



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Third Session

Alberta Hansard

Tuesday morning, March 7, 2017

Day 3

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Third Session

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

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

Party standings:

New Democrat: 55 Wildrose: 22 Progressive Conservative: 8 Alberta Liberal: 1 Alberta Party: 1

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Deron Bilous	Minister of Economic Development and Trade
Oneil Carlier	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
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David Eggen	Minister of Education
Richard Feehan	Minister of Indigenous Relations
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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 Community and Social Services
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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. van Dijken

Anderson, S.	Gotfried
Carson	Orr
Connolly	Piquette
Coolahan	Schneider
Dach	Schreiner
Drysdale	Taylor
Fitzpatrick	

Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Chair: Ms Goehring
Deputy Chair: Mr. Smith

Aheer	Miller
Drever	Pitt
Hinkley	Rodney
Horne	Shepherd
Jansen	Swann
Luff	Yao
McKitrick	

Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

Chair: Mr. Shepherd
Deputy Chair: Mr. Malkinson

Drever	Nixon
Ellis	Pitt
Horne	van Dijken
Kleinsteuber	Woollard
Littlewood	

Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Chair: Mr. Wanner
Deputy Chair: Cortes-Vargas

Cooper	Nixon
Dang	Orr
Jabbour	Piquette
Luff	Schreiner
McIver	

Select Special Ombudsman and Public Interest Commissioner Search Committee

Chair: Mr. Shepherd
Deputy Chair: Mr. Malkinson

Ellis	Pitt
Horne	van Dijken
Kleinsteuber	Woollard
Littlewood	

Standing Committee on Private Bills

Chair: Ms McPherson
Deputy Chair: 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. Cyr
Deputy Chair: Mr. S. Anderson

Barnes	Malkinson
Dach	Miller
Fildebrandt	Panda
Fraser	Renaud
Goehring	Turner
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Luff	

Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Chair: Loyola
Deputy Chair: Mr. Hunter

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

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

10 a.m.

Tuesday, March 7, 2017

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Good morning.

Please bow your heads. Let each of us reflect or pray, each in our own way. Let us have confidence in our abilities to make decisions while maintaining respect for those who may oppose those decisions. Never let our actions or our words be disrespectful. Amen.

Please be seated.

Orders of the Day

Government Motions

2. Ms Ganley moved on behalf of Mr. Mason:
Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly resolve into Committee of the Whole, when called, to consider certain bills on the Order Paper.

[Government Motion 2 carried]

3. Ms Ganley moved on behalf of Mr. Mason:
Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly resolve itself into Committee of Supply, when called, to consider supply to be granted to Her Majesty.

[Government Motion 3 carried]

4. Ms Ganley moved on behalf of Mr. Mason:
Be it resolved that the message from Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, the 2016-17 supplementary supply estimates (No. 2) for the general revenue fund, and all matters connected therewith be referred to Committee of Supply.

[Government Motion 4 carried]

5. Ms Ganley moved on behalf of Mr. Mason:
Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 61(2) the Committee of Supply shall be called to consider the 2016-17 supplementary supply estimates (No. 2) for the general revenue fund for six hours: three hours on Wednesday, March 8, 2017, beginning at 3 p.m., and three hours on Thursday, March 9, 2017, beginning at 9 a.m.

[Government Motion 5 carried]

6. Ms Ganley moved on behalf of Mr. Mason:
Be it resolved that the message from Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, the 2017-18 interim supply estimates, and all matters connected therewith be referred to Committee of Supply.

[Government Motion 6 carried]

7. Ms Ganley moved on behalf of Mr. Mason:
Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 61(2) the Committee of Supply shall be called to consider the 2017-18 interim supply estimates for three hours on Tuesday, March 14, 2017, beginning at 3 p.m.

[Government Motion 7 carried]

Amendments to Standing Orders

8. Ms Ganley moved on behalf of Mr. Mason:
 - A. Be it resolved that the standing orders of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta effective April 21, 2016, be amended as follows:
 1. Standing Order 14 is amended by renumbering suborder (1) as (1.1) and by adding the following before suborder (1.1):
Withdrawal and custody of strangers
14(1) For the purposes of this Standing Order, a stranger does not include an infant being cared for by a Member.
 - B. And be it further resolved that the amendment in this motion shall come into force on passage.

The Speaker: Are there any members who wish to speak to the motion? The Member for Calgary-East.

Ms Luff: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Sorry; I'm a bit out of breath. I was just running from Public Accounts. I just want to speak briefly to this. This is a recommendation that came about as a result of the recommendations of the family-friendly subcommittee of the Members' Services Committee that was charged to look at ways in which we can make our Legislature more family friendly. This is the result of that committee. I just wanted to say that I thought the committee worked really well together. It was an all-party committee, and we worked, you know, co-operatively. We worked on a consensus basis, and this is a recommendation that everyone on the committee agreed was something that we should do. I just would like to take the opportunity to thank all of the members of the family-friendly subcommittee for their work on that subcommittee in allowing this to be something that we can act on.

