the Assembly to please join me in giving them the traditional warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and to all members of this Assembly members of the Council of Alberta University Students, commonly known as CAUS. This group represents the interests of more than a hundred thousand university students from the University of Alberta, the University of Calgary, the University of Lethbridge, and MacEwan and Mount Royal universities. Their continued advocacy work ensures a quality, affordable, and accessible postsecondary education system for all Albertans, and I admire them greatly. As Minister of Advanced Education it is always a pleasure to meet with them. I want to point out to the House that the executive director of CAUS will be leaving on maternity leave because she'll be becoming a first-time mother in the next couple of months. We wish her well on her new parenting adventure. I'd ask all of the members of CAUS to stand and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Dr. Turner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to all members of the Assembly it is my pleasure to introduce Ms Jamila Moloo. I would ask her to rise. Jamila is the chair of the Nellie Carlson parent advisory council. That school council has been very effective in working with the teachers and principal, Henry Madsen, and getting the K to 9 school open by September 1 this year. I ask that all members provide Ms Moloo a warm welcome.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

Mr. Piquette: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly three guests from the town of Bon Accord in the exceptional riding of Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater: Randolph Boyd, the mayor of Bon Accord; Vicki Zinyk, the chief administrative officer for the town; and Steve Madden, assistant chief administrative officer. I'd like to welcome them and invite them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you a wonderful family from my constituency of Leduc-Beaumont: Mr. Robin Menaar, Mrs. Carol Menaar, Emma and Benjamin Menaar. The Menaars are a home-schooling family and engaged community members in Leduc-Beaumont. They have taken the opportunity today to come to the Legislature to watch the excitement of question period and to learn how respectful debate can lead to good policy-making. I hope we can set a good example for their family today, and I hope they have

a wonderful visit to the Legislature. I ask that they now stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: Welcome. I hope you don't have too many high expectations.

The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Legislature my daughter Tenea. You can stand now, Tenea. Tenea is a grade 10 student in Valleyview at Hillside high school. She decided that since it is a short week this week, she would take the week and spend it with me here at the Legislature. Her education is going to happen here this week, so we'll see what she learns today in question period.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Yet again another expectation that may not be met.

1:40 Members' Statements

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

Nellie Carlson School

Dr. Turner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Twenty-five months ago, during the by-election in Edmonton-Whitemud, our current Premier and I stood next to a bare field in Magrath. We noted a sign promising a K to 9 school for that site. That sign had been there for several years, thanks to these guys, despite Edmonton-Whitemud being represented by a long-term cabinet minister and interim Premier.

On September 1, 2016, less than 16 months after the historic election of our government and our commitment to re-funding education and infrastructure, the Nellie Carlson K to 9 school opened to several hundred bright children from my constituency. NCS is home to the Cub athletic teams and a burgeoning arts program. The building will be used as a model for other schools being opened in all parts of Alberta.

A special thanks goes to Clark Builders, who delivered the building on time and under budget. Thanks also to the Edmonton public school board, the teachers and staff at Nellie Carlson school, including Principal Henry Madsen, and the dedicated parent advisory council, who worked so diligently to get the school open.

Most of all, my thanks to Nellie Carlson, after whom the school is named. The students and staff are so proud to have the school named after her and were honoured with her attendance at the opening along with her husband of 70 years, Elmer Carlson, and five generations of family. I have met with and listened to the wisdom of Nellie Carlson on three occasions. She is a saint, in my opinion. Well over 90 years old, she has made several important contributions to First Nations, Alberta, and Canada. Thanks to her perseverance, the Supreme Court of Canada righted a wrong whereby First Nations women lost their treaty rights by marrying a nonstatus man.

She is also a proud Cree woman who has championed the teaching of First Nation languages and culture. Nellie Carlson is a role model for us all. In particular, she is a brilliant example for the hundreds of new students at Nellie Carlson school in the beautiful riding of Edmonton-Whitemud.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Home-schooling

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Friday parents and children of Trinity Christian School Association and the Wisdom Home Schooling Society let go a collective sigh of relief as the

Court of Queen's Bench granted a temporary injunction to halt the NDP government's decision to cancel their accreditation.

As Wildrose said last week, the NDP government did not consider other options for tackling financial concerns and left the families of 3,500 students to deal with the effects of its sudden actions just two months into the school year. Town hall meetings on home-schooling are taking place across our province, and we are hearing the human side of this story, the story of moms, dads, and children who have had nothing to do with the alleged financial improprieties.

In Airdrie I have heard from parents who have children with autism, and the traditional bricks-and-mortar school system just does not serve their kids' needs. I have heard from parents with kids who are in and out of the hospital with chronic illnesses, who have relied on this program and who otherwise wouldn't have an education. And I have heard of students being affected who had chosen Wisdom to suit their high-level sports programming needs.

The minister and this NDP government need to start thinking more about the human impact that their heavy-handed governance has on everyday Albertans, especially when it comes to the deaccreditation of an education program which serves so many Albertan students. Parents need to be assured that their government will act in a fair manner and that their education choices will not be undermined.

With this ruling to grant a temporary injunction Albertans and I expect this government to put kids and families first and to come up with a reasoned solution now.

Government Policies

Dr. Starke: Well, Mr. Speaker, recently this NDP government shelled out 5 million taxpayer dollars for ads to promote their climate leadership plan, and they were everywhere: on YouTube, in theatres, even on TV during the Rio Olympics. I'll bet those slots didn't come cheap. At one point in the ad a sincere-looking fellow on an equally sincere-looking horse leans over his saddle horn and earnestly intones: I never thought I'd see the day. And I have to agree with him, but I suspect we aren't talking about the same things.

I never thought I'd see the day that NDP government policies caused businesses to move operations from the Alberta to the Saskatchewan side of Lloydminster because it was now the better place to do business. I never thought I'd see the day that the NDP government would shut trillions of dollars of clean-burning coal in the ground and destroy towns across our province instead of relying on the ingenuity of Albertans to develop even better clean coal technology. And I never thought I'd see the day that our Energy minister would tell energy workers to go look for work in B.C. if they couldn't find any in Alberta.

While we're talking about B.C., I never thought I'd see the day that this government would go there and spend a cool half million bucks to hire a lawyer to sue Albertans because apparently Alberta has none who are qualified.

I never thought I'd see the day when our farmers would get demeaned by their government, claiming it had to create a culture of safety.

I never thought I'd see the day when business was vilified and profit was a four-letter word.

I never thought I'd see the day when NDP government logic says that if you make carbon more expensive, we'll use less, but if we make labour more expensive, we'll use more. Must have something to do with that whole NDP world view thing.

Now, the sincere man on the sincere horse was no doubt talking about something else, but the Albertans I talked to are fed up. I

never thought I'd see the day when people are counting the days until the next provincial election so they can vote this NDP government out.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I remind both sides of the House that the past practice and tradition in this House is that you don't make comments or interruptions, either pro or con, while members are speaking.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-South West.

New School Construction in Southwest Edmonton

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since September I've had the fortune of opening three new schools in my constituency of Edmonton-South West. I've joined my colleague, the Minister of Education, in opening Dr. Margaret-Ann Armour school, Roberta MacAdams school, and St. John XXIII school in just a few short weeks. Next year we're going to be opening five more of these schools. I'm proud to be able to support a government which doesn't just make announcements on schools but actually gets behind and funds those schools so that parents and students can have a place to learn.

Mr. Speaker, these schools would not be possible without the amazing work of our school boards, our development partners, and amazing staff at these facilities. These new schools are full of worlds of opportunity for these new students. But behind those students we have an amazing team of parents, and those parents are volunteers who go out every day and do their best to make sure their students have the best possible learning environments. They work on groups like parent associations, they work on groups like playground groups, and they develop their communities into something that students can excel in. Much to the surprise of many parents, schools don't actually come with playgrounds, and with the support of our amazing parents and communities we're able to build amazing recreation spaces for all of our students.

Mr. Speaker, these schools are not just a place of learning; they are cornerstones of our neighbourhoods and our communities. Well-funded education means a well-educated populace that can go out and live and work and succeed in Alberta. A well-funded student means a well-rounded learner. A good education leads to good jobs and lays the foundation for a healthy economy. With these new schools we are preparing Albertans for success. Our children can't wait. That's why this government is so founded in supporting and funding education.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to support a government that absolutely understands how important education is and funding education is.

Thank you.

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

Equinox Festival in Bon Accord

Mr. Piquette: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my great pleasure to rise today to recognize the great work done by the town of Bon Accord in holding their fifth equinox and dark-skies festival earlier this year. I had the honour of attending this free event personally, and I wanted to share the great impressions I have of it.

The people of Bon Accord have put a great deal of effort into reducing light pollution in their community. In doing so, they have become Canada's first dark-sky community and only the 11th town in the world to earn this certification from the International Dark-Sky Association.

The guest of honour at their festival this year was the famed Canadian astronaut Colonel Chris Hadfield. It speaks volumes to the capabilities of the town and their dedicated volunteers that they

were able to secure such an esteemed guest and host such a large and complex event so successfully. On a quick personal note, I'll say that this is one of the few things I've done as a member so far that my teenage son thinks is really cool. I had a chance to meet with Colonel Hadfield. It is dedicated people like these, found throughout Alberta, that Hadfield said that he was inspired by while living in Alberta, and in participating in this event, he had a chance to pay back a bit of that inspiration.

This festival has many benefits. It brings tourism and economic opportunities to the region. This year it attracted approximately 3,500 people. To put that into perspective, the community of Bon Accord has about a 1,400 population. It also brings the community together and fosters a love of science and astronomy. Culture, environment, and education are the three pillars of the community of Bon Accord, and it's events like these that bring these elements together in a very powerful way. I'd like to extend my sincere thanks to the town and their dedicated volunteers for hosting this event. It speaks to the community-mindedness and their commitment to preserving our night sky for all of us to enjoy.

Thank you.

1:50

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

Job Creation and Retention

Mr. Jean: More bad news came out for Alberta this past week. Calgary's unemployment rate is the highest it's been in over two decades, at over 10 per cent, a 120 per cent increase since 2015. Jobs are being shed all across all sectors, but the NDP is more interested in raising everyone's taxes and suing Alberta-owned companies than getting people back to work. What does the Premier have to say to the Albertans who have seen their companies and jobs be taxed and regulated out of existence because of this NDP government's policies?

Ms Notley: Well, first of all, Mr. Speaker, I would say to many Albertans that which most of them already know, which is that the slowdown in our economy is due to the international drop in the price of oil. Now, that being said, however, it is certainly incumbent upon government to do whatever it can to have Albertans' backs as they struggle through these economic times. That's why we have the Alberta jobs plan, and that is why we have a plan that just today we announced would create tens of thousands of jobs over the next three years, and we'll continue to do that work because we care about Alberta families.

Mr. Jean: This government has been in power more than 18 months and has overseen one of the most devastating periods of job losses in our province's history and is totally unapologetic. Compared to October last year, Alberta has lost 47,000 full-time jobs. That's 47,000 families whose lives have been thrown into chaos, whose EI is running dry, and all the government can promise them is new carbon taxes and more risky NDP economic policies. Jobs are being lost in construction, in manufacturing, and in professional services right across Alberta. Will the Premier please tell Albertans how many net jobs have been lost since the NDP came into power?

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, as I said, responding to the fact that our economy was not well positioned to

immediately adjust to the dramatic drop in the international price of oil, we've been working very hard to support jobs. For instance, our Alberta jobs plan will create an average of 10,000 jobs annually over the next three years. More than 129 wells have been approved under our modernized royalty framework. Each well sustains about 135 jobs for a total of 17,000. Our investor tax credit will support up to 4,400 jobs over the next three years. We'll continue to . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Jean: Over 100,000 jobs have been lost since this party has been in power, and I would challenge the NDP to travel to the communities that their policies are hurting the most. Go to Grande Cache, where you can see the desperation in people's eyes. Talk to people in Hanna, whose community is hanging on the edge of a cliff because of this government's coal shutdown, or talk to the tens of thousands of workers and professionals in Calgary who are stuck at home, desperate for a job but simply can't find one because there are none available. How can the Premier and her government be so indifferent to the harm these policies are having on working people, working Albertans, families, right across this province?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In fact, I reject very much the premise of that case. We have been working very hard with coal companies to negotiate coal compensation because we made it very clear when we brought in our climate leadership plan that we would work with them to make sure that there was no capital stranded. Our minister of economic development is also in the process of going around and meeting with coal communities to talk about a just transition from coal because we believe that it's important to work with not only the companies but the workers and the communities who are impacted. Quite in opposition to what the member opposite has said, we are going to work to make sure that we make this adjustment together.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Oil and Gas Transportation to the West Coast

Mr. Jean: Last spring all parties in this Legislature followed the Wildrose lead and voted for our motion to fight any crude oil tanker ban by the federal government to British Columbia's north coast. This move would be aggressive and ideological, to intentionally block any current or future pipeline proposals heading in that direction, and now the Liberals are promising a moratorium later this fall. Can the Premier please explain if she has done anything at all to advocate against banning tanker traffic on B.C.'s north coast?

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, what we have done is that we have met with the government of B.C. and representatives there. We understand, quite rightly, that they are concerned about marine safety and that that's one of the things that needs to be appropriately addressed in order to secure social licence for approval of a pipeline going to the coast. So we were very pleased to see that today the federal government, having listened to us, having listened to the government of B.C., is moving forward very aggressively on significantly enhancing marine safety in B.C. as of today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Jean: The Wildrose motion passed by all MLAs in this House asked the government to do all it could to stop this move by the federal government designed to block new pipeline projects built from Alberta. It clearly stated that the government would support

the Northern Gateway pipeline project, but Albertans haven't heard a single peep from the Premier or the NDP government giving support to this project and the damaging move to block crude oil tankers on B.C.'s coast. When, if ever, can Albertans, Alberta families expect the Premier to denounce this heavy-handed move from Ottawa against Alberta's interests?

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, our government and myself as Premier – I have made one of my primary goals the issue of getting our product to tidewater. As a result, I meet regularly with federal officials. I speak with the Prime Minister about this issue regularly. I have met with provincial officials across the country to talk about this issue. We are doing everything we can to move this matter forward. You know what? The report that came out last week about the Kinder Morgan pipeline from the Kinder Morgan panel said that the first priority that needed to be considered was whether a new pipeline would work in alignment with the national climate change plan, and – you know what? – it will thanks to this government.

Mr. Jean: The first priority of this government should be Alberta's families.

The Premier's NDP allies in British Columbia have done all they can to smear Alberta's oil and gas industry. They've inflamed protesters, and they continue to attack the integrity of Canada's pipeline review process. But not once have we seen any of Alberta's NDP demanding better from their provincial colleagues. Not once have they ever travelled to British Columbia to drum up support for our pipeline projects. Why hasn't the Premier travelled to B.C. to convince her NDP friends and the B.C. government to stop blocking Alberta's pipelines and start supporting them and Alberta's families?

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, what our government has done, as I've just outlined, is that we have met frequently and at great length with officials across the country, including representatives from B.C. Just a couple of weeks ago I met with a whole bunch of environmental NGO leaders to talk about why it was that we needed to get our pipelines to tidewater, in particular the one going west through B.C. So, in fact, we have done that work. But – you know what? – it's about getting the work done in a respectful way, not about political grandstanding. The latter will only create more division; the former will get results.

The Speaker: Third main question.

Student Assessment

Mr. Jean: Experiments and new educational fads from NDP government bureaucrats continue to hurt test scores for students all across Alberta. One-quarter of grade 6 students and one-third of grade 9 students are failing their PATs. Grade 12 math scores are also on the decline. It certainly shows a broken system that is no longer supporting teachers or students in Alberta's classrooms. When will the Premier realize that we need to stop treating our children like guinea pigs in the classroom and start giving them the tools they need to succeed?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me begin by thanking the member very much for that question because, of course, it lines up very much with the fact that our Minister of Education recently announced a curriculum review process into which parents, students, and members opposite can all contribute to ensure that we do better on the matters of the education that we're

providing, to ensure that our kids are ready for the new economy. So I'm very pleased to hear that we're on the same page on this.

2:00

Mr. Jean: This NDP government seems more interested in taking instructions from the Alberta Teachers' Association boss than sticking up for parents and our students. Last month the ATA president argued that PATs are not a valuable assessment tool because they don't test important skills like creativity, collaboration, and citizenship. There's no question that they are campaigning to eliminate them. The Education minister is keeping the door wide open. [interjections] He hasn't yet made a decision on continuing with PATs, and this is not a laughing matter. Does the Premier plan to scrap standardized testing? Yes or no?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. One of the things that we're not going to scrap is thousands of teachers. To be clear, if the member opposite takes \$2 billion out of operational revenue, which they plan to do, that's exactly what will happen. We are ensuring stability in our education system. We are working with teachers, we are working with parents, and thanks to the Minister of Education we are inviting all Albertans to be part of the conversation on how to make our education the best in the country.

Mr. Jean: Fearmongering and passing the buck on Alberta students' failing math grades by this Premier just isn't acceptable. We need to have a plan to get us back to a place where our province once again prepares our youth for a successful life, with a strong foundation in literacy and numeracy. I know that many parents share my concerns that an NDP world view will be the main focus of their current curriculum review. If the NDP do away with PATs, we will have one less mechanism to track these slipping scores. Why, then, does the Premier refuse to commit to PATs and standardized testing?

Ms Notley: Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, math skills are critical to student success. We believe that very strongly, and we know that we can do better. I think that the member opposite would actually be surprised to discover the amount of common cause we have on the matter of improving our math scores. We are working on that. The minister is working on that. We are reviewing math, we are reviewing the curriculum, and we will move forward to ensure that the way we measure that is also done in a way that best ensures the greatest and most successful outcomes for our children.

The Speaker: The leader of the third party.

Coal-fired Electric Power Plant Retirement

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This NDP government has developed a solid track record of failing to consult with and listen to Albertans. We saw it with Bill 6, and we're seeing it now with the job-killing carbon tax. This government is continuing to attack hard-working Albertans and their families with the coal phase-out. To the Premier. Thousands of Albertans will be out of work and their families' economic viability put at risk because of the coal phase-out. Have you been in contact with the hardest hit communities like Hanna, and what will you actually do to replace the good, mortgage-paying jobs they have today once your government rips them out of their hands?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think the first thing to understand is that the coal phase-outs that will occur between now and 2030 were already going to happen because of the federal government regulations put in by the former Conservative government. That's the first thing to keep in mind.

That being said, our minister will be reaching out and consulting with workers and also with communities about how to do this with a just transition, to help retrain into renewable energy in some cases, to look at pension things, those kinds of things. We're taking a very open mind to this because we're very committed to ensuring that we support a just transition away from coal to clean, renewable energy for everybody's benefit.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker, I'm glad that the Premier didn't say that the minister has talked to them because that's not the case. Hanna has been trying to work with the government on an economic impact study because the expedited coal phase-out, the provincial part, will decimate the jobs of over 10 per cent of their population. One out of 10 people in the community will be out of work because of your policies. They've been waiting for an answer since June, yet who's on the job? To the Premier: since your minister is not doing the job, will you pick up the phone, call the good people of Hanna, and give them an answer? They need to know whether they're going to have jobs and what's going to happen to their community. Call the mayor.

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As the member may or may not know, the government has actually engaged in a great deal of work to talk about the way in which we would go through a payout and also how we would negotiate the payout with the companies and the degree to which the companies would also work with the communities and the workers to make sure that they are justly transitioned. So that work is ongoing. There will be more to say about it in the very near future. As well, the minister will be out working with the communities in the very near future, once the coal transition part has been negotiated.

Mr. McIver: Well, now, thank you, Premier, for admitting that your government has been gazing at your navels instead of talking to municipalities.

We know that government got a report about a month ago where they paid over half a million dollars to get recommendations on the coal phase-out, but you haven't told the municipalities. To the Premier. You're sitting on Terry Boston's coal phase-out report. Albertans are in the dark. They don't know whether they're going to lose their homes. They don't know whether they're going to lose their jobs. They don't know whether they're going to have a community. When are you going to actually get on the phone, talk to Albertans? They're the ones that matter, not your NDP inner circle.

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, the report that the member opposite references is a report that is the foundation of the negotiations that are under way with the coal companies, you know, the kinds of negotiations that the members opposite suggest that we should do to ensure investor stability and competence. Once those negotiations are completed in good faith, we will then move on to make sure that the outcome of those negotiations is supported and also that the impact on communities and workers, if they are not addressed through those negotiations, will be additionally supported.

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Adult Learning System Review

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the first things this government did back in June 2015 was announce a wide-ranging adult learning review, but very little has been accomplished in 18 months, and now they've scaled it back to focus only on tuition. When I talked with student leaders and administrators, I've learned that neither has asked for a tuition freeze. It seems they get it. I wish the government did. To the Minister of Advanced Education: will you commit to completing a comprehensive review to look at the needs of the system as a whole, including financial aid, noninstructional fees, mental health, board governance, and amend the PSLA?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. He is indeed correct that our government did implement a tuition freeze extension, and we're quite proud to be working to make sure that education remains affordable for all of Alberta's students. In addition to the other requests that he's stated with respect to board governance, a PSLA review, a funding review: all of those things we'll be rolling out in the near future.

Mr. Clark: We'd like to know when, Mr. Speaker.

Now, every PSE stakeholder I talk with is asking for quality and predictability, and it's frustrating to hear the minister continue to promise certainty but continually fail to deliver. On April 7, 2016, the minister said in this House:

We are going to be conducting the consultations around the adult learning review so that postsecondary institutions will have certainty about what will happen to their funding.

The student groups and administrators are asking for a legislated tuition cap to grow at a rate of no greater than CPI. Again to the minister: will you listen to students and amend the legislation to bring . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.
The Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the issue of certainty that the Member for Calgary-Elbow raised, our government has provided certainty in funding. We've provided 2 per cent increases in the operating grants to every university and college, and we've committed publicly that there will be no surprises in the budget that we provide to universities and colleges next year. In fact, it was just last week that the president of Mount Royal University was on television telling the citizens of Alberta that he's very pleased that our government has provided certainty and predictability to the system. I'm very proud of the work that our government is doing in that regard.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Clark: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, another big challenge for Alberta's postsecondaries is board governance. This government keeps moving the goalposts when it comes to board appointments. First, reappointments were rejected, then long-serving board members were asked to reapply, and now the minister has put a totally different process in place. As a result, several PSE boards have lost members and are having a difficult time making quorum. To the minister. I wonder: is this delay caused by your inability to find capable people who share the NDP world view, and

how long are you willing to let postsecondary institutions and their students suffer?

The Speaker: The Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. With respect to making students suffer, nothing would make students suffer more than implementing the policies of the conservatives that are sitting across the way from me today. Making billions of dollars' worth of reckless cuts would hurt students more than anything else that's on offer from that side of the House.

2:10

With respect to board appointments, Mr. Speaker, we have changed the process of appointing party insiders and party donors to boards. We have opened the process. It is a transparent process, and once we find the right people to appoint to those boards, they will be appointed.

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

Agribusiness Industry Development

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Leduc-Beaumont is home to Alberta's agrivalue food processing centre and business incubator. This facility has supported the establishment of companies that have resulted in 500 indirect and direct jobs despite these tough times. To the minister responsible: given that our agricultural industries are the backbone of communities like the one I call home, what is the government doing to ensure that these industries have every opportunity to grow?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, hon. member, for the question. He's absolutely right. Value-added agriculture industries are critical to supporting jobs and diversifying our economy. Since 2011 Alberta's agrivalue food processing centre and business incubator has supported 10 new companies that have generated \$60 million in investment in Alberta and created hundreds of new jobs.

Mr. Speaker, the Alberta jobs plan is working. I can inform this House that our plan will ensure the expansion of this facility by 2,350 square metres, making it the largest of its kind not only in Canada but in the world.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the minister for taking a clear stance that Leduc-Beaumont's agricultural industries are, simply put, the greatest in the world, and she'll get no argument from me.

What else can Alberta producers and people working in agricultural industries across rural Alberta expect from the jobs plan?

Ms Larivee: I thank the member again for the question. Our minister of agriculture is currently on a trade mission to Asia, building investment relationships that are essential to creating jobs and diversifying the Alberta economy. Our Alberta export expansion package will provide additional support for small businesses in Alberta looking to enter international markets with \$9 million of funding over the next three years.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans deserve a better plan than no plan, and returning to the days of boom and bust will hurt, not help our

economy. On this side of the House we're not living in the past; we are building an economy for the future.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: how would small businesses in Leduc-Beaumont get access to those supports?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through three programs: the export support fund for eligible companies to export to new markets, the global buyers and investors program for export-ready companies to connect with international buyers, and the export readiness program, which helps increase access to Alberta's 12 international trade offices.

Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition has said that investing in our trade relationships is not a real plan of any substance, and the Member for Drumheller-Stettler disagrees with our government promoting trade at all, but on this side of the House we are proud of our businesses, big and small, and will continue to promote Alberta well beyond our borders and work to create jobs to diversify our . . .

The Speaker: The Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Bovine Tuberculosis

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, as we speak, there are over 30 ranches in southeastern Alberta under quarantine due to bovine tuberculosis. While these ranchers wait weeks for the Canadian Food Inspection Agency to conduct testing, they are forced to incur tens of thousands of dollars in costs to feed, water, and corral their cattle over winter. What's worse, this is the one time of year that producers go to market to pay their expenses. Can the minister of agriculture tell us what the government is doing to help cut through the bureaucratic delays and expedite this process?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again, I have to emphasize that our government knows that the beef industry in Alberta is strong and resilient, and we're incredibly proud of the industry in this province and the iconic product we export to the world. We continue to be in close contact with beef producers about the issue. A team of AF staff members has been set up, using an incident-command system to co-ordinate activities to assess potential avenues for financial assistance, and we continue to work with the CFIA and beef producers to share information on financial options.

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, seeing as the process continues at great expense to ranchers and their families, who are unable to access compensation for destroyed herds until the testing is complete, and since these producers face mounting stress and uncertainty from the prospect of having their life's work set back, even losing family pets and other important animals, what is this government doing to communicate with affected ranchers on how they will support them and communicate directly as they rebuild their lives?

The Speaker: Hon. member, I hope that with the next supplemental you'll avoid the preamble. Thank you.

Hon. minister.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The CFIA is leading this investigation, and we have offered our support in this matter. The

situation is an important priority, and the government of Alberta will continue to do whatever we can to help the CFIA to expedite the investigation or reduce quarantine times. You know, certainly, we've posted a list of programs available to affected cattle producers, from advance programs to flexibility on AFSC loans. We've begun the longer term analysis of whether future AgriRecovery assistance may be available to producers affected by bovine TB. We will continue to listen to beef producers.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, given that the cause of this TB case is still unclear, that the animal in question was near CFB Suffield and given that CFB Suffield had 200 head of elk introduced that now total over 10,000 and given that these elk have already impacted the agriculture sector by destroying crops and breaking fences, can the government listen to the solution offered by local officials and aggressively manage this elk for the sake of controlling and preventing further disease and damage?

The Speaker: The Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, the fact of the matter is that Environment and Parks is working quite aggressively to reduce those elk numbers. We certainly share that view, and we are working with the Department of National Defence so that we can manage our elk populations properly. We're working with CFB Suffield to develop a long-term management strategy. In response to concerns from hunters last season we created more breaks between hunts so that elk can return to the base rather than moving toward adjacent private land. That should improve hunters' experience on the base. We will continue to evaluate that hunt so we can better manage the elk population and ensure that hunters have a worthwhile experience.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

Postsecondary Education Funding

Mr. Rodney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The NDP government claims to be trying to make postsecondary education more affordable, but affordability should not come at the expense of the quality of the education received at any of our fine postsecondary institutions here in Alberta. Paying less for an inferior product is not affordability. To the Minister of Advanced Education: will your ministry be providing additional funding to postsecondary institutions to offset the cost of the tuition freeze, and if so, when will this funding be announced, sir?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, our government values providing high-quality education at a low cost, unlike what the PC government did when they were in power: offering a 2 per cent increase in 2013 and providing them with a 7 per cent cut. That's not the way this government operates. We will be providing predictable funding to the institutions going forward. There will be no surprises in the budget, and institutions can count on what we're telling them as far as their operating grants go.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Rodney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very happy to table page 17 of our last budget, which indicated that starting in 2015 and

every year forward we actually had increases every single year and no mention of a carbon tax.

On to the question. Given that the president of the U of A recently described the tuition freeze without offsetting . . . [interjections] Shall I continue, sir? Thank you.

. . . as a cut, a simple and pure cut to programs, and given that this seems to indicate that temporarily decreasing the cost of one academic year is more important to the NDP than the quality of instruction, to the minister: how do you intend to address these concerns that a continued freeze . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member. Hon. member, please sit when I stand.

Mr. Rodney: Happy to.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The Minister of Advanced Education.

2:20

Mr. Schmidt: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure which budget the hon. member is referring to because the budget that the Prentice government brought down was scheduled to make a 4 per cent cut to postsecondary education this year and continued cuts last year. In fact, that's a time-honoured tradition of the PC government. I spoke to Jim Dinning not two months ago, and he said that when he was Finance minister, they cut postsecondary education funding. If this government wants to support postsecondary education in the future, they should vote for our budget in the spring.

Mr. Rodney: As mentioned, Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to table that document that proves him wrong.

Given that there are concerns that Alberta's postsecondary institutions may increase tuition in one big jump as opposed to the gradual increase we would likely have seen if there had been no tuition freeze and that the president of Grant MacEwan likened the freeze to being stoned to death with popcorn and given that postsecondary students are concerned that a temporary three-year reprieve from tuition increases may be nullified by large increases when the freeze ends, again to the minister: how do you intend to provide quality education at an affordable price when your tuition freeze inevitably ends?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, the Member for Calgary-Lougheed is quite right to highlight the fact that our tuition freeze will end in the 2018-2019 academic year, and that's why we've launched our tuition review consultation. I encourage all members of the House to go back to their constituencies, encourage citizens to go to tuitionreview.alberta.ca to share their views on what tuition for postsecondary education should look like in the future because this government is committed to providing high-quality education at an affordable price for all the people of Alberta.

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

Seniors' Housing for Couples

Mr. Yao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The divorce-by-nursing-home policy that was imposed by the previous government was crass, inhumane, and un-Albertan. This policy was allegedly scrapped in 2013, but we keep hearing stories about couples in care being torn apart after 40, 50, 60 years of marriage. In September we saw

reports of a Camrose couple being separated in care after 66 years together. Now our office has learned about a Ponoka couple going through the very same thing because of their varying service needs. To the minister: is this the quality of care that you would want for your loved ones?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Certainly, when there are those experiences where family members are separated, particularly when they've been with each other for so long, it definitely pulls at the heartstrings. Staff do everything they can to make sure that families can be reunited but that they're also in a level of care that's appropriate to make sure that they're safe. I have heard of a number of facilities. If you want to reach out specifically with the example, we'll do our best to try to help triage that, but our number one priority needs to be safety. That's why when we're building new facilities, we're finding ways to make sure that they can be safe and provide a variety of care in congregated settings.

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, the couple from Ponoka has been contributing to this province for half a century. They deserve to spend their final years together. Given that this government currently has no plan to address the issue of couples who have varying needs of care who live in rural Alberta and given that Albertans expect our senior couples in care to be taken care of in their golden years, again to the minister: why does this government consistently fail to keep Alberta's seniors together?

Ms Hoffman: The member opposite maybe didn't hear it, but absolutely we are working to make sure that we can keep couples together and provide them a safe level of care as close to home as possible, Mr. Speaker. That's why we've made a commitment to build 2,000 new long-term care and dementia care spaces to support Albertans. The members opposite have proposed cutting \$9 billion from infrastructure spending; that certainly wouldn't help address the situations that the member is speaking to.

The Speaker: Hon. member, I think I might have picked up a preamble in your last supplemental. Try and avoid that this time.

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, talk is cheap. We need action here.

The Speaker: That is what I would call a preamble, a classic example.

Mr. Yao: We know that there are serious issues with capacity in long-term care, and given that a lack of space is contributing to the issues around keeping couples in care together, Albertans want to know why this government is content sitting on its laurels, referencing a couple of long-term care bed announcements. Again to the minister: how many new long-term care beds have been built under your leadership, and when are you going to fully deliver on the 2,000 beds that you have promised?

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much for the question. Mr. Speaker, we are absolutely committed to building 2,000 new long-term care and dementia care spaces, and we will meet that commitment. We are on track to do that by the end of the term. We are absolutely moving forward in the right direction. I think you can look throughout Alberta to see the great progress we've made. There are many announcements being made already today, and construction is taking place as we speak, and that's important. Of course, in existing facilities it's difficult to make sure that the accommodations have been made to make sure that they're safe for

everyone, but moving forward we are absolutely making sure that we have the ability to keep couples together and provide a variety of care within one facility. I'm very proud of that, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

Carbon Policies

Mr. MacIntyre: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Wildrose has repeatedly warned the NDP about the risk of Alberta's climate policies falling out of lockstep with other jurisdictions. The chair of the NDP climate panel knows that carbon leakage is a big deal. He said that until the rest of the world has policies that impose similar costs, you're not actually reducing emissions; you're just displacing emissions and the economic activity to other jurisdictions. The facts are clear. Alberta should be producing more goods, not less. To the minister of environment: how exactly does a punitive carbon tax prevent carbon leakage?

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

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, the hon. member is cherry-picking from the Leach report, which made a very clear commitment to a set of performance standards. That was the recommendation, which we accepted, which would allow for an output-based allocation for our large final emitters. I know those are big words and it's really hard, but the point here is that we are allowing for those competitive effects, and we are doing so in a made-in-Alberta way because the opposition's idea of a carbon plan is to have one imposed by Ottawa.

Mr. MacIntyre: Just last Thursday the Minister of Advanced Education stood in this Assembly to accuse the opposition of being exactly wrong in our steadfast support for made-in-Alberta products as a solution to global pollution. Given that when Albertans produce, we do so under world-class environmental standards and given that the per capita metric that the minister cited is a false metric for evaluating emissions intensity – they should use emissions by GDP – does this government understand the devastation that policies leading to carbon leakage have on Alberta's economy?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we are engaged in these conversations right now with the oil and gas industry, with the cement manufacturers, with the fertilizer industry, and with all other large final emitters to make sure that our performance standards system fits with the overall structure of our economy. You know, where we won't take advice is from a bunch of folks who don't accept the science of climate change.

Mr. MacIntyre: Inexpensive and reliable power is a cornerstone of economic growth. Given that in 2015 78 per cent of Alberta's grid was used for either industrial or commercial purposes, demonstrating our job creators' heavy reliance on cheap power relative to our competitors, and given that neither U.S. presidential candidate supports a carbon tax and that Australia and this government's socialist comrades in France have both abandoned their carbon taxes, will the NDP admit that its carbon policies are harming Alberta job creators, just like France has discovered?

Ms Phillips: Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, I am not surprised at all that a party full of folks who deny the science of climate change are also denying the health effects of burning coal. The fact of the matter is that we are moving ahead because those health effects are

real and they are demonstrable, and we are doing the right thing for our children and our elderly. [interjections]

The Speaker: If all sides of the house don't want to be quiet for my sake, I hope we don't want to wake any children with our loud noises.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway.