Now, as many of you know, there have been a few babies in the House already. I think some of us might argue that said babies have been better behaved than members at times. However, these children that have been in the House have been here as the result of work that has been done through the Speaker's office to allow the babies and not as a result of a change in the standing orders. So with this change to the standing orders we are making this a permanent change.

Now, as many of you will also know, it's Westminster parliamentary tradition that no one is allowed on the floor of a House or a Legislature who is not a member. Anyone else is deemed to be a stranger. Now, I've mentioned this to many of my colleagues before, and I want to reiterate it now. I don't think that tradition is ever a good reason to continue to do something if the basis of continuing to do it is tradition alone. So I think that in this sense we are changing tradition in a very positive way for the future of parents and people all over Alberta.

However, in recent years this particular issue has come up again and again in parliaments around the Commonwealth. It's come up here, in the House of Commons in 2012. It came up in Australia recently, and they've had to make changes there. Just in April of 2016 a Slovakian MP was barred from bringing her child onto the floor of the House there because of this rule.

10:10

I just want to say that there are a few facts, I think, worth considering, to my mind, in this matter. First of all, elected officials, MLAs, in Alberta don't get parental leave. Regular folks in Alberta are entitled to parental leave; MLAs are not. As a result of that, we sometimes need to bring our children with us to work, and I would encourage folks to do so.

Second, it's quite obvious to me and, I think, anyone who's been around small babies and small infants that the best place for an infant is always in the arms of a parent. That parent could be a male parent or a woman parent or a parent of any gender. It really doesn't matter. Babies like to be snuggled. It's an incredibly crucial time, the first three months of life especially, so to be able to have the opportunity to bond with your baby and still be a sitting member of the House is a huge benefit.

Thirdly, I think this really sends an important signal to Albertans. It sends a signal to Albertans that in this province we believe that you can be both an MLA and a parent. This is one step that we're doing that really makes that clear. It makes it clear to women and men all over the province who have small children that you can still run for public office and you can still be involved. You can still be involved and be a parent. It's something that you can do. I think we want to have members in this House that represent all ages and all stages of Albertan life, so making this change makes that possible.

I think it's also very clear – it's been clear to me – that all of us in this House who are parents struggle. We struggle to do this job, and we struggle to balance our responsibilities as parents with our responsibilities as MLAs. We struggle every time we have to leave our kids at home and come here for four days. We struggle every time we have to bring them to an event on the weekend and they knock down a signed B.B. King guitar, like mine did this weekend. We struggle every time we miss a recital or we miss a soccer game or a school event. So, you know, something small like this is perhaps more . . .

An Hon. Member: Symbolic.

Ms Luff: Symbolic. Thank you.

. . . than something that actually makes a difference, but I think that sometimes these symbolic gestures are important.

I do want to just take this moment to thank all of the people who are not here in this House who make it possible for us to parent and to do our jobs. My partner, who stays at home with my two-year-old and my four-year-old during the week so that I can come do this job; I know the Minister of Status of Women's partner did an amazing job when Patrick was little; the Associate Minister of Health's husband; every single partner, every single grandparent, every single family friend that has helped out when we needed it: I want to take this opportunity to thank all of those people.

What this change is really about at its core is the acceptance that children are part of life and part of society. Being a new parent can be an incredibly isolating experience because it's this thing that happens, that you're not supposed to bring your baby places because it might cry or because it will cause a fuss. But children are part of life, and children should be part of society. We should embrace them at every level of society, and a change like this really makes that possible.

I think it's also appropriate that on this day so close to International Women's Day and given things that are happening in this world, the House embrace what I consider to be a very feminist change. It's a step towards equality, equality in opportunity to be both an elected official and a parent for all genders. I thank my colleagues in the House for accepting this very feminist revision of the standing orders.

I'd just like to take a moment right now to read something that my dear friend Kate wrote on Facebook last night that I think deserves to be on the record. She said:

If feminism is cancer, it is cancer to misogyny, cancer to modern backwards double standards, cancer to discrimination and oppression. Feminism shall invade those practices, shall morph

them into equality and humanity, shall multiply rapidly. Let this "feminist cancer" wreak havoc on prejudice and bring about symptoms of . . . respect, fearlessness, merit, opportunity.

This is a great opportunity that we have here today to make history in this change, so I'd like to thank all of the members of the House for supporting it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today to speak to what in some ways is a historic change to the standing orders. As you know, sir, there's nothing that gets me more excited in the morning than the standing orders of this place, so it is a pleasure to be part of the discussion today, this discussion around what is a positive change.