2:30

Capital Infrastructure Funding

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The 2015-2020 capital plan introduced under the previous government contained \$29.5 billion in projects, including the southwest Calgary ring road and the University of Lethbridge destination project, both mentioned by the minister in a recent news release. To the minister. You seem to be very excellent at taking credit for PC initiatives. You even just held a press conference, when you knew the opposition would be sitting right there, saying that you created jobs, and those jobs came from PC projects. Can you please outline to the House the number of jobs created by NDP projects, not the projects already announced under the previous government?

The Speaker: Hon. member, thank you.

Mr. Mason: Well, thank you very much for the question.

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: Don't stand when he's standing.

The Speaker: That's right. You don't stand till I . . .

Mr. Mason: Sorry.

The Speaker: Please proceed.

Mr. Mason: Can I go now?

The Speaker: Now you can.

An Hon. Member: It's his first day, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yeah. I know.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for that reminder, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. I just want to indicate that many of the projects that the previous government was working on were stalled and were not going ahead. Their budget, that they ran on and lost the election on, quite frankly, was also something that's not designed to make good progress.

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

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this government announced the completion of the northeast Anthony Henday Drive to much fanfare and given the government's own numbers that this project supported 2,000 jobs over five years and given that this project was built as a P3, to the same minister again: will your government be continuing the use of a P3 model for creating capital assets given the success of this project?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, we're very pleased that the Henday is now open right around the city, and I

think that people in the entire Edmonton region appreciate that. Clearly, that was a project that was initiated by the previous government.

With respect to P3s the jury is out as far as I'm concerned, Mr. Speaker, and he's hailing it a success. I want to see what all the numbers look like when it's all in. We'll make an evaluation, and I'll let all members and the public know where we're going.*

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

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the government has taken a special interest in the PC leadership race, I thought we could revisit the Premier's leadership promises. Given that she stated – and I quote – that we need to replace aging hospitals like Edmonton's Misericordia, unquote, and given that AHS is calling for a new Edmonton hospital, which would create a number of jobs as well as support front-line health care, can we expect a groundbreaking ceremony for Edmonton's new hospital soon, or is this no longer a priority?

Ms Hoffman: It's not a surprise to me that the member from the third party cares mostly about groundbreaking ceremonies. It was clear, from the progress that the last government made, that all they cared about was getting signs up saying that they were going to build something and not actually bringing about action, Mr. Speaker. That's why, when we came in and we looked at what had actually been done – they announced that they were going to do all this work at the Alex. They hadn't even done any beginning plans. So we've actually moved forward by investing in planning processes. We're bringing about real change. We're actually getting things built, and we're paying for it.

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

Affordable Housing

Ms Luff: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When I speak with affordable housing stakeholders in Calgary, they're excited that for the first time in decades the federal, provincial, and municipal governments are all on the same page with regard to investing in affordable housing. To the Minister of Seniors and Housing: how will investments made through the affordable housing agreement and the social housing agreement impact the affordable housing market in Alberta?

The Speaker: The Minister of Seniors and Housing.

Ms Sigurdson: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. I'm very proud that we've signed two agreements with the federal government. The social housing agreement transfers properties to full provincial ownership and provides \$892 million in funding to 2033. The investment in affordable housing agreement provides an additional \$94.5 million of federal funding over the next two years, funding that not only helps build homes but will diversify our economy and create jobs here in Alberta and will increase affordable housing here in this province.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms Luff: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that in my riding of Calgary-East the Calgary Housing Company plays an important role in providing affordable housing and given that the company runs approximately 10,000 units for 25,000 Calgarians, to the same

minister: what changes can the company expect to see with the signing of these agreements?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've had the opportunity to tour the Calgary Housing Company, and they can expect to see, through investment in affordable housing, significant capital investment in community housing, provincially and municipally owned units, housing for populations with special needs like those fleeing domestic violence and through the social housing agreement increased administrative flexibility for units previously owned by Canada Mortgage and Housing. This will create predictable operating funding to 2033.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Ms Luff: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The minister mentioned greater administrative flexibility for Calgary Housing. Can she elaborate on what that means and how it will affect tenants living in those particular units?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you. For example, a tenant living in social housing may improve their financial situation, and that puts them above the income eligibility threshold, and then they may be forced to move out of this housing. This policy is a disincentive for tenants and penalizes them for improving their financial situation, and this is certainly the wrong direction that we want to go in. Our updated agreements give greater administrative flexibility to explore alternatives like mixed-market housing and buildings. Tenants who improve their financial situation can continue to have stable housing as long as they pay market rent.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Wildlife Management

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Wildlife damage to crops and hay bales has been occurring in Alberta for years. What's worse is that this year there are still crops lying in the field, leading to the potential of high crop losses in a year when farmers are already suffering badly from this government's ongoing wildlife mismanagement. To the minister: what, if any, new programs has your department developed to manage this ongoing problem, and what is your department going to do to start working with farmers and ranchers on wildlife management?

The Speaker: The minister of the environment.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, our work on wildlife management is ongoing, our work with the public lands, and our work with our fish and game policy is ongoing. We are always open to ongoing conversations with landowners on how we can best manage the number of tags, the wildlife management units, and the movement of wildlife, as I was talking about with CFB Suffield and many of the private landowners around there. If there are specific instances that the hon. member would like me to follow up with, I'm happy to do so.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, given that the Suffield elk herd has been damaging ranchers' fences and crops for years – and the problem has been getting worse – and given that your department has been failing at wildlife management in the areas of aeration, fisheries

*See page 1773, right column, paragraphs 13 and 14

management, game management, predation management, and now the TB situation, to the minister of environment: when are you going to show the affected ranchers, farmers, and outdoor enthusiasts in Alberta a plan that will actually work and start taking wildlife management seriously?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. With regard to the specific situation at CFB Suffield our department is working with area hunters to assess the risk of bovine TB in the Suffield herd. We've asked our department to organize a meeting with area hunters so they can present their concerns to staff. We are continuing to evaluate that hunt so that we can better manage the elk population and ensure that hunters have a worthwhile experience there. One of the biggest things we can do as well for the quality of hunting experience is to ensure biodiversity, and that's why we've moved forward on a number of those conservation initiatives as well.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, given that wolves are already being culled to assist the woodland caribou and given that ranchers around Alberta continue to suffer significant and ongoing livestock losses from both wolves and grizzlies all across the eastern slopes of our province, when will this minister's department stop picking wildlife winners and losers and do more to assist farmers and ranchers with proper predation control management programs and proper wildlife management programs?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, I'm happy to follow up with the specific landowner and the concerns that the hon. member has in his riding and along the eastern slopes. Of course, we do continue to move forward with predation control in order to manage our caribou herds in the Duvernay and Montney areas and elsewhere. But if there are specific concerns in his geographic area, I'm happy to follow up after question period.

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

2:40 Heritage Savings Fund Alberta Growth Mandate

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This NDP government is busy trumpeting its job-creation plan today. The Alberta growth mandate is an example of this plan. The mandate directs AIMCo to invest 3 per cent of the heritage fund into Alberta companies. Worthy? Undoubtedly. But jobs? Hey, let's find out. AIMCo invested \$40 million from the heritage fund into Calfrac Well Services. To the minister of economic development: how many jobs did the investment create?

The Speaker: The Minister of Labour.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Through our Alberta jobs plan we're moving forward by creating employment, diversifying our economy, protecting services that Alberta families count on. Today we released numbers on the progress that we're making with our Alberta jobs investments.

Specific to the investment that the member has asked me about, I will have to take a look and see if we can find a more specific numbers answer for him, but I am able to share additional information, like with the STEP program, where we were able to create 2,700 jobs for students this summer.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Ellis: Great. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the purported goal of the Alberta growth mandate is to create jobs and given that AIMCo's investment in Calfrac is actually a loan to restructure its debt as well as options for AIMCo to purchase shares at a preferred price – yikes – and given that the government issued a news release boasting of the \$40 million as a means of supporting “innovation and environmental stewardship” in Alberta, again to the minister: why do you continue to claim that this investment is creating jobs in Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Through our Alberta jobs plan we are using a number of initiatives to invest here in Alberta, including making a \$500 million investment available for the petrochemicals diversification program, providing stable funding to health care, education, and other services.

Regarding a specific investment as directed by this member, I do not have details on that, but we will take a look at his feedback and return.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Ellis: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Calfrac, like so many fracking companies, saw its operating income in Canada drop by more than half in 2015 and given that Calfrac is downsizing and restructuring its operations in Alberta due to the economic downturn, which included laying off 200 employees in Medicine Hat, and given that Calfrac is active in the U.S. and South America and Russia – perhaps I'm a little confused here – to the same minister: is your job-creation plan to create jobs in other countries?

The Speaker: The Minister of Labour.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Our jobs plan has been creating jobs here in Alberta through a number of measures. We have through the STEP program created 2,700 student jobs. We are looking forward to creating 8,000 jobs in 2016 through the Alberta investor tax credits. We are looking at supporting businesses.

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

Members' Statements

(continued)

Calgary Veterans' Food Drive

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, over the weekend I held my fourth annual Calgary veterans' food bank drive. The veterans' food bank targets services to veterans, ex-service, widows, dependants who are in temporary financial difficulties. About 50 volunteers went out in northern Calgary, where we raised over \$3,500 worth of food. In addition, we raised over \$1,500 in spontaneous donations at the Alberta-wide rally at McDougall Centre. But our volunteers at the doors could tell that there were people giving who were also down on their luck. Normally the veterans' food bank does about 90 hampers a month. This year they're up to 140 a month, a 55 per cent increase. They also normally spend \$10,000 to purchase food. This year it's \$50,000, and that extra money comes from the poppy fund, the money raised from the red flowers on your lapels. The carbon tax will cost the food bank more to heat and power the building and will cut back on donations received.

Traditionally people think of veterans as senior citizens. That's no longer the case. Due to Canada's involvement in Afghanistan a veteran can be in his 20s. Younger veterans used to find work in the oil patch, but the oil patch isn't hiring. It is not through lack of effort. Some veterans have applied for work more than 300 times and still have no job. Last week it was revealed that the unemployment rate in Calgary is 10.2 per cent, the worst rate of any major city in Canada.

Join me in thanking my volunteers, especially Stephen and Karen Davis and Emery Pritchard, for hosting and feeding the team while we helped the Calgary veterans community.

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier and Minister of Health.

Bill 28 Public Health Amendment Act, 2016

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to request leave to introduce a bill, Bill 28, the Public Health Amendment Act, 2016.

Immunizations save lives, Mr. Speaker. They protect our children and our communities and reduce the burden that we have on our health care system. Amendments are aimed at increasing immunization rates in our children and improving our response to outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases in our schools and communities. Amendments will also improve immunization services so that Albertans have increased access to safe, high-quality immunization services.

I look forward to discussion and deliberation with my colleagues in this House as we consider this important public health initiative.

[Motion carried; Bill 28 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

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

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the name of expediting the process this afternoon and not needing to wait until tomorrow, I will be referring to a couple of documents while we discuss the point of privilege later this afternoon. In anticipation of that, I will table two documents, both with respect to the point of privilege.

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 19(5) of the Auditor General Act I'm pleased to table five copies of the following report: Report of the Auditor General of Alberta, October 2016. Copies of this report will be provided to members.

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

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm rising today to table five copies of an October 2016 article from the University of Calgary's School of Public Policy titled Alberta's New Royalty Regime Is a Step towards Competitiveness, which is a document that I referenced during question period on November 2, 2016. The article states that Alberta's new royalty framework is making Alberta's energy market more competitive compared to other Canadian jurisdictions, including its immediate neighbours, British Columbia and Saskatchewan.

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-East.

Ms Luff: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm rising today to table five copies of a May 2016 article from the Canada West Foundation titled Look Out: Toward a Climate Strategy That Reduces Global Emissions, that I quoted in my speech on Bill 25 on November 3, 2016. The article states:

Alberta's new climate [change] strategy provides a good example of how to thread the needle . . . The genius of the plan is that it injects competition into the mix at the firm level by [introducing] "top quartile" performance . . . [and] there is an incentive to perform better than one's peers.

2:50

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

Mr. Rodney: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. After your request on Thursday of last week I'm very pleased to rise today to table the five requisite copies of an Alberta government website post, an Alberta government news release, and a CBC article with quotations from the minister of the environment. Please note that these documents were all available online while Bill 27 was on notice but before it had been introduced, and it clearly shows that this government made details of Bill 27 available to the general public before that information was shared with this House, demonstrating the lack of respect of this government for this House and the work that we're trying to do here. That's the first set.

The second – and I'm sure the Advanced Education minister will appreciate this after today's questions – is simply, as requested, Budget 2015's fiscal plan 2015-2020 consolidated expense, page 17, ministry of innovation and advanced education, indicating increases for each of the years going forward, 2015 through to 2020.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a tabling, and oddly enough, it's the same document that the Member for Calgary-Lougheed just tabled, but it says exactly the opposite of what he just said, that, in fact, postsecondary operations are receiving decreases in the years 2015-2016, 2016-2017, and 2018-2019. I have the appropriate number of copies that I'd like to table.

Tablings to the Clerk

The Clerk: I wish to advise the Assembly that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of the hon. Mr. Schmidt, Minister of Advanced Education, return to order of the Assembly Motion for Return 12, asked for by Mr. Cooper on May 2, 2016, copies of all ministerial orders issued by the Ministry of Advanced Education or its predecessor between January 1, 2014, and December 31, 2015; response to Written Question 14, asked for by Mr. Clark on May 16, 2016: what is the status as of March 15, 2016, of the adult learning review program proposed in the New Democratic Party election platform during the May 2015 Alberta provincial general election?

The Speaker: Hon. members, I believe that at approximately 2:41 there was a point of order made. The hon. member.

Point of Order Language Creating Disorder

Mr. Hanson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today on a point of order. At approximately 2:34 this afternoon, during question period, under 23(j), "uses abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder," the Member for Calgary-East, after asking a question and as she was sitting down and, hopefully, caught on

camera, very clearly mouthed an obscenity over to this side of the House. I would ask that she stand and apologize for that remark.

This is, you know, getting to be a bit of a pattern here, a common pattern, that people think that just because they're not saying it loudly, a gesture or mouthing obscenities is acceptable, and it absolutely is not in the House. Heckling is one thing, Mr. Speaker, but this is another matter.

Thank you very much.

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

Ms Luff: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I absolutely apologize. As the member stated, things do sometimes get heated, and I felt like I was coming under a bit of a personal attack. But it's never acceptable in this House, and I sincerely apologize, and I withdraw.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Point of Order

Allegations against Members

The Speaker: I would like to, first of all, deal with a point of order that was raised at our last meeting. You will recall that I indicated that I was – the Official Opposition House Leader raised a point, but I did not hear the statements being made giving rise to the point of order. I didn't have the chance at the time to read it out of the Blues.

I have now reviewed the exchange between the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster and the Minister of Labour and minister responsible for democratic renewal, at page 1699 of *Hansard*. This would appear to be a difference of opinion or a matter of debate in connection with what transpired in a committee, a committee which, by the way, has reported its findings to the Assembly. Members did have an opportunity to clarify their respective positions on the issue. I do not find that the statements constituted an allegation, and I find there is no point of order.

Privilege

The Speaker: I also agreed at our last session that I would hear arguments in terms of the point of privilege raised by the House leader for the third party. First of all, to the hon. member, are there any new pieces of information? We have on the record your initial point. Is there anything substantive or new that you would need to add, sir?

Mr. Rodney: Yes, please, and thank you. I will be as brief as possible under the circumstances respecting the auspices that you have under this House.

I do rise to speak on the point of privilege related to a series of events which occurred last Thursday, November 3, 2016. Mr. Speaker, I quote from a news release issued by the NDP government that morning.

The first competition will see investors bidding to provide up to 400 megawatts of renewable electricity. The AESO will gather feedback from industry on draft commercial terms starting on Nov. 10, and before the competition takes place in 2017.

That was from the morning, sir.

Next I will quote from a printout taken from the Alberta government website, once again, released in the a.m., not the p.m., of November 3. "Alberta will add 5,000 megawatts of renewable energy capacity by 2030 through the Renewable Electricity Program, run by the Alberta Electric System Operator (AESO)."

Similar comments, Mr. Speaker, were also made by the minister to CBC, as noted in the article which I've already tabled.

Until Bill 27 was introduced, AESO did not have any legislative authority whatsoever to organize the competition as listed by the government, and for the sake of the table, these powers are found in sections 5(1) and (2) as well as section 7.

It's clear from these sequences of events that the government was once again thumbing its nose at this House and its conventions, I might add, by sharing the contents of the bill with the general public before it was shared here in this House. I'd simply remind every one of us, Mr. Speaker, that this is not the first, not the second, but the third instance of this demonstrated lack of respect for the House. Well, the last time I checked, the province is run by laws which have to be debated and ultimately passed right here in this House, not by some political bureau.

I just can't help but point out that this is the second point of privilege we're discussing in short order. Just last week we heard from the minister of economic development. He was earnestly apologizing to this House and promised that the government would do better in the future. That was the same week.

Mr. Speaker, this government is supposed to provide . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member, I'm encouraging you to give some new information.

Mr. Rodney: Yes. I'm happy to.

The Speaker: We've had that before.

Mr. Rodney: I'm on my last page of the exact same thing.

The Speaker: Good.

Mr. Rodney: The House is to provide a check on government power. Sharing information contained within a bill with the general public while that bill was on notice but had not yet been introduced circumvents our Assembly and the important work that we're trying to do here, so it's staggering arrogance.