I think you'll probably remember, Mr. Speaker, that quite some time ago I rose in this place to suggest this very committee. At that time members on this side of the House and that side had identified some shifting demographics here inside the Chamber and that perhaps it was time to address some of these very important issues that face families here inside the Chamber as well as right across Alberta. I was pleased to be able to sit on the family-friendly subcommittee. I think that there was some significant work that was done. I think that there was some very positive work that was done. I might add that it was very positive, very good to be able to work in a bipartisan way as this affects so many members of the House.

I might just add that my good friend from Strathmore-Brooks is, I believe, next on the list to be able to bring an infant into the Chamber as we look forward to the arrival of a new bundle of joy just in the next couple of weeks, so there are lots of exciting things that are happening for him and this side of the Chamber when it comes to babies being passed around caucus, et cetera. We look forward to that, and we'll celebrate with him as we've celebrated with many in this House on the birth of new arrivals.

With respect to moving forward and identifying areas where we as members can support each other as parents as well, I think it is critically important that we do those things, not in a way that makes us more important or less important than any other Albertan but that acknowledges it is important that through our public service we are also able to make our families a priority.

Oftentimes, as was mentioned by the Member for Calgary-East, our families do wind up taking a bit of a back seat, so I know that I'm just so grateful for the work of all of our spouses and partners, that provide us the opportunity to serve the public day in and day out. They have an equally great commitment to this Chamber. They have an equally great and sizable commitment to our province to ensure that we all play our particular role in ensuring that we leave our province better. Really, creating a family-friendly environment is just about that. These young babies and children all across our province are the next generation of Alberta and are so critical to the success of this province.

I know that I and members of this side of the House, too, will be pleased to support this motion. I know that we are happy to be able to make some positive steps for all members of the Chamber, and I think that on a go-forward basis, it is really great to be able to see ways that we can engage more people in the political process.

In many respects this committee was about that, not putting barriers in place for those who are in the very critical years of their lives, where they're raising children, but to be able to remove barriers. We should ultimately be trying to remove barriers for all folks. I think that the Member for Calgary-East is correct in her assertions about not placing barriers for people, particularly for women that may like to engage in the political process.

I know that when people from all backgrounds and all genders are engaged in the process, our democracy is strengthened and our Chamber is strengthened and our province is strengthened. I know, Mr. Speaker, that I can tell you that I and members of this caucus want to partake in encouraging people to engage in the process, particularly women.

10:20

I also shared last night some significant – significant – disappointment in some individuals that are not in our party but associated with our party that produced some very inappropriate content on the Internet. I certainly reject their comments. Any indication or any comment that would discourage women from wanting to be involved in politics is absolutely unacceptable and in no way, shape, or form reflects my views. I will speak for everyone in our caucus that those comments or statements are not reflected by anyone in our caucus and should be dealt with appropriately.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your time. Thank you to the members opposite for their input into the community and as well, in this particular case, into the committee, and thank you to the members of the third party and the independent members, who also had the opportunity to provide some comments specifically to the motion. I think that it is a positive step for all of us here today.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member. I wonder if you as an experienced parent might give some lessons. I'm sure you'd be welcomed by the Member for Strathmore-Brooks. It would be nice to see the Member for Strathmore-Brooks snuggling, with a soothing and soft voice. I'm sure that the House but certainly I will look with anticipation to that.

I think we have application of 29(2)(a) here. Are there any questions or comments to the Opposition House Leader? Okay.

The hon. member of the third party. Please proceed.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand in support of the motion, and in the spirit of the member that moved it, who talked about the way that the committee worked very much in a collaborative and co-operative fashion to get here, I will simply say: what she said, what he said.

Mr. Hanson: Not under 29(2)(a) but just while we're on the subject of babies and babies in the House, although I've been sworn to secrecy, I'm going to take this opportunity to say that I'm going to be a grandpa.

Mr. Cooper: Relevance.

The Speaker: Hon. member, I must tell you that it is very, very relevant.

Are there any comments under 29(2)(a)?

Mr. Taylor: I was just going to, I guess, comment on what Dave said. On April 27 I'm going to be a grandfather as well for the first time.

The Speaker: Are there any other members who would like to speak to this motion?

[Government Motion 8 carried]

The Speaker: Hon. members, I wonder if I could inquire if someone from Executive Council, the cabinet, would be prepared to introduce this motion.

Amendments to Standing Orders

9. Mr. Schmidt moved on behalf of Mr. Mason:
Be it resolved that Standing Order 52.01(1) be amended in clause (a) by striking out "Human Services" and substituting "Community and Social Services, Children's Services."

The Speaker: Are there members who wish to speak to this matter?

[Government Motion 9 carried]

Ombudsman and Public Interest Commissioner Search Committee

10. Mr. Schmidt moved on behalf of Mr. Mason:
Be it resolved that the Select Special Ombudsman and Public Interest Commissioner Search Committee be authorized to meet during the consideration of the 2017-18 main estimates.

The Speaker: Having heard the motion, anyone wish to speak further to it?

Opportunity to close debate, Mr. Minister?

[Government Motion 10 carried]

Adjournment of Spring Session

12. Mr. Schmidt moved on behalf of Mason:
Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 3(9) the 2017 spring sitting of the Assembly shall stand adjourned upon the Government House Leader advising the Assembly that the business for the sitting is concluded.

[Government Motion 12 carried]

Consideration of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor's Speech

Ms Jansen moved, seconded by Ms Miller, that an humble address be presented to Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor as follows.

To Her Honour the Honourable Lois Mitchell, CM, AOE, LLD, the Lieutenant Governor of the province of Alberta:

We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.

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

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to members of this Assembly for the opportunity to respond to the Speech from the Throne. It is such an honour to be able to debate on the throne speech. I'd like to thank Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor for her thoughtful and passionate words about our province and for laying the groundwork of this, the Third Session of the 29th Legislature of the province of Alberta.

I'd like to echo some of Her Honour's words that have stayed with me since that speech. "We are one province, one people on a common journey towards a common future." Those words gave me pause for thought. It's not easy to work together on a common future in an often confrontational parliamentary system. It's even harder when some people use the excuse of confrontational politics to justify threats, bullying, and harassment.

That's why, Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to stand before this Chamber and give my support to this year's Speech from the Throne, because while working together towards a common future is a goal that some days seems elusive in this Chamber, we all know, at least, that

the values espoused by Her Honour in her speech are worth the effort, and they're worth stating again: openness and inclusiveness, compassion, hard work, and justice. I'm sure that every person in this Chamber will join me today in showing their support for those values.

When we talk about openness, we're celebrating the Alberta we know today, built by people from all over the world, all religions, all creeds. For many of us our parents or our grandparents were the beneficiaries of that openness and came here to build a new home and a new life. We must protect that heritage and those values to ensure that our province continues to grow strong into the future. Inclusiveness of all kinds is the key to the values of this province.

10:30

I was thrilled to hear in this year's Speech from the Throne that the government is going to work with people with disabilities to provide timelier, more accessible services. A powerful voice for inclusion and persons with disabilities ally, Leah McRorie, shared her thoughts with me about the throne speech. She said:

I believe the majority of Albertans share my vision . . . for an Inclusive Alberta where all people have equal access and opportunity.

I do not know of another Govt that shares my vision & values. NDP are the 1st & only government to not only hear thousands of [persons with disabilities], but listened to folks and took action.

I found her words very moving. It's satisfying to know that a group of Albertans who traditionally felt overlooked or ignored now feel that they're being heard and respected by government. This world that we live in was made, for the most part, for the able-bodied. For people with disabilities, physical or learning disabilities, there's often a daily struggle to belong in a world that wasn't really built with them in mind. But that's changing, and I'm proud to work with the people who want to make that change.

Of course, inclusiveness is not just about people with disabilities. Creating an inclusive society also means helping those who are excluded from enjoying the basic benefits of our province because of poverty. The Alberta child benefit and enhanced family and employment tax credit have helped nearly 200,000 children in this province to date. These kids now have nutritious food to eat, a warm winter coat, or new books to read, when they didn't before in this province. In the fall families all across Alberta had to dig a bit deeper into their pocketbooks to come up with extra money to pay school fees, but no more. For some families, including families in my constituency, in Calgary-North West, those fees added to a lot of pressure on the family budget. When a child comes from a low-income family, they may be left out of activities that their classmates get to enjoy, noticeably left out, and this can make them feel different in the eyes of their classmates. When kids go off to school – it was the same for me when I was a child, and I can imagine that it's the same now – they just want to fit in, to be accepted by their peers and not singled out for their differences.

Once again I turn to the wonderful Leah McRorie for perspective on this. She shared her personal experience on social media, saying, "I was called to the principal's office b/c my fees were not paid. No fieldtrips 4 me . . . Humiliating!" She went on to tell me about how she got in trouble at school for having unpaid fees and was given a letter to take home. She was afraid and didn't give the letter to her mom. She knew that her mom had no money to give, so she ripped it up, and the next day she skipped school for the first time. She was 10 years old. No child should have to go through that. This government agrees, and I think that's wonderful. We're taking steps to reduce school fees, saving families hundreds, potentially thousands of dollars every year, and that means that kids won't have

to feel the pain of being excluded from activities that their friends get to enjoy. They can focus on their school work, making friends, and having fun.