The last point, that is new, Mr. Speaker, is this. The Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood was so surprised when the previous government was found in contempt that he stated: I've never seen a point of privilege be successful in events of the government of the past. I've been here for 13 years, and it's the first time in my experience. Fortunately for the member he didn't have to wait 13 years for a second one. My only hope is that the government will finally learn its lesson, and I hope it's the last time that we have to have a discussion of this nature.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to your ruling. I truly do.

The Speaker: The Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, you know, I have to say, listening to the hon. member talk, that there's scant information there to support his claim. Lots of rhetoric and attempts to chastise the government, but quite frankly, there's very little substance to this point of privilege, purported privilege, which has been raised. They are very serious, as I said on Thursday afternoon, and ought to be dealt with as such. They should not be brought up frivolously, but unfortunately I think that's exactly what's happened here, and it may be the inexperience of the hon. member as a House leader. [interjection] Maybe I can be allowed to proceed on my point without heckling, Mr. Speaker, by the hon. member.

3:00

Quite frankly, to summarize, we do not believe this is a matter of privilege because a copy of the bill in question was not distributed out of the House until it was given first reading, technical details from the bill were not part of Thursday morning's announcement, the program that was announced is not contingent on the passage of this bill, and where the minister did make reference to the bill, she did not prejudge its passage.

Mr. Speaker, let's first establish precisely what happened in this case, not starting last Thursday but actually going back to last year. In November 2015 this government launched an ambitious climate leadership plan that will make Alberta an environmental leader, among other things. At that time we said explicitly that we would be moving forward with a carbon levy. We discussed our plan to cap oil sands emissions, and we unveiled our target of 30 per cent renewable electricity by 2030. Why is that material? Well, each of these measures were the subject of subsequent legislative enactment.

Of course, on May 24 our Bill 20, the Climate Leadership Implementation Act, enacted a carbon levy as well as certain related rebates. Earlier last week my colleague the hon. minister of environment gave first reading to Bill 25, the Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act, which would cap emissions from the oil sands, and then on Thursday my colleague the Minister of Energy introduced Bill 27, the Renewable Electricity Act. Again, this measure expanded on what our government had previously announced.

In all three cases the government's policy objective was a matter of public debate well before any of these pieces of legislation were introduced. The measures had been outlined by the government, and elements of the plan had been the subject of debate in this Chamber on many occasions, specifically on March 15, April 12, April 16, April 18, April 19, April 21, May 3, May 10, May 12, May 16, May 24, May 25, May 26, May 30, May 31, June 1, June 2, and June 6. Renewable energy, the subject of Bill 27, was specifically raised in question period on May 24, May 30, and May 31. Mr. Speaker, these are matters of public debate, and of course there was no attempt by the opposition to claim privilege in either of the previous cases.

Let's talk specifically about renewable electricity. As noted above, the government outlined its commitment to renewable electricity, including a commitment to see up to 30 per cent renewables by 2030, last November. Shortly thereafter, on November 30, the minister of environment and the Minister of Energy noted that in pursuing that objective, Alberta would keep the cost of renewables as low as possible by using market mechanisms such as auctioning. In mid-September 2016 the government announced that Alberta will add 5,000 megawatts of renewable energy capacity through the renewable electricity program, a competitive and transparent bidding process run by the Alberta Electric System Operator, or AESO. This matter was detailed in a September 14 *Calgary Herald* article.

On the morning of last Thursday the minister of environment was in Calgary to announce details related to the first auction, specifically that the first auction will be up to 400 megawatts. The minister did not announce details related to the bill although she did note that the government's intention was to introduce enabling legislation later that day related to our broader vision of 30 by '30.

It is worth noting here that the bill introduced and the programs and measures announced are distinct. The program details are not spelled out in the act. The government could develop a funding program without the existence or passage of the act. On Thursday at noon the opposition were provided an embargoed briefing, as is the normal practice adhered to by this government, wherein they

were provided a substantive document outlining various provisions of the act. On Thursday just before 3 o'clock the minister rose in this House to give the bill first reading. After first reading the media were given a technical briefing on the bill.

If I could for a moment, I would now like to summarize what is in Bill 27. For my summary I will quote from the briefing material provided to the opposition on Thursday. The purposes of the act are to establish a definition of renewable electricity for Alberta, provide the Alberta Electric System Operator with a statutory... [interjections] Mr. Speaker, I beg your assistance in muzzling the hon. member from Calgary. [interjections] You're out of order, sir.

The Speaker: Hon. members, as I understand it, the Government House Leader is providing information. He asked for permission on Thursday to make his arguments today. The reference to new information is entirely – it is all new, it seems to me today, because he did not have the opportunity. However, I would encourage the Government House Leader to provide substantive information with respect to the point of privilege being raised.

Mr. Mason: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've put quite a bit of work into this, and I hope that I can be permitted the opportunity to respond fully.

The purpose of the act includes legislating the target of 30 per cent renewable generation in Alberta by 2030, clarifying the Market Surveillance Administrator's oversight function and extending it to market participants involved in the renewable electricity program, and providing funding certainty for renewable electricity programs so that developers can secure better financing rates, thereby improving government program cost outcomes.

Details of the bill were not in the announcement. The act and the program are two separate and distinct things. If you go to the Alberta government website for the renewable electricity program, it clearly outlines what the program is intended to do, much of which has been discussed publicly for some time. First, Alberta will add 5,000 megawatts of renewable energy capacity by 2030. The program will be run by the Alberta Electric System Operator, and the investment will be solicited through a competitive and transparent bidding process.

It outlines a competitive process, that the AESO will gather feedback from industry on draft commercial terms before the first auction takes place in 2017. The first competition will see investors bidding to provide up to ...

The Speaker: Government House Leader, you seem to be speaking to the details of the bill. I would encourage you to get to the matter as raised by the hon. member.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, I have another page to read, but I take your direction. These are specific details on the renewable electricity program that are available online and to the public, none of which are contained in the Renewable Electricity Act and none of which are contingent on the act passing. Again, they are two separate and distinct things.

The precedent, Mr. Speaker. There are decades of precedent that allowed government to communicate elements of its legislative agenda to the public prior to the enabling legislation being given first reading. Just a few Speaker's rulings shortly, but to summarize, it's very clear based on the practices of this and other Houses that the government must have the ability to communicate with the public what its overarching plans and goals are. The final version of bills that may make up a part of that plan must be presented in the Assembly before they may be given to anyone else, but that absolutely does not preclude the government or ministers from talking publicly about that subject in any way.

On October 31, 2013, Speaker Zwozdesky made a ruling that can be found on pages 2655 and 2656 of that day with a regard to information that was released about Bill 32, the Enhancing Safety on Alberta Roads Act, prior to its introduction in the Assembly. In that ruling Speaker Zwozdesky states the following:

Several points were outlined by the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills when he spoke on October 29 in this Assembly. These points are in our recorded *Hansard* proceedings on page 2528, wherein he said, amongst many other things, the following:

We had seen a sign, obviously in the orange and blue colours, displayed publicly outlining Bill 32. We've seen press releases and public statements outlining the details of Bill 32. We know, of course, that Bill 32 was on the Order Paper yesterday, Mr. Speaker, and it was not yet introduced until earlier today.

I'd like to underline the reference to press releases and public statements outlining the details of Bill 32.

There are clearly parallels between that case and this one, bearing in mind that the comments made by the minister of environment on Thursday in fact did not outline details of Bill 27. In fact, they spoke to a government program, the details of which are not contained in the bill.

Speaker Zwozdesky goes on to refer to a previous ruling of his. At that time, and also as with the case before us today, there was no factual basis to actually conclude that explicit and verbatim details or provisions of the bill were discussed. Accordingly, it was held that the member's ability to perform her functions in that instance had not been impeded. Again, the same thing can be said about today's matter.

3:10

The ruling continues:

I would like to point out that not every statement about a bill that is on notice will automatically lead to and qualify for a prima facie case of privilege. In fact, Speaker Milliken came to this same conclusion in a November 5, 2009, ruling concerning comments made by a federal minister at a press conference. In that particular case, it was held and noted that the minister had not disclosed details of a bill yet to be introduced since he had only discussed in broad terms the policy initiative proposed in the bill. Similarly, Speaker Milliken found that there was no impact on a member's ability to perform his or her duty in a parliamentary ruling that he made on March 22, 2011, which can be found at page 9113 of *House of Commons Debates* for that day.

Again, in speaking on the subject of renewable energy, the minister did not disclose details of the bill and only discussed policies and plans that are on the same subject field as the bill.

Speaker Zwozdesky concludes that

Turning to the case before us today, there is no allegation and, indeed, there is no proof that the actual bill, Bill 32, in its final form was provided to the media or to any outside entity prior to its introduction in this Assembly two days ago, and neither was any evidence found in that respect . . . Accordingly, the chair does not find that there is a sufficient factual basis to find that the actions of the minister constitute a contempt of this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Calgary-Lougheed has not even made a claim that the bill has been distributed in its final form prior to first reading. In fact, there is no factual basis that it has been provided, where any explicit and verbatim details or provisions of the bill have been disclosed. This Assembly was the first to see the proposed legislation in its final form.

On May 29, 2012, Speaker Zwozdesky ruled on a purported question of privilege that referred to "a press conference held by the Premier and the Government House Leader . . . in which both the

Speech from the Throne and Bill 1, the Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2012, were discussed." Speaker Zwozdesky stated:

In response the hon. Government House Leader noted that during the press conference Bill 1 was discussed but only in general terms and that no specific wording was provided to those in attendance. The Government House Leader acknowledged the importance of ensuring that members are the first to see proposed legislation in its final form before a bill is disclosed to outside parties.

The Speaker also noted "the Government House Leader's submission that the bill was neither circulated, nor was the specific content of the bill disclosed" and that "given the circumstances of this particular case the chair finds that the member's ability to perform her functions has not been impeded, and accordingly the chair is unable to find a prima facie case of contempt and considers this matter now closed."

Mr. Speaker, I have a number of other citations, which I propose in the interest of time to submit to you in writing if that is suitable to you. Or I can continue.

The Speaker: I would find that acceptable.

Mr. Mason: Okay. That's acceptable. Then I'll just conclude.

Mr. Speaker, in raising this matter last Thursday, the member made only cursory reference to our standing orders, for some reason citing Standing Order 23(e), which, of course, governs anticipation, being the practice whereby members should be called to order if during debate they anticipate a matter set out for debate later in the day. He made no reference to any citations related to the practice before us today, that being the discussion of bills prior to their first reading, nor did he explain how his privilege as a member could have been infringed by a minister of Crown discussing matters of state.

However, Mr. Speaker, he did make some comments that I would like to discuss. First he stated that "a government minister spoke to the media and at a conference [today] about a new renewable energy program which had not . . . been introduced in this House." Mr. Speaker, I would like to confirm that and say that the member knows full well that program announcements are not required to be made in the House. Ministers announce programs all the time. When those programs need enactment through either legislative or budgetary means, those measures come forward at the appropriate time.

Second, the member quotes from the *Calgary Herald*, which states, "Alberta to buy 400MW of renewable power as it phases out coal." That's true, Mr. Speaker. The *Herald* did say that. You know what doesn't say that? The bill. That detail is not part of the bill, and as such the minister or any other member is free to speak to the public about it. Specifically, a 400-megawatt program using competitive procurement and contracts with the eligibility criteria established here are all things the government could have done without this bill. This legislation is very specific in what it would accomplish, and the minister did not divulge technical details contained in the act.

Third, the PC House leader quotes the minister, from CBC, saying that "today is sort of the first step in the real nitty-gritty details for the investment community on how we're going to move forward on that," "that" referencing our 30 per cent renewable target, by 2030.

Well, Mr. Speaker, that target was set out in November. Initial details about how the auctions would get us there were a matter of public debate last month, as I've already outlined, and just like my previous point, those details are not set out in the enabling legislation. Just because there's a bill on notice called the

Renewable Electricity Act does not mean a member of cabinet cannot speak about renewable electricity.

To conclude, Mr. Speaker, nowhere in the member's comments does he even attempt to claim that we have done what Speakers in this Chamber have stated might be considered a breach of privilege; that is, released copies of the bill or detailed elements of the bill. The minister has not breached the privilege of this House by discussing the government's policy over the past year. It's our submission that it is not a matter of privilege.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Cooper: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the Government House Leader for his exhaustive comments. Very thorough.

I would just like to touch on a number of items today with respect to this point of privilege. Normally it's a real privilege to rise, but I'm a little disappointed to have to speak to another point of privilege, that was originally raised on Thursday. In fact, when the Member for Calgary-Lougheed first rose in his place to call a point of privilege, I thought perhaps it was on the way that the bill was actually introduced, in that I'm not a hundred per cent convinced that the Lieutenant Governor had actually been informed of this, but perhaps that was an overstatement.

The case that has been made by the Member for Calgary-Lougheed is that it is very clearly a breach of privilege. A mere two days after you, Mr. Speaker, found this government had committed a breach of privilege, we are again discussing the very real challenges that this government has when it comes to following the rules. Well, the last breach of privilege, that you found last week, was in regard to presupposing a decision of the Assembly. Here they are not respecting the rules of anticipation, and the very important part is: once the bill goes on notice and before it's introduced. So while the Government House Leader made a number of arguments around ministers of the Crown being able to speak to a piece of legislation, the key difference here is that the bill was clearly on the Order Paper and had yet to be introduced in the Chamber.

I want to reiterate a few points. Bill 27 first appeared on the Order Paper on Wednesday, November 2, and it wasn't introduced in this House until Thursday, November 3, at approximately 2:45 p.m. Again, that means that the government must refrain from providing detailed information about the bill during that time period. While the Government House Leader claims that they did, there are a number of statements both in the press release and on public record that specifically refer to the bill, particularly in the AESO's ability to deliver the programs of which they speak. Prior to the press release as well as the public comments that was not clear, and it is only the bill that provides AESO's ability in which to deliver on that.

As we learned last week, both the Minister of Energy and the Minister of Environment and Parks showed no hesitation in discussing the details of the legislation with the media or in discussing them during a lunch keynote to the Canadian Wind Energy Association. In particular, Mr. Speaker, they sent out a press release on Thursday, November 3, at 10:21 a.m., during the period the bill was on notice. This press release included many details that were contained in Bill 27 that hadn't been mentioned publicly prior.

3:20

As a point of interest, Mr. Speaker, it is not an uncommon practice for the government to send out embargoed press releases, one which this side of the House takes no objection to. This,

however, was not the case last week on the 3rd of November at 10:21. The press release was sent out well before the introduction of Bill 27. The press release specifically mentioned Alberta's Electric System Operator being responsible for the administration of the government's renewable electricity program, a point that the bill provides the ISO the ability to do. This detail was made clear in the bill and had not yet been known to the public. It also mentioned the specific number of megawatts it is expected to add by 2030. The press release said that it will add 5,000 megawatts. That sounds a lot like presupposing a decision of the Assembly. It also spoke about the AESO starting consultation on November 10. I'd like to ask the question: is that going to be prior to the passage of this bill or after?

Now, these may be two separate issues, one presupposing a decision of the Assembly in the language used in the press release and releasing information prior to introducing the bill while the bill is on the Order Paper, but, Mr. Speaker, both are extremely, extremely serious.

I'd like to draw your attention to a similar situation that occurred back on March 5, 2003, when Speaker Kowalski found a prima facie breach of privilege when the government provided information to the media while a bill was on notice. The former Member for Edmonton-Strathcona and Speaker Kowalski made comparisons to a situation in the House of Commons when Speaker Milliken ruled on March 19, 2001:

The House recognizes that when complex or technical documents are to be presented in this Chamber, media briefings are highly useful. They ensure that the public receives information that is both timely and accurate concerning [ongoing] business before the House.

In preparing legislation, the government may wish to hold extensive consultations and as such consultations may be held entirely at the government's discretion. However, with respect to material to be placed before parliament, the House must take precedence. Once a bill has been placed on notice, whether it has been presented in a different form to a different session of parliament has no bearing and the bill is considered a new matter. The convention of the confidentiality of bills on notice is necessary, not only so that members themselves will be well informed, but also because of the pre-eminent [role] which the House plays and must play in the legislative affairs of the nation . . . To deny to members information concerning business that is about to come before the House, while at the same time providing such information to media that will likely be questioning members about that business, is a situation that the Chair cannot condone.

That, Mr. Speaker, allowed Speaker Kowalski to say this:

The chair wants to make it very, very clear that the Legislative Assembly . . . of Alberta is not bound by decisions from the Canadian House of Commons or any other Assembly in Canada. This would be contrary to the nature of Canada's federal system. However, how could this chair hold that the Canadian House of Commons and its members are to be accorded greater respect and dignity than the members of this Assembly? The role of the chair cannot be to lessen the dignity and the respect of . . . [members of this Assembly].

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, I would like to draw your attention to the debate that followed the prima facie breach of privilege I spoke of whereupon the Member for Edmonton-Highlands – incidentally, the current Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood – was permitted to immediately move that the matter be referred to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing.

Mr. Speaker, it is very clear that the government in both the press release and in their public comments on what the bill would contain, in two separate media stories – and the fact that they released an

unembargoed press release to the media prior to the introduction of a bill that, in fact, was on the Order Paper. The precedent is clear that this House holds supremacy to the other forms of information to be released.

On that day in 2003 the now Government House Leader participated in the debate scheduled for March 6, 2003, on the matter and had this to say:

I just want to reiterate that what's on trial here is not the [Energy minister], who's apologized, but what is on trial here are the procedures that have sometimes been used by the government, and what we want to do is find an effective way to correct those so that the rights of members are respected in the future and we do not have to spend time in this Assembly on matters like this.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, it's not just about respecting the members but all Albertans as an extension of the people that we represent. Statements like this remind me that the Government House Leader wasn't always like he is today. He once believed in the rights of the Assembly and the respect and dignity it deserves.