A strong education system, Mr. Speaker, is the key to a strong Alberta. We all want children to fulfill their potential. I know that the parents in Calgary-North West are very thankful that their government continues to provide stable, predictable funding for education. That means that teachers have remained in the classroom; new schools are being built. As laid out in the throne speech, I was so happy to see that classroom education will remain a priority, as will infrastructure. Children can't learn if they don't have a proper space to learn in. They need a school, a classroom that's up to date, that's safe, and that's not overcrowded.

Last year shovels were in the ground at over 100 new school sites. This year thousands of Albertans will be put to work on construction sites across the province as well: new schools, health care centres, roads, and bridges, infrastructure that is critical for Alberta's economic future, a future that is starting to look very bright.

The world-wide collapse in the price of oil left our province reeling, but we are stabilizing. There have been positive signs of economic recovery, but it is going to take a while before Albertans feel it in their daily lives. Until then I want to reassure my constituents, the people of Calgary-North West, that I as your MLA will continue to support you. I'm proud to be part of an inclusive, compassionate government that is truly working to make life better for Albertans. The agenda laid out in the throne speech may seem daunting, but it's one that is so worth while to accomplish because it puts Albertans first.

I along with my government colleagues will continue to work to create good jobs, to make life more affordable, to protect and enhance the public services relied on by everyone who calls this great province their home. I am proud to be an Albertan, Mr. Speaker, proud to be a member of a caring and compassionate government, and proud to work every day for the residents of Calgary-North West.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

Ms Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and members of this Assembly, for this opportunity to respond to the Speech from the Throne. It is such an honour to be able to second the motion to accept Her Majesty's speech. Every day when I step into this House I am humbled by the task before me, that the great constituents of Red Deer-South entrust me to speak for them on matters that are vital to the well-being of their families. I want them to know that I will continually strive to earn that trust.

I'm proud to be a part of a government that is working to make life better for ordinary Albertans. Albertans are worried about covering the basics: paying the mortgage, putting food on the table, and making sure their kids get a good education. I've been there myself, sitting at the kitchen table looking at a pile of bills and wondering how I was going to make ends meet. The agenda laid out in Thursday's throne speech is an ambitious one but one that puts Alberta families first by creating good jobs, making life more affordable, and protecting the public services that families rely on.

These goals reflect the values of my constituents in Red Deer-South. Every fall families across Alberta have to reassess their budgets in order to ensure they have enough money to pay for school fees. This government's plan to reduce school fees will save families hundreds, if not thousands, of dollars. This is money that families in Red Deer-South can now put towards their bills, their mortgage, or put into a savings account.

Red Deer, like a lot of Alberta communities, is feeling the effects of aging infrastructure. The city is now home to over 100,000 people. It's the third-largest city in Alberta, and millions of vehicles pass by every day as people travel between Edmonton and Calgary. I'm so grateful that our government has seen the need to invest in infrastructure, including the Gaetz Avenue-QE II interchange that is currently under construction. This project will not only improve traffic flow in the critical corridor; it will make it safer, too. It has created many good, mortgage-paying jobs.

Another project I'm really pleased with is the Red Deer regional airport runway extension. I stressed to my colleagues the importance of this, and we got it done. Having been already completed, this directly created jobs, and we're already seeing interest in expanded usage of the airport, meaning more jobs are sure to follow.

Last year construction started on hundreds of infrastructure projects across the province: roads, bridges, schools, health care facilities. I was happy to see in the throne speech plans to continue to rebuild and replace aging infrastructure, creating even more construction jobs. I will work with my colleagues to give Red Deer a voice at that table as our city is growing in number and in need. Our city needs new schools. I've heard this first-hand from teachers and educators during my numerous visits to the schools in my area. We need a new courthouse, something I've been working on with the appropriate ministries so that this necessity materializes.

I also need to stress to my constituents: I've heard your concerns about Red Deer regional hospital loud and clear. This government has already met with the hospital many times in recent months to address your concerns, and we will continue to work on making health care in Red Deer world-class quality. Expanding the hospital and the services it provides has always been and continues to be at the top of my priority list.

10:40

Red Deer is a growing city. It is also an aging city. Senior care is a priority for residents of Red Deer-South. Seniors helped build this province. They deserve to retire in comfort and dignity. However, seniors can be overlooked. Recently I was shopping at a local Red Deer grocery store when I ran into a senior lady that I know from my days at Safeway. It was her birthday, so I wished her a happy birthday. She smiled and thanked me, and then what she said broke my heart. She told me that I was the only one to wish her a happy birthday. Her family and her friends had all passed on. This is the reality for many seniors in Alberta. It was then I realized I could do something. I teamed up with my wonderful colleague in Red Deer-North to start hosting birthday parties for Red Deer seniors and those in the surrounding areas, a simple thing, really, just cake, entertainment, and good company, but it's something that can make a big difference in the lives of seniors, to know they have not been forgotten, to know that we recognize how important they have been and continue to be in making our communities stronger.

Seniors deserve a government that makes life better for them. I applaud the provincial and federal governments for providing funding for Red Deer senior housing groups in order to pay for much-needed maintenance. Having upgraded fire safety systems, new hot water tanks, and upgraded furnaces will make our seniors safer and improve the quality of their life. I'm pleased that this government will continue to create new long-term care facilities and offer more home care services to allow seniors to stay in their homes and communities. To those of you who fear that your quality of care depends on the state of our economy, you can rest assured that we are on your side. To this government austerity can't be the answer to the pressing question: what's going to happen to vital social services when times get tough?

Low-income families in Red Deer can often feel that their concerns are overlooked also. I want to say to them: I see you, and I hear you, and so does this government. We have been and will continue to be in your corner fighting for you. We are moving towards a minimum wage of \$15 per hour, a wage that will mean that low-income workers won't have to go to the food bank in order to feed their children.

This year we will also continue to make progress on our government's commitment to \$25-a-day daycare so that more families can access affordable, safe child care, more women can enter the workforce, and we remove a barrier from mothers who want to work but sometimes can't. Raising a family and providing for one shouldn't have to be a choice. We won't let it be. Bit by bit this government will help to eliminate the wage gap and empower women.

I'm also glad to see a pledge in the throne speech to build more affordable housing units so more Albertans will have a roof over their head. Providing access to the most basic of human needs shouldn't be lauded as generous or wasteful but, rather, acknowledged as the simple first steps in building a bigger and better middle class.

No Albertan should have to live on the streets. In October I participated in the homeless count that took place all across the province to show that this government wants to address the issue of homelessness. I want to tell people in Red Deer that if you ever find yourself out in the cold, my office is open to you. If you need to warm up, please come inside and share your experiences with me and my staff. The humanistic aspect of my job is something that I will always be able to make time for. I recently moved my constituency office to a street-front location to make it more accessible for exactly these reasons. An open and accessible office is something I pride myself on, and I hope my constituents take me up on this. Every time I walk into this Chamber, I do it for the benefit of you folks, the hard-working people of Red Deer-South.

We all know that a strong energy sector in Alberta is vital for our province's economic future and Canada's. Last November the federal government approved the Trans Mountain pipeline and line 3, citing our government's climate leadership plan as one of the main reasons the pipelines got the go-ahead. But our government's work isn't done yet. I'm proud that our Premier and ministers continue to make pipelines a priority. Just how big a priority was outlined in Thursday's throne speech. Albertans now know that their government will defend this province and our key industry in court by seeking intervenor status on any legal challenges to the Trans Mountain pipeline.

Alberta's energy industry impacts every corner of this province. It's no different in Red Deer. I will join my voice to those of my hon. colleagues in this Assembly to continue to speak in support of these pipelines. They are critical not just for Albertans but for all Canadians because a strong energy sector in Alberta makes Canada stronger.

There's no doubt that low oil prices have hurt our province. Alberta's economy has taken a beating lately, but as we've seen time and time again, when this province takes a hit, it always shakes it off and keeps its head up. There are already positive signs of recovery: more wells are being drilled, exports reached \$8 billion in December, and employment has grown by 18,000 since bottoming out in the summer. While our economy continues to recover, I'm proud to tell my constituents and all Albertans that their government will help them through this downturn and make their lives better.

It looks like we've weathered the eye of the storm in true Albertan fashion. We pushed onwards with our goals and promises. We will continue to reduce costs and bring government spending

down while maintaining and protecting the core services – health care, education, and social services – that many Albertans rely on. Steps have already been taken. This government has cut and combined government agencies; frozen salaries for cabinet ministers, MLAs, political staff, and civil services management; and spending has been streamlined. I know that we will continue to work to find further reductions and bring down spending growth at a thoughtful pace.

While it might have been easy to cut services during our tough economic times, you don't turn your back on Albertans when they need it the most. Providing front-line services are some of the most important duties of a government. To wash our hands of these responsibilities would be short sighted, with poor consequences.

We will also be helping families by introducing a consumer bill of rights, further building on consumer protection steps that we took last year to end predatory lending practices and ban door-to-door energy sales.

I'm proud of what our government has accomplished and eager to get back to making this province a more progressive and accessible place for the 4 million people that have the pleasure to call this beautiful province home. I'm proud to go to work every day in service of the people of Red Deer-South, and I'm thankful they trusted me with their vote. This agenda laid out in the throne speech is an ambitious one, but it is one that will put us on the path to a brighter future for all Albertans, including my constituents in Red Deer-South.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to reply to Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor and the throne speech. Myself, my colleagues here, and the good people of Calgary-Foothills: all of us are very pleased to see Her Honour address the issue of building new pipelines to markets. She's right. Alberta is too dependent on selling its energy products to one customer at one discounted price. This must change.