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, I hesitate to interrupt, but I must, with respect, make a point of order with respect to those last comments. Maybe the Opposition House Leader would like to withdraw them now.

Mr. Cooper: In the interest of time, Mr. Speaker, I will withdraw and apologize unreservedly.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, the challenge, as I have laid it out, is that clearly this piece of legislation, Bill 27, was on the Order Paper when the government made numerous public statements, a lunchtime speech as well as a press release, with specific details, including AESO's ability to provide the oversight to this program, which only the bill provides them the ability and the power to do.

In closing, not only is it necessary for democracy in Alberta that another prima facie breach of privilege be found, but that you, Mr. Speaker, under Standing Order 15(6) and the precedent established by Speaker Kowalski on March 5, 2003, allow this matter to be referred to the Assembly's Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing.

The Speaker: Hon. member, I wonder if I could just ask you to speak to the question that you raised about the embargoed press release in greater detail. Had that have happened, what . . .

Mr. Cooper: Well, Mr. Speaker, it has been the common practice of this government to provide embargoed press briefings. As mentioned by Speaker Milliken, it is important, and in fact the press has a job to do with respect to dissemination of information across our province. I'm more than happy to table for you numerous embargoed copies of press releases that this government has provided to the press corps here in Alberta. What did happen last week at 10:21 a.m., well before the introduction of the bill, was that an unembargoed press release providing specific details about what the bill did was sent to the press well before all members of this Assembly had the ability to receive the bill.

The key privilege here that Speaker Milliken refers to is members' ability to respond in public without the appropriate information. That's exactly the position that this government put all members of this Assembly in by not respecting the rules of the Assembly and not respecting the traditions of even this government of holding embargoed press releases.

3:30

As such, I encourage you, Mr. Speaker, to find a breach of privilege and to refer this to standing orders and committees because what we don't need is another apology from the government but an actual discussion on how these things will be stopped and prevented in the future.

The Speaker: Is there anyone else who would like to speak to the point of privilege? Clearly, I need to have some deliberations on this. Some new information, hon. member?

Mr. Rodney: Yes. Concluding remarks, sir.

The Speaker: I thought that we had decided the last time that you spoke that you had provided all of the new information.

Mr. Rodney: Absolutely not, sir. I have a few sentences. This has been very long-winded. A few sentences, I think, are in order.

The Speaker: Hon. member, with respect, I simply don't think that would be appropriate at this time. Thank you. I think you had an opportunity to speak to the matter, and it's been so noted and in the record.

Is there anyone else who would like to speak to the matter? The Member for Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Okay. Well, Mr. Speaker, thank you for allowing me to speak here for a few minutes. This is obviously a serious situation, which stops members of this House from being able to fully discharge their duties, including to answer questions. That legislation is to be tabled in the Legislature before being discussed in the public is an important principle. Details of the bill were, I would say, despite what the Government House Leader said, explicitly outlined in the three tablings that our Government House Leader made earlier. They demonstrate that in each of these ways procedures and protocols of the House were not upheld.

Perhaps it's the experience of this government to do this, but as this is not the first time, I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that you do as the Official Opposition House Leader has recommended and rule that this is a point of privilege and that it be recommended to the committee so that we can avoid reoccurrence.

The Speaker: So noted.

Seeing no one else who has new information to ask, I think that there's been adequate shared information about the case being put forward by both sides of the House. I will clearly be taking an examination of that material plus all of the precedents.

I would now propose that we move to Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

Motions for Returns

Health Electronic Record System

M20. 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.

[Debate adjourned October 31]

The Speaker: Hon. members, is there someone wishing to speak to this matter?

Hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat, are you going to close debate on the matter?

Mr. Barnes: Yes. It was my question that the government is wishing to amend, so if you will allow me, I will.

The Speaker: Could you just wait a minute, please? I'd like to consult with the table.

Mr. Barnes: Absolutely, yeah.

The Speaker: Just to clarify, hon. member, you'll be speaking to the motion as amended to close debate. Is that correct?

Mr. Barnes: Yeah.

The Speaker: That amendment passed.

Mr. Barnes: Okay. Oh, the amendment has passed already?

The Speaker: Yes.

Mr. Barnes: Okay. I don't need to speak, then.

[The voice vote indicated that Motion for a Return 20 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:35 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, S.	Horne	Nielsen
Babcock	Jabbour	Payne
Carson	Kazim	Piquette
Connolly	Kleinstauber	Rosendahl
Cortes-Vargas	Larivee	Sabir
Dach	Loyola	Schreiner
Dang	Luff	Shepherd
Drever	Malkinson	Sucha
Feehan	McCuaig-Boyd	Sweet
Ganley	McKittrick	Turner
Goehring	Miller	Westhead
Hinkley	Miranda	Woollard

Against the motion:

Aheer	Ellis	McIver
Barnes	Gill	Orr
Cooper	Gotfried	Panda
Cyr	Hanson	Taylor
Drysdale	Loewen	

Totals:	For – 36	Against – 14
---------	----------	--------------

[Motion for a Return 20 as amended carried]

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

Ministry of Health Fraud Detection Procedures

M21. 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 their audit, compliance, and oversight procedures for the detection of

fraud, as referenced during consideration of the Ministry of Health's main estimates on November 16, 2015.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you. Mr. Speaker and colleagues, health care spending this year is at over \$21 billion. I hope the government takes very seriously the issue of fraud in the health system. It potentially represents a very large amount of our spending. You know, some estimates of fraud in the system in Canada range anywhere from 2 to 10 per cent, but as the Auditor General so aptly pointed out for us approximately a year ago, in Alberta we do not have a clear picture at all of the scope of fraud at the 21-plus billion dollar health spending level.

I think back to estimates last year, when the Health ministry and the department were \$240 million over budget. I think back to a meeting I had with a predecessor who represented Cypress-Medicine Hat in the early '90s, who pointed out to me that in 1993 health spending was \$4 billion. So from \$4 billion to over \$21 billion in that 23 or 24 years without the oversight, without the assurance for taxpayers, for ratepayers, and, most importantly, for Albertans – children, seniors, the sick – who need as much value as possible from our system, who need as much value as possible for their tax dollars.

A lot of times it's just ensuring that the oversight, the procedures are in place so that our great, great front-line workers, whether they be health care workers, nurses, doctors, have the mechanisms to see what's going on and the mechanisms to ensure that things are done as accurately as possible.

You know, we also know that the Auditor General's report from last year explored health fraud, both on the billing and the usage sides. It was noted: an inadequate response from the ministry and policy-makers to measure, control, and decrease it. Absolutely amazing, Mr. Speaker. Some side of 44 per cent of the money we spend, over 50 per cent of the revenues we take in, and our government gave an inadequate response from the ministry, policy-makers to measure, control, and decrease it.

I hope to see the minister at some point provide this House with a clearer picture of the extent of the problem and the strategy for dealing with it. I appreciate that sensitive or confidential information may be somewhat involved here, but, my goodness, how could all of it be?

I remember that one of the things the Auditor General pointed out was Alberta's lack of expiry dates on our health care cards now, something as basic as a card with an expiry date. His analogy was: banks do it. Banks do it because they know it controls fraud. They know it's a mechanism for control on their expenditures and their bottom line and their profit.

Mr. Speaker, it's absolutely crucial for 4.4 million Albertans, for the next generation, that needs to count on value for tax dollars, that this government take seriously the consequences of all this spending and the impacts if we don't try to have the proper oversight, if we don't try to have as much value as possible.

Mr. Speaker, I would hope that the government would accept this question. I would hope that the government would provide to this House the information that would make more value for all of us.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Associate Minister of Health.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak against Motion for a Return 21. Alberta Health works hard to ensure that the compliance and oversight measures used for the detection of fraud are effective. This is an issue that our government takes seriously, and that is why we are reviewing these measures to ensure that they are as effective as possible. Releasing detailed documents about a

review of these operations could hamper government's efforts in this area, and for that reason I would reject this motion.

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

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have to admit that I'm a little surprised at the outright rejection of this question. This is a good question, a question that goes a long way in assuring not only members of the Assembly but all Albertans that this government takes inappropriate use of taxpayer resources inside our health care system seriously.

As mentioned by my hon. colleague, it's possible that some of these documents would be confidential or pose a risk to the system in terms of those who are acting fraudulently knowing the ways that the government is looking to minimize that, but what the minister doesn't even provide are the documents that aren't confidential.

The Auditor General has clearly stated that there are concerns and issues around fraudulent behaviour. He has mentioned a number of different concerns. So for the government to say, "Oh, somebody might find out what we're doing; we'd better not tell anyone," that is more than a little disappointing.

4:00

I know that on a pretty regular basis members of the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills come to the office and have ideas on ways that we can minimize fraud inside the system. It is something that Albertans care about, and they want to know that the government is actually taking proactive steps to ensure that fraud doesn't occur. I'm sure, Mr. Speaker, that you'll be aware. My guess is that people in the constituency of Medicine Hat have come and said: "Why don't we get statements anymore on the health care that we use, not in the form of a bill but in the form of some acknowledgement of the health care that we've used? Therefore, we would be able to have a better idea on whether or not the services we actually used were the services that were provided."

I recognize that there is a level of costs that may prevent the government from going down that road. There may be a number of reasons, but the point is that many Albertans have a deep care and consideration for fraud inside the system, and they want to be reassured that the government is taking those things seriously. It would be interesting to have some sense or understanding of what level of fraud there is inside the \$20 billion health care system.

Let me be very clear, Mr. Speaker. Let me reiterate that I fully support the vast, vast majority of individuals inside our system. One can only imagine that there is some level of individuals who behave untowardly and don't appropriately spend those resources the way that they should, so as a result the Alberta taxpayer is the one that suffers.

One thing that I'm sure you'll hear me say on a number of occasions today is that this government got elected on a platform of being more open, more transparent, not less. I'm sure that the Minister of Health would be able to tell you that when she worked for the NDP caucus as a researcher, a very skilled and astute researcher at that, she likely crafted questions very similar to this around information that the government held that would be helpful for all members of the Assembly and, as an extension, Albertans to have. Now we see her not just as a researcher – and I don't mean just a researcher because these are some of the most important people in our lives – but as the Minister of Health. What do we see? The minister and the department protecting, if you will, the information that is so, so important to the debate.

I look forward to hearing from the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat when he closes debate because just today the Auditor General's

report of 2016 came out, and my guess is that there is some very, very pertinent information in that report to this very issue. So I am very disappointed that the government, promising to be more open, more transparent, more accountable to the taxpayer, is flat out rejecting very important questions like this and not even providing information that may be publicly available, that may not be as confidential as other pieces of information with respect to revealing the ways that they fight fraud, just flat out saying: "No. We want to keep this secret from Albertans and reject the premise of the question."

These motions for returns and written questions are very important when it comes to the process of getting information out. We've seen this government take a number of different steps with respect to delaying information, whether it's via FOIPs and some of the worst record in terms of timelines around releasing FOIP information. Now we see it again here in the Assembly. The Assembly has asked for the production of a document, and we see the exact opposite of what we would have expected to see from this government.

The Speaker: Are there any other members who would like to speak to Motion for a Return 21?

Mr. Taylor: You know, when this was brought up, I thought that this was really a great motion for a return for having more transparency to find out if there is fraud in the health care department. I was shocked, frankly, when the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat said that between 2 and 10 per cent could be attributed to fraud. Frankly, that's a huge number when you're looking, as he also mentioned, at that \$21 billion going into the health care system right now. We need to have value in what we're getting for our dollar, and when there's this much potential fraud, we're not getting that value.

I was surprised that we got this response from the government, where they just outright rejected having this done. They could have taken the approach and said, "Yes, we will provide it; yes, there is confidential information" and worked with that. They could have redacted the information that was confidential, that you don't want everybody to see. When I'm looking out for the constituents in Battle River-Wainwright, they're asking me to get good value for their money. They want a hospital; they want a facility in Wainwright. That facility is going to be approximately \$240 million, and if you're looking at 10 per cent of \$21 billion, you're looking at over \$2 billion being left on the table because of fraud. Two billion dollars. You could have eight hospitals of the size that Wainwright needs just on that fraud that's occurring.

I think it's irresponsible to not have this review done and look for all the different fraud cases that are happening. It's critical for Albertans to be able to have the best value for their money. This government, I know, in the past, before they became government, stood for openness and transparency. That's what they fought for, and they said that that's what they will provide. When they have the opportunity with this motion here to be able to provide transparency and they don't, I'm frankly disappointed.

I just want to make sure I'm standing up for the constituents of Battle River-Wainwright in saying that they want a hospital. They could be having a hospital, perhaps, based on this, but we're losing the ability to have that money because \$2 billion could be gone in fraud.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members who would like to speak to Motion for a Return 21?

Seeing no one, I would ask the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat to close debate.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As my colleagues from Battle River-Wainwright and Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills have so eloquently pointed out, the main concern here is that this money that's lost to fraud doesn't help Albertans, whether it's an individual suffering while unable to get access to a pharmaceutical or surgery, whether it's a person that needs a rotator cuff, a hip, or a knee done. I don't know if you find the same in your office in Medicine Hat, but in Cypress-Medicine Hat the number of Albertans that have spent \$15,000 to get a rotator cuff fixed in Kalispell, the number of Albertans that have spent \$25,000 to \$30,000 to get a knee or a hip done in Great Falls is mind-boggling.

4:10

Secondly, though: the concern as to whose health system it is. It's not the government's. It's not the 87 of us in here. It's Albertans', and they expect us to run it with maximum results and maximum value. A government that doesn't even want to, you know, provide the basics – the Auditor General in his report, that we just received a short time ago, on page 118 points out two key things, again, that could go a long way to eliminating some of the fraud or impacts. He talks about health care processes and points out: "Establish a proactive check to ensure that individuals with an Alberta healthcare number continue to meet residency requirements." Our Auditor General is not scared to tell 4.3 million Albertans what to do. Why is the NDP government?

The second recommendation that he has caught my eye more. "Health care processes: Enhance processes to check for receipt of services for which physicians billed." One of my constituents has long pointed out to me and reminded me that he thinks every time we go to a doctor, we shouldn't pay a bill, but we should sign a bill on the way out so that we know what it cost. That would go a long way to raising the consciousness of Albertans as to the value, and it would go a long way to eliminating some of this fraud that may or may not be there.

We've also seen this government fall down on the \$800 million they spent on electronic health records and now another \$400 million without proper oversight.

Again, Mr. Speaker, colleagues, I'm disappointed that the government is hiding from being a little more transparent, and I would ask that all colleagues in the House vote against the government and vote in favour of them answering this question. Thank you.

[The voice vote indicated that Motion for a Return 21 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:13 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Ellis	McIver
Barnes	Gill	Orr
Cooper	Gotfried	Panda
Cyr	Hanson	Taylor

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Horne	Nielsen
Babcock	Jabbour	Payne
Carson	Kazim	Phillips
Connolly	Kleinsteuber	Piquette
Cortes-Vargas	Larivee	Rosendahl

Dach	Loyola	Schreiner
Dang	Luff	Shepherd
Drever	Malkinson	Sucha
Feehan	McCuaig-Boyd	Sweet
Ganley	McKitrick	Turner
Goehring	Miller	Westhead
Hinkley	Miranda	Woollard
Totals:	For – 12	Against – 36

[Motion for a Return 21 lost]

4:30

Primary Care Networks Review

M22. 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 financial review of primary care networks conducted by the Minister of Health, as referenced during consideration of the Ministry of Health's main estimates on November 16, 2015.

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker and colleagues, we spent quite a bit of time in estimates discussing primary care networks. We discussed the primary care model and the fact that funding to them was substantially cut in order to deplete existing surpluses, the old argument of local jurisdictions saving for future betterment for everyone versus the most use at the best time for taxpayers' money and, of course, leaving money with taxpayers.

You know, the primary care model, to me, is extremely interesting, extremely important. In the four years I've been in here, I've heard different arguments on it. I guess, to me, we have a system where the government will so often say that they want the Albertan, the patient, to see the right person at the right time and with the right delivery model. To me, primary care networks are so potentially the solution to so many things in our system, whether it's mental health, whether it's physiotherapy, whether it's prevention, whether it's the comprehensive care that Albertans need so we can get off this model of treating sickness and whatnot and we can get on a model of well-being and prevention.

You know, there has been a lot of criticism about primary care networks, and I think a lot of it hasn't been justified. My understanding as to what has happened is that the previous government decided to set these up with the hope that, I think, some side of 70 primary care networks in the province would have the opportunity to develop sort of independently, sort of autonomously, to share best practices, obviously, hopefully, but to develop in a way where we could have many, many different points of best practice, where we could have many, many different ways of analyzing this and seeing what worked and what didn't work. Then that's when I hear that it started to maybe fall down. Did they share best practices? Could or should there have been a little bit more oversight so that we could focus on, let's say, mental health or prevention and wellness instead?

That, Mr. Speaker, is the heart of this question. Let's see the internal working documents or reports prepared by or on behalf of the government pertaining to the financial review so that once again we can see that Albertan taxpayers, that the 4.3 million Albertans that could benefit tremendously from a stronger health care network, again concentrating on prevention and wellness and the mental health aspect – are we getting the value for the programs, the systems that have all been put in?

It's back to: through the primary care networks we could have the opportunity to ensure that people get connected to the appropriate care provider in the best way. Is that happening? You

know, I was Health shadow minister for about a year and a half. I don't know. That's where, hopefully, the government will answer these questions. Hopefully, we'll see that we're getting value for money, and hopefully we'll see that in a world where technology and medicines and everything seem like they change instantly, we can see that we're staying on top of things to make sure they're happening right. Are we getting value? Are we getting our resources, our hard-earned tax dollars to the right places?