The government of Canada approved the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion over the existing pipeline right-of-way. The line 3 expansion to Wisconsin was also approved to reach the installed capacity of that pipeline. This was done despite the opposition of the NDP in both British Columbia and Manitoba. Pipeline construction brings with it good-paying jobs, including union jobs. I can't believe that the NDP in those two provinces threw their union brothers and sisters under the bus for ideology. I guess they have enough money and enjoy being the permanent opposition in those two provinces.

10:50

Speaking of being in permanent opposition, Mr. Speaker, I dare say that this throne speech is a large warning shot across the bow of the British Columbia NDP as it heads to the polls in two months. The hon. Premier is correct. How dare her NDP comrades in British Columbia oppose a pipeline expansion allowing a route that has provided the safe movement of petroleum to Vancouver since 1953. I know Albertans and British Columbians will be relieved that Alberta NDP government ministers, backbenchers, and staffers will not be going to British Columbia to interfere with that province's election that's coming up soon.

I'm also pleased to see that the government is going to work thoughtfully and respectfully with the federal government and business communities and elected officials across Canada on the Energy East pipeline proposal. Canada is home to the third-largest oil reserve in the world. Still, Mr. Speaker, Canada is not energy

independent, although we own the third-largest resource. Support for Alberta oil and gas means not just a stronger Alberta but a stronger Canada.

Mr. Speaker, the Energy East pipeline is still not approved, but just the prospect alone is causing global investment decisions to be made. This pipeline alone can displace almost 800,000 barrels per day of foreign oil coming into Canada. The Liberals and the NDP want to leave our bitumen and the conventional oil in the ground and be dependent on foreign dictators. Investment decisions are happening that will one day see Alberta's petroleum products sold all over Europe. Talk about market diversification.

First, let's talk about utilizing about 925,000 barrels of Alberta oil in refineries within Canada and Europe, and that's not counting the United States, our largest trade partner. Irving Oil already operates at 300,000 barrels per day in its refinery, the largest in Canada, at Saint John in New Brunswick. Irving boasts having long-term supply arrangements with the offshore of Newfoundland and Labrador, the North Sea, and Saudi Arabia. I'll come back to Saudi Arabia a little later. Irving recently purchased the Whitegate refinery in County Cork, Ireland. This being the only refinery in Ireland, it has 75,000 barrels per day of capacity and currently sources oil from North Africa and the North Sea, selling gasoline, diesel, and kerosene across Ireland and Europe.

Can you see, Mr. Speaker, that we are on the verge of selling Alberta's synthetic crude? Western Canadians sell it to Ireland and Europe, and that's travelling from New Brunswick in Irving's double-hull tankers. This would not have been possible without the work of our Alberta international offices and the diplomats at Global Affairs Canada, who worked tirelessly to end the proposed European Union's field quality directive.

Alberta could very well soon displace 375,000 barrels per day of Saudi Arabian and North African oil used by Irving Oil. The oil that they currently use is conflict oil, dictator oil, bloody oil, or whatever you want to call it. It's an exciting prospect to think that it could be replaced by free, ethical, and democratic Alberta oil. Their women are not allowed to vote. Women are not allowed to drive automobiles or have the freedom to show their faces.

The Energy East pipeline is just getting started. Then there is the Valero refinery in Lévis, Quebec. Beginning in 1971, it produces 265,000 barrels per day. Then our Suncor's Montreal refinery, built in 1955, has a capacity of 160,000 barrels per day. Coastal Petrochemical operates the Montreal East refinery. Built in 1963, it has a capacity of 70,000 barrels per day. That's another 495,000 barrels per day for Alberta's petroleum products to be moved into the domestic market in addition to Irving Oil refineries' 300,000 barrels. This oil is not coming from places where people are taking up arms against each other and committing atrocities on a regular basis. Need I mention the Burnaby refinery at the end of the Trans Mountain pipeline, which handles 55,000 barrels per day for the B.C. Lower Mainland's use?

Speaking of trade, Mr. Speaker, I did notice Her Honour mention that "additional trade missions will be undertaken this year to key markets across the world, including Japan, India, and China." As you know, I was in India and Japan not even two months ago, at my own expense, and I have reached out and am prepared to sit down with the Minister of Economic Development and Trade and the Premier to brief them on my experience and provide them with insights into the government and business community to better prepare them for the trade promotion that they seek to undertake to those countries.