You know, I think we've had a lot of successes with primary care networks, but what is the long-term funding strategy to ensure that we're going to get more value and that Albertans are going to get better service? The question that especially was pertinent during the dates that I mentioned was that some of them were losing their surpluses. Some of them were losing funds that they were building up to hire professionals, to buy the equipment that was needed to ensure that proper facilities were put in place. How can a government know if it's doing the right thing if we don't have the proper oversight and the proper mechanisms? Most importantly, how can Albertans know that the government is doing the right thing if they don't share the information that ensures that, you know, we have the opportunity to look at what these financial reviews were and what they were going for?

Mr. Speaker, I think it's only proper that the House should be permitted to see the ministry's evidence for this review as to how they're going to ensure that we really get our full value out of primary care networks, and we should be able to see how the government intends to measure success and what it's doing to promote success. I think the primary care network budgetary item is somewhere around \$280 million. I'm sorry, colleagues; I don't have that right here. But, again, that is a tremendous, tremendous amount of money that could do a tremendous amount of good for Alberta families, Albertans who at times need some support. I hope that the government will provide this information in a full, you know, fulsome context so the 87 of us in this House can go back to our constituents and share the good ideas that we hear to make it better and to share where this is going. I would hope the government would answer this question in full.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Associate Minister of Health.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move to amend Motion for a Return 22 as follows: (a) by striking out the phrase "internal working" and (b) by adding "excluding documents that constitute confidential advice to the minister and excluding data and information that is specific to an individual or a specific primary care network" after the word "government."

The amended motion for a return would then read as follows:

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 and excluding data and information that is specific to an individual or a specific primary care network, from May 22, 2015, to March 7, 2016, pertaining to the financial review of primary care networks conducted by the Minister of Health, as referenced during consideration of the Ministry of Health's main estimates on November 16, 2015.

I am proposing this amendment to reflect our responsibilities under FOIP section 22(1), regarding cabinet and Treasury Board confidences. The outcome of the government's review was released publicly in June, and the full report is available on Alberta Health's website. We promised Albertans that we would take steps to protect and improve our health care system, and we're making great progress. This fall we partnered with PCNs to focus on sustainability for millions of Albertans who use these front-line

services. Better financial management is part of ensuring that public health care dollars are directed towards care. We are working with primary care networks as partners, and together we will be able to achieve cost-effective, long-term health system reform.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The Associate Minister of Health has moved an amendment. Wishing to speak to the amendment? The Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Why, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to the amendment. I just really want to highlight a couple of quick things for you, particularly around the Assembly's ability and how we interact with the FOIP legislation. As you know, the Assembly has the ability to ask for documents, and it has the ability to require the production of documents. It's just whether or not the government in this case, if they vote in favour of the initial motion for a return, which I think at this point is highly unlikely given that they've just moved a motion that essentially changes the intent and really only provides publicly available information – but if they had supported the motion, the Assembly has the ability to require the production of those documents.

4:40

While I know that the minister likes to hide behind the FOIP legislation, last week I provided the specific reference in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* that indicates that we have that ability. Perhaps at a later date, like when we're back on the same motion, I will provide that reference again for you as I'm just having a little difficulty finding it here on the fly.

But there are a lot of issues that present a challenge to the amendment, particularly around – essentially, the government is offering to provide information that's already publicly available and answering the question that they would have liked us to ask, not the question that was actually asked. While I'm sympathetic to the government in that I appreciate them at least trying to provide something whereas in the last question we saw that they provided absolutely nothing and just rejected the question out of hand, now they use the FOIP legislation to hide behind not providing documents to the Assembly that, clearly, there is the ability for them to provide.

I just would like to quickly touch on a couple of things around this issue of primary care networks and why getting this information is critically important. We see in the Auditor General's report, that was released just today, on page 115 an outstanding recommendation, the department's accountability for the primary care network, this initial recommendation from the Auditor General, where it says:

We recommend that the Department of Health:

- establish clear expectations and targets for each of the PCN program objectives
- develop systems to evaluate and report performance of the PCN program.

Outstanding recommendation 7, Mr. Speaker, July 2012:

We recommend that the Department of Health proactively inform Albertans which Primary Care Network they have been assigned to, and what services are available through their [primary care network].

While these specifics might not be to the motion for a return today, they speak to an ongoing lack of desire for accountability that we see from this government. The Auditor General, Mr. Speaker, asked in 2012 for accountability around the primary care networks. Again, 2012, outstanding recommendation from Alberta Health Services – so now this isn't just the department, but this is,

in fact, Alberta Health Services – AHS accountability for primary care networks, recommendation 6, on page 40:

We recommend that Alberta Health Services within the context of its provincial primary healthcare responsibilities:

- define goals and service delivery expectations for its involvement in [PCNs]
- define performance measures and targets
- evaluate and report on its performance as a PCN joint venture participant.

My point is, Mr. Speaker, that since 2012 there have been outstanding recommendations. Now in the Chamber my colleague from Cypress-Medicine Hat asks for accountability measures and the review of the primary health care networks conducted by the Minister of Health, a review that the minister herself referred to during the consideration of the Health ministry's main estimates. This isn't a hypothetical review – or maybe it is a hypothetical review because we haven't seen anything that has come from that – but this is a review that she specifically referred to as under way. It would only seem reasonable that we would be able to see the information around that review, including the working documents and, at the very least, the conclusions of that review. So it's disappointing to see the ministry and the minister hiding from accountability. It's disappointing for them to continue to not respond to the Auditor General.

It is now – 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016 – four years, much of which time this government has been responsible for. I know that this current government likes to blame the third party for a lot of the predicaments that we're in. Let me be clear, Mr. Speaker. There's a lot of blame to go around to the third party. But in this case there's well over 18 months, yet this government chooses not to respond to the Auditor General, as he has proposed a number of recommendations, and now, perhaps even worse, has refused to provide all of the information available to this Chamber.

I'll let my hon. colleague speak about some of the challenges with this amendment, particularly not providing specific reviews to specific primary care networks. If we can't compare the good ones to other ones, how are we going to create any standards or have any real understanding of what's working and what isn't?

There is a smattering of real challenges with this amendment. I certainly am unable to support an amendment that doesn't provide more accountability, that doesn't provide more transparency, that doesn't provide information that 4.1 million Albertans so rightly deserve. It's disappointing. Again, this pattern of disappointment that this government is engaging in is not what they said when they got elected, it's not what Albertans have expected, it's not what Albertans had hoped for, and it's certainly not what I expected or hoped for either.

So I will not be supporting this amendment, and I encourage all members of the Assembly who believe in openness, transparency, and freedom of information to not support this amendment either.

The Speaker: Hon. members, is there anyone else who would like to speak to the amendment to Motion 22? The Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to take a minute or two. Every party here acknowledges the importance of a publicly funded health care system, and as such I want to challenge all of the members here to consider who owns this system. No, it's not the government. It's not cabinet. It's not the Ministry of Health. My goodness, it isn't even AHS. It's the people. It's Albertans. It's our system, and the system is ultimately accountable and beholden to the people, not the other way around.

We're seeing it here on notice of motion after notice of motion. The government is consistently reducing transparency, hiding

internal documents that may or may not be of a confidential nature. We're certainly reasonable and could understand, you know, if it had to be. But if it's just documents, especially the three that highlight around the Auditor General's concerns, his outstanding recommendations, as my hon. colleague from Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills just pointed out, from July 2012, "We recommend that the Department of Health proactively inform Albertans which Primary Care Network they have been assigned to, and what services are available through their PCN," that's basic.

I mean, I've talked to many, many Albertans who have no idea about all of the good services our primary care networks can offer to them, as I said earlier: mental health, prevention and wellness, and rehabilitation. The fact is that we should have the opportunity to look in and ensure that the government is making Albertans aware of this.

4:50

Again from July 2012: "We recommend that the Department of Health improve its systems for oversight of Primary Care Networks." As has been mentioned, oversight could just focus on sharing of best practices. We've got wonderful physicians, wonderful health care professionals. Sharing best practices could go a long way to improving the quality of Albertans' lives.

What triggered this specific question was to ensure that the PCN surplus funds are used in a timely and sustainable manner. Certainly, you know, I've heard that lots in my time as an MLA, that sometimes the government, the taxpayer has to give. Our health care professionals, our education professionals, our people that provide so many important supports socially for all Albertans: sometimes the government has to give them the opportunity to build up some funds, to do some long-term investing for a piece of equipment, a building, training for professionals. But by the same token the government is responsible for those tax dollars. So it's important to make sure that that information is two-way. The two-way part is what is greatly concerning me today.

Accountability. We're accountable for some side of over \$50 billion a year in annual spending, and that accountability depends on transparency between the government and Albertans. The information has to flow, Mr. Speaker, to the owners of the system, and that, of course, is all Albertans, not just those that are in cabinet, not just those that are on the government side but to all of us. So I speak against this amendment in the hopes that my colleagues on the opposite side will realize that the system belongs to all Albertans.

As great work by the Auditor General's department has shown, there have been three or four areas since 2012 that, had they been addressed, could have greatly improved this. So I'm asking the government to show us this information more than is just publicly out there so we could absolutely have confidence that Albertans are getting the maximum value for their hard-earned tax dollars.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, are there any other members who would like to speak to the amendment to Motion for a Return 22?

[Motion on amendment carried]

The Speaker: The Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Cooper: Yeah. Thank you. I'd just like to speak a few moments on the main motion, Mr. Speaker, for a brief moment. I just wanted to state that, as you know, we've heard on a number of occasions that this government likes to hide behind FOIP legislation and doesn't respect the ultimate authority that this Chamber has and that members of this Assembly have. So I'd just like to highlight

for you and for members of the Assembly that this is private member's business, as you know, and we are all equal members of this Assembly, and we all have the ability to ensure that information is made available to Albertans.

I'd just like to speak, very briefly, about how important that information is and specifically refer to page 137 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, when it refers to the ordering of documents. It states:

The power to send for persons, papers and records has been delegated by the House of Commons to its committees in the Standing Orders. It is well established that Parliament has the right to order any and all documents to be laid before it which it believes are necessary for its information.

Mr. Speaker, I would suggest to you that the information around PCNs that the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat has asked for is necessary information.

The power to call for persons, papers and records is absolute, but it is seldom exercised without consideration of the public interest.

Now, I would suggest to you that it is in both the public interest as well as the interest of this Assembly for us to have a real understanding and working knowledge around what exactly is happening with PCNs and the, I believe I heard my colleague say, \$280 million. I would suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that \$280 million is in the public interest.

The House of Commons recognizes that it should not require the production of documents in all cases; considerations of public policy, including national security . . .

Again, this was not one of those cases.

. . . foreign relations . . .

Again, not one of those cases.

. . . and so forth, enter into the decision as to when it is appropriate to order the production of such documents.

Mr. Speaker, today we were asking for important information with respect to the expenditure of well over \$200 million and how effective that expenditure was. We weren't asking for information that is critical to the province's security, we weren't asking for information that is critical to our foreign relations or even our relations with Saskatchewan but the very important information that should have been made available to the Chamber with respect to how PCNs are working. This Assembly has the ability to send for papers and records. It is absolute.

I might just add, Mr. Speaker, that the majority of members of this Assembly should want access to information. They should want more openness and transparency. It is exactly what this government was elected on. I know that members of the public would like access to this information. It is disappointing to see that not happening.

I'd just like to cite briefly for you that in 1990 the Solicitor General refused to provide the Standing Committee on Justice and the Solicitor General with two reports, citing privacy issues like we saw today around cabinet confidentiality and a number of other changes that aren't of a significant nature. The committee reported the matter to the House. This is the challenge, that this government is not respecting the importance of the Assembly and they are hiding behind legislation, not providing the most accurate information to the Assembly, which is critically important. In that case in 1990 a question of privilege was subsequently raised, and the matter of the failure of the Solicitor General to provide the report was referred to the Standing Committee on Elections, Privileges and Procedure.

Mr. Speaker, we've had a lot of discussion around points of privilege. We've had a lot of discussion around the information that is important to this Chamber. So far today we've seen the government outright reject to provide information. We've seen the government amend questions to provide the answers to the questions that they would have liked us to ask. Perhaps we should

have just asked them to write the motions for returns for us, and then they could have answered their own questions, similar I think to what happens during question period.

I can't stress to you enough the importance of the Assembly's ability to call for the production of documents. It's disappointing that this government hasn't done anything different than the previous government with respect to providing information to us. I don't want to go on too long, Mr. Speaker, as we are getting very close to 5 o'clock.

5:00

The Speaker: Hon. member, I believe that it might be 5 o'clock.

Mr. Cooper: Oh, that's unfortunate.

The Speaker: I certainly don't want to interrupt such an enthralling debate; however, I need to interrupt and advise that the time limit for consideration of this item has concluded.

Motions Other than Government Motions

Affordable Housing Committee

508. Mr. Gotfried moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly establish a special committee to conduct a review of the current state of affordable housing in Alberta, and in conducting its review the committee shall consult with key public, private, and nonprofit stakeholders; study attainable home ownership, workforce housing, low-income rental accommodation, seniors' housing, and homeless housing options; and make recommendations for the creation and implementation of a comprehensive provincial affordable housing strategy.

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

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As you can see, I'm honoured today to present Motion 508, which is on the Order Paper today. I'm somewhat saddened, because I've had the opportunity to work very closely with the Member for Calgary-East with respect to her bill, which we have not gotten to yet, but in the interests of moving this issue forward, I think it's important that we focus on the now, which is that now is an ideal time to leverage public investment in collaborative and innovative partnerships to increase our supply of flexible, affordable housing appropriate to current and projected demographic and geographic needs. It is also time, I think, for this Legislature to send a message to Albertans that we are serious about addressing chronic housing shortages and a lack of affordability across many segments of society.

There are three things that I want to talk about here. The who: the committee shall consult with key public, private, and nonprofit stakeholders. I call that PPNP. Public responsibility, of course, is incumbent here. In an environment of constrained financial resources we need to take a look at what we can do to leverage the resources of the other sectors. The private sector could bring capital, expertise, and business acumen to the table and deliver cost-effective results. Of course, the Minister of Seniors and Housing witnessed just a few shorts weeks ago a PPNP in action in a partnership for affordable and accessible housing, where we saw that business can be a force for good when society engages, challenges, and encourages it. The nonprofit sector also needs to be considered here because it's lean, it's mean, and it tends to be very passionate about the issues they're involved with. They can make great partners in solving some of society's most challenging and persistent issues.

Mr. Speaker, then there's the what. The committee will study attainable home ownership, moving some people, those people that are able, from rental into home ownership to help them not just today but to build equity for the future so that they can actually put money in the bank, that forced savings plan that we call a mortgage, so that they have the opportunity to do that – there are some great programs already in place that we can consult with – workforce housing, what I like to call public, essential, and key workforce housing; low-income rental accommodation; seniors' housing; and homeless housing and support options.

Then there are the outcomes, Mr. Speaker, the recommendations that we hope will come from such a committee. The committee will make recommendations for the creation and implementation of a comprehensive provincial affordable housing strategy. We know that there is lots of good work going on. Again, the Minister of Seniors and Housing has been meeting, I know, with her national counterparts. This is meant to support that opportunity, again, so we can move this forward with the support of this Legislature so that we can actually be key to this initiative, to this outcome, and to moving forward.

We'll support the good work that's already being done in the Ministry of Seniors and Housing. We'll ensure broad input, engaging Alberta's best, brightest, and most passionate from all three sectors, and we'll bring forward the best, most cost-efficient, innovative, out-of-the-box recommendations to complement the expertise within the ministry while recognizing the expertise, experience, and ideas of the private and nonprofit sectors in addressing an enduring problem in Alberta and indeed across most jurisdictions in our country.

In closing, esteemed colleagues, I'd like to say that this is not about partisanship. This is not about who or what party the member is from that is proposing this motion. This is about Albertans: young, old, frail, infirm, facing physical, financial, emotional, mental health and addiction-related issues or just unable to access affordable and appropriate housing, which many in our province are facing. This is about all 87 of us here today doing the right thing to ensure that we take one step forward in ensuring that all Albertans can reach their full potential through a thoughtful, comprehensive, collaborative approach to addressing a key issue for us all: a roof over our heads, sleeping in a warm bed, and an opportunity to not just survive but to thrive, Mr. Speaker, which I believe is part of the commitment we all make when we step forward for public service. These are important issues for us, and these are issues which face us in good times and in bad.

As I noted, I've had an opportunity to work with the Member for Calgary-East on her bill, and I would be very supportive of that as well as it comes forward. I know that there's good work going on in the ministry, but this is an opportunity for us here today to support the development, the comprehensive consultation across three sectors, which will be the source, I believe, of solving some of our societal issues when we can all work together across three sectors as Albertans across this province, setting aside partisanship.

I encourage all of you to support this motion, to take this one small step forward in achieving the goals and outcomes I know we are all passionate about. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ms McKittrick: Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to rise and once again speak about affordable housing. It is so amazing that we spend so much time in this House talking about affordable housing. I want to thank the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek for his motion, that is allowing us this afternoon to focus for an hour or so on the need for affordable housing. I only wish that so much focus on affordable housing had been in evidence under the previous government. We would not be in the situation we are now, with huge waiting lists,

buildings needing repairs, and the lack of appropriate supportive housing.

I was delighted when our government began its work to put together a provincial affordable housing strategy that will guide and direct the \$1.2 billion investment in seniors' and affordable housing. The government is currently consulting with Albertans affected by the lack of affordable housing, consulting with housing providers, municipal authorities, not-for-profits, housing co-operatives, and private-sector developers. The consultation included those involved with affordable housing for seniors, people with disabilities, those who need supportive housing, families, all Albertans that require the provision of affordable, stable, suitable housing.

I was one of eight MLAs who participated as an observer during one of the consultation sessions in Edmonton. It was a privilege to be in a room full of housing providers, advocates, municipal leaders speaking on what should be in the provincial housing strategy. I found that people were engaged, and they understood the need for government to develop a housing strategy so that a plan could be developed that would help all Albertans in need of affordable housing. It was also the opportunity for Albertans to participate in the consultation through an online survey. I'm hoping that the hon. member took the opportunity to indicate his support for affordable housing through his participation in a survey and that he had ideas to contribute to the process.

It is not only the provincial government that is engaged in developing an affordable housing strategy. As the Minister of Seniors and Housing indicated this afternoon, the federal government has signed an agreement with our province on affordable housing. I was very pleased at the recent announcement of funding from the Ministry of Human Services for the Alberta Rural Development Network to support projects on rural homelessness. Affordable housing is not just an urban issue; it's also a rural issue. This indicates clearly that while the consultation towards a strategy is taking place, the government is moving forward on key affordable housing issues.

I am always pleased when I can speak about how proactive my own municipality of Strathcona county is in dovetailing with the government's provincial affordable housing strategy consultations. Not only is there a community housing committee, led by two councillors of Strathcona county, but last week there was a community consultation on affordable housing, led by Heartland Housing, which is the local municipal housing authority. The municipality is being proactive by preparing its own plans so that they are ready when the government releases its provincial affordable housing strategy so that they can move forward knowing the needs and possible solutions and, therefore, have projects ready to work on with our Ministry of Seniors and Housing.

Mr. Speaker, while I am delighted with the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek's interest in supporting affordable housing, I will not be voting for this motion as the government is already moving forward to establish a provincial strategy for affordable housing.

Thank you.

5:10

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

Mr. Yao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to rise today to speak to the motion on housing brought forward by the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek. I'm sure that you're aware of the statistics surrounding Alberta's affordable housing system. It's a very diverse system, involving over 350 partners. These partners help to enable more than 110,000 Albertans to benefit from different

housing programs within Alberta, including rent supplement programs, community housing, and seniors' lodging, to name a few. It's vitally important that we have these programs in place so that Albertans from all walks of life have access to safe and secure housing no matter the situation they find themselves in.

The *Edmonton Journal* reported twice over the past year, first at the end of December 2015 and again at the end of May 2016, that the wait-list for social housing in Edmonton has recently skyrocketed. As of the end of December there were about 400 families reported to be considered high-needs. In Calgary the need has doubled according to the *Calgary Herald*. Those are huge increases, and that is a concern that needs to be addressed. Those aren't the only ones. If you look at the annual reports, Medicine Hat and Red Deer also mention increases in the need for housing. And I've only mentioned four cities.

Those are not mere numbers, Mr. Speaker; those are people, several thousand people who are waiting for assistance with one of the most basic needs that a person can have. The government needs to be proactive in its development of an affordable housing strategy that will address the concerns that are being raised today.

You know what, Mr. Speaker? Assisting people with housing is noble. It's satisfying to know that people have a place to call home, a place they can return to at the end of the day, or a place that family can visit. But it doesn't end there. It's important that these places that people call home be safe places, be places where they don't need to worry about the level of care they will be given, and be more than just a motel because there's no permanent or semipermanent place for them. It's important that these places, while they may not have all the bells and whistles, meet the needs of the person or the family that resides there. Even more important is that there are such places for people who need them.

That's what I'm hopeful such a review, as brought forward by the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek, will do. Now, I'm not typically a fan of reviews, sir, but I think that in this case, where we're looking at the current state of our affordable housing, where it may be succeeding and where it may be failing, it is important. More Albertans than ever are out of work, and the demand for affordable housing is on the rise, as I mentioned earlier. The government needs to act on this and consult with all stakeholders to see how we can work together to fill the gaps that exist.

Our seniors population is growing and will continue to grow over the next decade or two. The government needs to evaluate the state of our current seniors' housing now and needs to bring a plan forward to enable us to effectively prepare for and manage the need in two, five, 10 years.

We don't need a bill directing the government to act. When it comes to conducting a review, the government has the ability to act on its own volition. Would such legislation, such a piece of paper be the impetus that the government needs to move forward on a housing strategy? It shouldn't be. It should be enough that the members of this House stand together to ask the government to put the time and resources into a comprehensive study of the current state and projected need of affordable housing here in Alberta.

For those reasons I support this motion. Sir, this is better drafted than the bill that's before us that is similar. It hits all the points. For that I commend the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek. I encourage all members to stand together and support this call for the government to evaluate the current system, consult with all stakeholders, whether private, public, or nonprofit, and create an affordable housing strategy for both today and tomorrow.

Thank you, sir.

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

Mr. Malkinson: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased today to speak on Motion 508. I'd like to begin by thanking the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek for bringing forward this motion. Through my time in the House and events around Calgary I've come to note that the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek and I share a passion toward affordable housing for all Albertans, including seniors, so it comes as no surprise to me that the member would put forth a motion to establish a special committee to look at issues around affordable housing. I applaud him for doing so because today there are over 15,000 Albertan families on an affordable housing wait-list. Yes, that's 15,000. I've personally seen the stabilizing effect that having affordable housing has on low-income families who are working to improve their lot in life.

Given the previous government's lack of leadership on this issue the need for safe, affordable, and appropriate housing is clearer than ever. These families on the wait-list, Mr. Speaker, deserve better. I agree with the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek that improving the province's current housing situation and ensuring its supply of affordable housing is a complex matter requiring the engagement, consultation, and co-operation of public, private, and nonprofit stakeholders. However, we don't need to duplicate the work that is already in progress.

What I don't agree with is that a special committee as proposed in the motion will be helpful in reaching the goal of all Albertans having safe and affordable housing. This would slow down the good work already being done by the government on this issue. This government saw the need to act swiftly on housing, and as a result it's dedicated \$1.2 billion to investment in seniors and affordable housing. This is why, Mr. Speaker, our government is establishing a provincial housing strategy which will help guide the \$1.2 billion investment this government will make over the next five years.

Let's go over some of those investments, Mr. Speaker. It includes \$298 million for capital maintenance and renewal; \$582 million for sustainable housing renewal; \$148 million for new housing supply as well as \$120 million for housing for indigenous populations that are living off-reserve; \$13 million for new supply, specifically targeted at demographics like those who are homeless, for example; and \$14 million for planning new projects.

As reported in Capital Region Housing's 2015 annual report, no new social housing units have been built since 1993, this in addition to the \$1 billion inherited by this government in deferred maintenance from the previous government administration. That's over 25 years of inaction on this file, Mr. Speaker, by the previous government.

Mr. Rosendahl: Shame.

Mr. Malkinson: Shame, indeed.

But make no mistake. Although the government had to act quickly on the housing file, we are committed to thoughtful discussions about how we move forward with respect to affordable housing.

So why are we moving toward an affordable housing strategy? Well, after more than four decades in government the previous government did not provide leadership on this issue, Mr. Speaker. After more than four decades in government the previous government allowed Alberta to be one of three provinces without an affordable housing strategy.

Let's be clear. Our government is committed to making thoughtful decisions about how we move forward with respect to affordable housing. This is why our government has had extensive consultations with thousands of Albertans across the province to ensure our government's strategy will guide the development of an effective and sustainable affordable housing system. This is why

our government has proceeded with extensive consultations on this issue through regional meetings, that were completed in June.

5:20

In fact, these regional meetings included the participation of eight MLAs, including the opposition Member for Calgary-North West. Mr. Speaker, our government proceeded with online engagement via a survey for Albertans that was completed this July. This was followed by a second round of targeted engagements, completed in September. In addition, our government is working with housing management bodies across the province to identify shovel-ready projects and has made numerous announcements of projects to build housing. In fact, I'm working with the city of Calgary and my local city councillor on a housing project that I hope to see built in Calgary-Currie, which I believe is very close to being a shovel-ready project. I hope to see that in my riding.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the demand for affordable housing is now, and it's not a time to form a special committee on housing. Now is the time to continue with the work that is already taking place as it is moving in the right direction. This is a focused government that's working toward affordable housing. [interjections] The opposition may laugh at our focus on affordable housing, but I believe that it is an important issue.

This focus and determination on housing has opened up further opportunities such as a recently signed deal on the social housing agreement with federal minister Kent Hehr, which replaces the outdated agreements that tied the hands of housing providers and allows them to find modern solutions to tackle the need of Albertans. Our government has also signed an affordable housing agreement with federal minister Amarjeet Sohi that will provide Albertans with sustained funds for renovation and upgrades.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to reiterate that I know the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek brings this motion forward with a genuine purpose, to see fewer Albertans without a place to call home, and that is a worthy goal. However, I do not believe that there is anything to be achieved by supporting this motion. Starting back at square one with consultations, as suggested in this motion, will not help Albertans who need homes right now. As a result, I will not be supporting this motion, and I encourage all others in the House to do the same.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. McIver: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate this opportunity to rise on this important issue, affordable housing, one that, it's my belief, all members of this House care about and surely one that all members of this House ought to care about. I'm a little surprised by what I'm hearing from the government side. I mean, when you read the motion from the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek, it's really about working together on all sides of the House on an issue that I believe all sides of the House care about, affordable housing.

I'm a little troubled by some of the commentary because it seems inconsistent with other evidence that's before us. We heard commentary about a backlog in maintenance on the housing. To be clear, there is a backlog in maintenance on the housing, but the budget the government brought forward actually makes that backlog bigger rather than smaller. But I'm not here to criticize that, only to point out that the criticism just levelled is in no way legitimate by that member. They actually have increased the backlog since they've been in government. Again, it's just a matter of: it's a big job. The reason there's a lot of backlog is because

there's a lot of affordable housing because there has been a ton of work done by previous governments on this file for years.

I know this first-hand. During my time on Calgary city council I was the chair of Calgary Housing Company for three years running, so I speak, I think, with a little bit of knowledge on this when I say that the government of Alberta has for a long time been co-operating with municipalities across Alberta, private-sector and public-sector housing companies, and NGOs to provide housing. So there's nothing new here. This is a matter of moving forward in the best way possible.

The other thing that seems a little bit disingenuous: some of the slams from the government side, particularly when the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek offered an olive branch. It's like the government-side members snapped it in half and poked him in the eye. You know what? If there was ever a place where you actually ought to reach across the aisle and work together, it's on affordable housing. I would say to the hon. member that just spoke in particular: shame. This is a place where we should be working together. You know what? There are a lot of times to be partisan and hit each other over the head with partisan issues, and we'll do that. This isn't one of those days. This isn't one of those issues.

Further, I would say that it's further disingenuous, Mr. Speaker, when on the Order Paper today, though it probably won't be presented today, although time will tell, is Bill 202, the government's own bill coming up, the Alberta Affordable Housing Review Committee Act. Wow. That sounds pretty darn similar: affordable housing review committee. That's what this is proposing. It could end up being exactly the same or almost the same as what the government is going to bring forward – we don't know because we haven't got the text of that before us – yet the government members have said that this is a terrible idea.

You know what, Mr. Speaker? I wish they would drop the partisanship just for this issue – just for this issue – and, as our Member for Calgary-Fish Creek suggested that we do, work together. You know what? The Member for Calgary-Fish Creek was a little bit modest in his introduction, if you don't mind. I know he doesn't come to this lightly or easily, and this isn't his first day concerned about this. As a member of the construction industry he has been part of introducing and bringing to the market attainable-housing issues. Some of the first attainable-housing programs in Alberta were authored by this Member for Calgary-Fish Creek, and I think everybody in Alberta owes him a vote of thanks for that.

Those aren't just words. Mr. Speaker, I've actually been at the ribbon cuttings for the openings that were done by his employer, a house builder, when he was there. He's being quite modest in not bragging about how much he cares about this and how much he's accomplished and how much he could contribute to the government side and all other sides by doing this. Again, listen; that's just one, but I fully believe there are many committed members on the government side and the other opposition benches that could contribute a great deal as well. I can tell you that the government – well, the current government would tell you that the previous governments haven't done anything. I can tell you from my time as chair of the Calgary Housing Company that there has been so much done. It's a large and complex process.

In fact, the 10-year plan to eliminate homelessness originated at the city of Calgary, adopted in a slightly revised form by the government of Alberta, and I would say that that's been a great success. Has homelessness been eliminated? No, Mr. Speaker, it has not. But has it resulted in a lot more people finding homes that would not have found homes without a concerted effort for them to do so? That's a yes. Every time you put a family or an individual in a home that they would not have had otherwise, I don't know any

way to call it anything but a success, and I would be surprised if anybody in this House would either.

I can tell you: it's so complex, and that's the reason why we all need to put our minds together. The Calgary Housing Company – I don't know if it's changed – when I was there, had nine different portfolios, you know: one fully owned by the city, one fully owned by the province, one fully owned by the feds, combinations of fed, provincial, city owned, city-provincial owned, city-fed owned, every combination of that, some with rent geared to income, some with mixed income. This is a complex issue that would be best solved, best dealt with if we work together.

You'll have to forgive me, Mr. Speaker, if I found it just a little bit disingenuous for government members to say that there's nothing to learn from other sides of the House here and that it will in some way slow them down to have a committee, particularly when on the same Order Paper for today is a bill suggesting the Alberta Affordable Housing Review Committee Act, which has not yet been introduced. For the government side to say that having a committee to deal with this – really, folks, let's work together on this. Drop the partisanship. In all of our communities, big and small, across Alberta there are people who need homes. This is one place where we need to hold hands, put our collective minds together, and actually make it better. We'll poke each other in the eye on the next issue. This isn't the one.

5:30

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

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak to this motion. I'd like to begin by sincerely thanking the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek for bringing this motion forward on something that is an incredibly important issue. I absolutely agree with him that now is the time to leverage the many opportunities that are available to us to address this problem. You know, in the last 18 months since I was elected, I've had the opportunity to meet with people across my constituency. Whether it's been business, whether it's been community leagues and community groups, whether it's been at seniors' homes, everyone I've spoken to has always asked me about the issue of housing.

That's because here in the heart of Edmonton we're very excited because we're going through a period of revitalization. We're seeing growth downtown like we've never seen before. It's amazing, and it's wonderful to see. It's great for our city. But at the same time it's highlighting the issue that's been ongoing for some time. We're also realizing that we can't ignore that in the shadow of all this amazing and fantastic growth there are still far too many people who are living in its shadows, on our streets. We recognize that if we want to have a city that really has opportunity and space for all, we have a lot of work to do on the issue of housing. I was reminded of that just a few weeks ago, when I had the honour of joining in Edmonton's homeless count and I spent a few hours out on the streets talking to men and women who did not have a home and learning more about their experience.

So the question of housing is one that I have personally made a priority for myself as an MLA and as a representative for Edmonton-Centre. Together with some of my colleagues, in particular the MLA for Edmonton-McClung, I've had the opportunity to meet with many of the housing organizations here in our city, folks like the Edmonton Coalition on Housing and Homelessness, or ECOHH, Homeward Trust, the Capital Region Housing Corporation, the Greater Edmonton Foundation, E4C, the Canadian Mental Health Association, Boyle Street Community Services, the Terra association, Edmonton Inner City Housing

Society, and the Edmonton YMCA. I know that many of my colleagues on both sides of this aisle have had the opportunity to meet with these organizations as well.

I've had many conversations with my municipal colleagues about the challenges our city faces. They've spoken to me, and they've told me how they are ready and willing to be partners in addressing this key issue. I and my colleagues have been keeping in active contact with the Minister of Seniors and Housing, seeking information on our government's plan, asking what was going to be in the budget, asking for more information about the direction and the strategy that we were going to take. So we were incredibly pleased when we brought forward our budget this year and we learned that we would have an investment of \$1.2 billion to build and repair affordable and seniors' housing across Alberta.

We were even more pleased when that minister announced that we would be working to create Alberta's first provincial affordable housing strategy. Mr. Speaker, this crisis in housing didn't develop overnight. I recognize that this began back in the early '90s, and it began with our federal government as federal funding began to dry up and be withdrawn. Of course, that trickled down to the province, and that trickled down, then, to the cities. It had a bit of a ripple effect, and of course the many cuts in social services that we saw in the early '90s here in our province didn't help with that matter either, unfortunately, as we saw vulnerable Albertans who were struggling with mental illness and addictions often left to fend for themselves.

But I recognize that work has been done since. We've been working to try to recover from that gap, and I recognize that the previous government tried to do what it could in some respects. I recognize that cities in Alberta – Edmonton, Calgary, others – have stepped up and tried to do what they could. You know, many community organizations stepped up to try to fill those gaps. They went out and they worked with – well, they depended on public generosity. They worked with private industry and philanthropy and, of course, just competed for whatever government assistance was available.

So we find ourselves where we are today, where we have a bit of a patchwork of a system of bandages trying to staunch the bleeding. One billion dollars was mentioned in deferred maintenance, and again that's something that's trickled down all the way through all three orders of government. Unfortunately, there was no real plan to co-ordinate the resources and the interests of all three orders of government with our community partners to try to address that need.

But, Mr. Speaker, we're finally on the road to developing that plan. I had the chance to attend the minister's consultations here in Edmonton back in June along with representatives from many of the organizations I had the opportunity to meet with over the last 18 months. They provided a wealth of ideas and great thoughts and feedback. They expressed enthusiasm for our government's commitment and the opportunity to be partners in helping us fulfill it. As others have mentioned, there was the online survey. I know that myself and several of my colleagues made an effort to get out into the community to let people know that it was there, be they community organizations or individuals. Now our municipal community partners are ready to work with us to get this done.

I sincerely appreciate the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek's passion for this issue. I recognize his own personal investment in this. I'll tell you that my door is always open to talk with anybody in this House about how we can move forward on this issue, and I dare say that it's true for all of my colleagues and it's true for the minister. That said, I don't see a point in duplicating the work that's

already under way. The consultations are happening. We're speaking with our partners. The municipal partners are lined up, and they're ready to go.

When the minister brings forward that provincial affordable housing strategy next year, we will all be prepared to sit down and work together, and I am more than happy to work with any member in this House and to bring their thoughts and ideas forward because – you're quite right – this is an issue that we all need to work on together. I believe we should all support the work that's being done and the strategy that's going forward and the work that the minister is doing. I invite all members in this House to reach out to the minister and share with her your thoughts, your ideas, any connections, any networking that you have, and we can work together to address this issue.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: You were standing, hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Why, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm sorry for my exuberance in standing to be recognized.

Well, Mr. Speaker, you know, it's an interesting day here in the Chamber this afternoon. I am a little bit surprised. I'd like to commend my colleague from Calgary-Fish Creek, who's been a long-time advocate on behalf of the need for affordable housing here in our fair land, and the good work that he's done in terms of reaching out to the government members and offering the opportunity to work together on such an important issue.

You know, one of the trademarks of the NDP, formerly the fourth or fifth party, whichever they were, was a continual calling upon the government to work together, and it's disappointing to see such an about-face. Issue after issue after issue we see an about-face from this government with respect to how they functioned in opposition and how they function in government. Mr. Speaker, I hope that if the Wildrose ever has the opportunity of serving as the government, we won't fall into the same traps that this NDP has with respect to, well, a number of issues, including points of privilege and saying one thing and doing another and all that.

But for today let me speak specifically about this motion that's before us. Just last week in the House, you'll know, Mr. Speaker, that I asked some very specific questions about deferred maintenance. Specifically, in the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills there are currently 41 bedrooms that sit vacant, not because of the previous government but because of this government's inaction and their unwillingness to act and take necessary and important steps to have those facilities maintained and repaired.

While the government likes to talk about how much wonderful work they're doing on an affordable housing strategy, I don't know what can be more clear than when you have 41 bedrooms currently sitting vacant, waiting to be accessed by low-income Albertans, and this government sits on their hands while they try to put together a strategy. They have announced \$1.2 billion in funding for low-income housing, a very, very important initiative, but what many of those people need today is action from this government. They need to go ahead and identify a problem that clearly exists, with the 41 bedrooms sitting vacant, unavailable for low-income constituents of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, but they've decided to play partisan politics on a motion inside the Chamber instead of doing the right thing.

5:40

Let me just highlight for you, Mr. Speaker, some of the inconsistencies of members of that side. I'll quote from *Hansard*.

I am delighted to be part of a caucus with such strong advocates for affordable housing, including the Member for Calgary-East. Bill 202 [provides] the Alberta Affordable Housing Review Committee Act, which is in keeping with our government's priority for safe, affordable . . . housing. What I particularly like about this bill is that it addresses the complexity of providing affordable housing by engaging all the stakeholders involved.

My question today, Mr. Speaker, I guess, revolves around the issue: do members of that side of the House still continue to support Bill 202 given that today we have seen a very clear departure from supporting the things that they once said were important? That particular speaker, on March 16, was the hon. Member for Sherwood Park. She then said, "I . . . therefore urge all members of this Assembly to support this bill and to demonstrate their commitment to planning and action on affordable housing." I understand that that was before the strategy, but the question is: do they continue to support Bill 202?

I hope that the hon. Member for Calgary-East will be in her seat when the vote is called so that we will have an understanding of whether or not she supports a motion that essentially is a reflection of her bill. She said:

The aim of this bill is to hear from many Albertans and to take a big-picture look at this [critical] issue. I want to allow a committee to conduct a comprehensive review of affordable housing issues in this province. I want a committee to make recommendations that would make Alberta a province committed to housing security, a province where every Albertan has a safe, secure place to call home.

Mr. Speaker, that is a noble cause, and what I'm curious to know about today is whether or not members of that government will vote against Bill 202 just as they're voting against the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek. [interjections] While the government would like to heckle the opposition because of the important work that's before the Chamber, they have shown a complete lack of respect for the dignity of this House just last week. It's quite possible, Mr. Speaker, that you yourself . . .

Mr. Mason: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The Government House Leader. A point of order.

Point of Order Imputing Motives

Mr. Mason: Well, Mr. Speaker, 23(h), (i), and (j). To suggest that the government shows a complete lack of respect for the dignity of the House is completely incorrect with regard to – and I'm assuming that he's pointing to the point of privilege that was dealt with last week, for which we apologized, recognizing that it was an error. He cannot presuppose the other point raised by the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed, which is substantially different and a much weaker case, in my view.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that the hon. member should not impugn the government's attitude towards this place and this House and our respect for parliamentary tradition. I think that it's unacceptable for him to be making those kinds of statements in this place, and I ask that you so rule.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On the point of order I think what we have here is a very clear matter of debate. Last week this government was found in contempt of this Chamber, and I was merely referring to that fact, that the government is contemptuous of the Assembly. They've been found in contempt, and a case very well can be made that they show – they certainly showed then – a

lack of respect and dignity, that the Assembly desires. So I don't have a desire to withdraw because what we have here is a matter of debate.

You, Mr. Speaker, found them in contempt. Contempt is often referred to as a lack of dignity and respect. In fact, I was using the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood's own words, that he used both inside the House and in a media interview in 2013, that we've spoken about at great length.

I'm more than happy to have you rule, and should you rule that it is a point of order, we can deal with that at that point. I'm also willing to continue my remarks.

The Speaker: Hon. members, this is a private member's – the Member for Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: You started my speech, Mr. Speaker. This is a private member's bill. I think the Government House Leader, the most seasoned one in the House, knows very well that he's just trying to take time away from a private member's bill. I'm suggesting as politely as I can that you should rule this for what it is, a frivolous complaint.

The Speaker: Hon. members, what an interesting day. I'm hearing two things. First of all, a point of order. I'm not exactly certain that it's a point of order. However, I would also point out that the House did accept the apologies. It was considered genuine and sincere. I think it is inappropriate to be referencing that matter.

With respect to the second one, that is still yet to be decided. I have not made a decision.

I would encourage, therefore, that we return to the debate on the matter before us and focus less on the other legislative matters and more on the private member's motion that is here.

I think you were speaking to the motion. Is that right, Opposition House Leader?

Mr. Cooper: Yeah, to the motion. Mr. Speaker, I will speak to the motion.

In the name of not being as hot under the collar as one ought to be, I'll withdraw and apologize for my comments.

Debate Continued

Mr. Cooper: The point is, Mr. Speaker, that it is very surprising. The Member for Calgary-Fish Creek intends to add value to this discussion. As you know, a motion of the Assembly is to urge the government to do something. The motion is not binding. But what the government is communicating today is that the work of members of the Assembly who want to add value to this conversation is not as important as the work that they're doing.

Now, that might not be their intention. We've heard a number of them say that they support the intent of the motion, but they just can't support the motion. I think it's unfortunate. I think it's disappointing. I encourage all members of the Assembly, particularly government members, to reconsider their position, understand exactly what this motion means and requires of the government, and in good faith to support that.

Now, with that said, Mr. Speaker, I'm pretty certain that we're going to have a recorded vote on this, and I would ask for unanimous consent of the House to go to one-minute bells.

[Unanimous consent granted]

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

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to rise to speak to private member's motion 508 on the topic of

affordable housing, a subject which I also have some degree of authority on, having worked in the housing industry for many years and also being a board member for homeEd, the City of Edmonton Non-Profit Housing Corporation for six years. I find it unfortunate for the member who has proposed this motion, that in all likelihood was written many months ago. I must say that a lot has happened since the time that the motion was, in all probability, originally written. The Official Opposition and the third party seem to want to continue to talk about affordable housing. We want to build some. We want to get moving on it.

5:50

Now, since the late '90s, as other speakers have indicated and I can verify, the federal government was absent from the affordable housing file. The money just didn't flow. I know that we tried to get opportunities, tried to force the federal government to come up with money as housing management bodies, but the well was dry for decades, and it was impossible to get anything built as a housing management body because we didn't have a willing partner in the federal government. That's one of the things that we do have right now, a federal government which has funding for affordable housing available in partnership with provinces and municipalities. That has to be taken advantage of, hon. members. I think that not to do so would be a very unfortunate circumstance.

What we are looking at doing right now is moving forward and getting housing built right away. We don't need to go backwards into a consultation process that is already well under way, and by accepting Motion 508 that's exactly what we would be doing. We'd be leaving our hammers in the tool box. We need those hammers at a workplace, and we need those affordable housing units built or improved. Those people who are on that 15,000 waiting list need to be moved out of the situations they're in and into safe, affordable housing.

Our government understands the need for safe, affordable, and appropriate housing that is accessible for all Albertans, especially those who are most in need. As was mentioned before, 15,000 Albertan families are on an affordable housing waiting list, and they don't need to be forced to wait longer when we already have a process under way that will get us closer to the construction phase than if we were to adopt the policy proposed under Motion 508 and roll the carpet backwards into a consultation process which really is a duplication of what's already taken place.

Nobody underestimates the passion and commitment of the member opposite who proposes this motion about the affordable housing file. He's demonstrated over the years a commitment, but – make no mistake – we are committed to getting them built, making thoughtful decisions about how we move forward with respect to affordable housing.

Mr. Speaker, we agree with the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek. Improving the province's current housing situation and ensuring a supply of affordable housing is a complex matter requiring engagement, consultation, and co-operation of public, private, and nonprofit stakeholders. The need for a strategy is clear, but establishing a special all-party committee to conduct a review of the current state of affordable housing, as the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek says, is not the correct method. I cannot vote in favour of this.

I'd like to emphasize that our government is already taking action in creating a provincial affordable housing strategy. In fact, our government's strategy is expected to be in place by spring 2017 and will help guide and direct the \$1.2 billion in investment in seniors' and affordable housing. By voting in favour of this motion, we would be back at square one. This would leave the 15,000 Albertan families waiting for a safe, affordable, and appropriate home sitting on a waiting list for more time than is necessary. Given that the

Alberta housing crisis is the result of inaction from previous governments, moving backwards on our government's proactive approach is not the solution. These families deserve better.

The demand for affordable housing has been long-standing and never-ending, it seems, and the opportunity right now exists where we have a willing partner in the federal government. We should be taking advantage of it moving forward, coupling the financing that we are able to produce in tough times to join that federal government money and build and maintain units that need the maintenance and build more as projects present themselves.

This is why our government has proceeded with extensive consultation on this issue through the regional meetings that were completed in June. These regional meetings included the participation of eight MLAs, including the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek's colleague the hon. Member for Calgary-North West. In addition, Mr. Speaker, the government proceeded with online engagement via a survey for Albertans that was completed in July. It was followed by a second round of targeted engagements, completed in September. The fact is that thousands of Albertans across the province have provided their input, and through this extensive engagement and consultation process our government's provincial affordable housing strategy will guide the development of an effective and sustainable affordable housing system.

Mr. Speaker, the time for action is now. The hammers need to be getting out . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but Standing Order 8(3) provides for up to five minutes for the sponsor of the motion to speak.

I would invite the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Mr. Gotfried: Mr. Speaker, I'm greatly disappointed by the response. You know, to go back and make this partisan by talking about what a previous government didn't do is to me unconscionable, given the fact that we have an opportunity here to do what's right. It seems to me that we've been talking about 2,000 beds, which was previously 2,612 beds, and we're cutting ribbons for that. It seems to me that we're still moving ahead with capital housing grants that were done by the previous government and that we have not seen a lot of net new beds occur in this marketplace.

Yes, this is a time for action. This is a time for consultation. Even within the consultations being done by the ministry, it talks about housing providers, Mr. Speaker. We need to consult the other sectors. We need to work with the private sector, who we've partnered with successfully in the past, to produce not just hundreds but thousands of beds for seniors' and affordable housing. We need to work with the nonprofit sector, who is being challenged today by – guess what? – the actions of this government in bringing forward a higher minimum wage. I talked to one provider. It has cost them \$921,000 of costs which are now coming off the plates and the services given to seniors. We are now bringing in a carbon tax. I talked to another provider. It is going to cost them half a million dollars of costs that are going to be layered on top, and that's going to come off the plates and the services delivered to seniors.

Mr. Speaker, this is a time to put down the partisan sabres here and to work with the private and the nonprofit sectors for the benefit of Albertans, not for partisanship, not to say that we're already doing something because what they're doing is talking to housing providers. They're talking to a narrow group of people that is not exactly what we need to do here, which is to partner with a broader sector, with the private sector, who bring expertise and capital.

We see the Resolve campaign in Calgary bringing millions of private-sector dollars to support the efforts for affordable housing and the efforts against homelessness in the province. We see the

private sector partnering to bring beds, both subsidized beds and market beds, to the market. I think we heard from one of the speakers here today, Mr. Speaker, that mixed housing is happening already in this province. We need to open the doors, we need to have conversations, and we need to bring the best and the brightest people together from all three sectors to solve this problem as we should have been doing for years and years. We were doing that. They're saying that we weren't, but that was happening.

I was a part of it. I was in the industry. I was one of the pioneers of the private sector in working to solve the problems of affordable housing in Calgary. I was proud to be one of the first authors of an attainable home ownership program in this province, bringing best practices not just from across Canada but from around the world. That is what Alberta is about, Mr. Speaker: best practices, doing it, a made-in-Alberta solution that we can do here with the entrepreneurial spirit, with the innovation and the expertise we have here, which is the public and the private and the nonprofit sectors brought together and firing on all cylinders.

That is what we should be focusing on, not throwing grenades at past governments, which I was not a part of. I have come here to do the work for Albertans. I come here to make sure that we work together, that we can partner with the private sector and the nonprofit sector and not worry about ideological issues, Mr. Speaker.

Business can be a force of good. I was at a ribbon cutting with the Minister of Seniors and Housing just two weeks ago with the company I previously worked for building affordable and accessible housing, Mr. Speaker. I see it every day. I see it all the time. We need to work together.

You know what? It disappoints me. You've got a bill, Bill 202, and I've worked and I've spoken to the member and I've suggested some positive amendments, which I hope will be accepted if we get to that bill. Mr. Speaker, this might be all we have to work with if we don't get to that bill for any reason. This is a chance for us to put down the partisanship and to work together to ensure that that work that they say is taking place over here – so why not make it better? Why not make sure that we have the stakeholders from all sectors involved with this? This is not to bring anything to a halt. This is a private member's motion. This is meant to enhance what government does.

6:00

I hope to provide direction from all 87 of us here in the Chamber so that we can do good work for Albertans, so that we can talk about the homeless, so that we can talk about those people who are struggling to find affordable and appropriate housing and rental, so that we can give the hand up to people that want to move from rental to home ownership, which will save the government hundreds of thousands and millions of dollars in the future by helping those households to build simple equity. Those mortgage-paying jobs that we hear about so much: we need to help those people that have mortgage-paying jobs to actually pay a mortgage.

Mr. Speaker, I am disappointed if we cannot get support from all sides of the House on this particular issue here. I thank the members in this House. I even appreciate . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member, your time has passed.

[The voice vote indicated that Motion Other than Government Motion 508 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 6:01 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Ellis	Panda
Barnes	Gill	Taylor
Cooper	Gotfried	Yao
Cyr	McIver	

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Horne	Nielsen
Babcock	Jabbour	Phillips
Carson	Kazim	Piquette
Connolly	Kleinsteuber	Rosendahl
Cortes-Vargas	Larivee	Sabir

Dach	Loyola	Schreiner
Dang	Malkinson	Shepherd
Drever	Mason	Sucha
Feehan	McCuaig-Boyd	Sweet
Goehring	McKitrick	Turner
Gray	Miller	Westhead
Hinkley	Miranda	
Totals:	For – 11	Against – 35

[Motion Other than Government Motion 508 lost]

The Speaker: The Assembly stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 10.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6:06 p.m.]

Table of Contents

Prayers	1715
Introduction of Guests	1715
Members' Statements	
Nellie Carlson School.....	1716
Home-schooling	1716
Government Policies	1716
New School Construction in Southwest Edmonton.....	1717
Equinox Festival in Bon Accord.....	1717
Calgary Veterans' Food Drive.....	1725
Oral Question Period	
Job Creation and Retention.....	1717
Oil and Gas Transportation to the West Coast.....	1718
Student Assessment.....	1718
Coal-fired Electric Power Plant Retirement.....	1719
Adult Learning System Review.....	1720
Agribusiness Industry Development.....	1720
Bovine Tuberculosis.....	1721
Postsecondary Education Funding.....	1721
Seniors' Housing for Couples.....	1722
Carbon Policies.....	1723
Capital Infrastructure Funding.....	1723
Affordable Housing.....	1724
Wildlife Management.....	1724
Heritage Savings Fund Alberta Growth Mandate.....	1725
Introduction of Bills	
Bill 28 Public Health Amendment Act, 2016.....	1726
Tabling Returns and Reports	1726
Tablings to the Clerk	1726
Orders of the Day	1731
Motions for Returns	
Health Electronic Record System.....	1731
Division	1732
Ministry of Health Fraud Detection Procedures	1732
Division	1734
Primary Care Networks Review	1734
Motions Other than Government Motions	
Affordable Housing Committee	1737
Division	1744

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

For inquiries contact:

Managing Editor

Alberta Hansard

3rd Floor, 9820 – 107 St

EDMONTON, AB T5K 1E7

Telephone: 780.427.1875