Alberta has incredible scenery and resources for the staging of motion picture productions. Bollywood produces over a thousand films a year, and there is no reason why Bollywood films cannot be filmed in Alberta.

Seventeen per cent of India's GDP comes from the agriculture sector, and that is valued at over \$152 billion. Agrifood alone is valued at \$40 billion and expected to grow to \$65 billion by 2018 in India. India remains an important player in the global agriculture market as an importer of commodities like edible oils, pulses, lentils, wood, and wood products. Guess what? Alberta produces all of those products, and we need to be selling more into that market. In the last fiscal year India imported about 6 million tonnes of pulses. We have so much opportunity to grow more pulse crops in Alberta. Mr. Speaker, the majority of the Indian population is vegetarian, and they consume lentils and pulses as their main diet regularly, so we have an opportunity to export more of our valued agriproducts. Canadian pension funds and institutions are very bullish on India and have committed about \$12 billion over the last 24 years in equity investments.

My former employer Reliance Industries Limited is the largest privately owned company with interests in telecommunications and oil and gas. When I met them, they expressed interest in importing our bitumen from here because their refinery can process the hardest crude in the world. Reliance was the first refiner from India to import about 320,000 barrels of Canadian crude in 2012. After that, there was not much business with them. I used to work at the company, and I was part of the team which built the world's largest refinery, producing 1.4 million barrels per day, on the west coast of India in the province of Gujarat.

While I was in India, I carried your best wishes and compliments and greetings to the Speakers of the Andhra Pradesh and Telangana provinces, and they were quite happy to receive your greetings and gifts. They also sent their greetings and best wishes to all of us here. Thank you for that.

I also met many union ministers. They call their federal ministers union ministers. I happened to meet with India's Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation minister and India's ministers for Information and Broadcasting and Civil Aviation and their Minister of Science and Technology and Earth Sciences. They have shown lots of interest.

11:00

I also happened to meet the Speakers of both Telangana and Andhra Pradesh states. Most of the questions they asked were about how we run the business here and whether there are disruptions in the House. That's the kind of thing that happens in that part of the world. They were quite pleased to actually follow us as a role model in their proceedings in their Legislatures.

But one thing I was excited about, Mr. Speaker, is that I happened to visit my native place, where I was born. All my relations send their greetings and best wishes to all Albertans and to all of us here. I happened to meet their Premier, who's a very, very dynamic leader. He's building a new capital in Amaravati, a brand new capital. It's a greenfield capital. He said that there will be lots of opportunities for Albertan and Canadian businesses, so I'm going to meet with our economic development minister and update him on the opportunities there.

I also met numerous cabinet ministers from the Premier's cabinet and neighbouring province in Telangana as well. They have shown lots of interest. With Mr. Trump as President of the United States there are lots of inquiries from students in India. They used to go to the U.S. before, and they're looking at Alberta and Canada for opportunities in our universities here. So I'm planning to meet with the presidents of the U of A and the U of C and update them on the opportunities. If I get time to meet with our Minister of Advanced Education, I'll be happy to brief him, too, on the opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, on my way home I stopped in Japan, the world's third-largest economy. It's interesting that I found Alberta pork. It

was displayed on grocery store shelves, very proudly, there. With Abenomics happening there, there is cheap Japanese money that overtook Chinese direct investment into Canada in 2015. It used to be China that was high in the trade between Asian countries and Canada, but now Japan overtook that.

AltaGas LPG in Alberta here have received approval to build a liquefied propane export facility on Ridley Island near Prince Rupert to ship Alberta's surplus propane for use in Japan. That's a good opportunity for exporting LPG, for using Alberta's surplus gas – convert that into LPG and ship it to Japan.

Mr. Speaker, it is through trade and selling quality Alberta products into these emerging markets that we will diversify the economy. That way we can build on our strengths in the energy sector as well as diversify in sectors like agriculture, forestry, tourism, and even producing Bollywood movies in Canada and in Alberta, particularly.

The world is at Alberta's doorstep, Mr. Speaker. [Mr. Panda's speaking time expired] Sorry. I ran out of time.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member. I hope you enjoyed holiday time as part of that. It seems to me you were doing a lot of working.

Under 29(2)(a).

Mr. Orr: I really appreciated your comments and your thoughts and your experiences. I just wonder if you would like to sort of continue, any other things you'd like to add to that, please.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Panda: Thank you so much. As I said, Mr. Speaker, the world is at Alberta's doorstep. I know how scary it can be to take that first step onto the plane or ship and venture to a foreign land, but we need to make that step. Our airports have grown, and airlines keep adding new offerings to new destinations. Entrepreneurs are now taking advantage of dedicated air cargo to help move products made right here in Alberta to Shanghai. It's a direct, nonstop flight to China. If not for the Air China cargo at the Edmonton International Airport, pump manufacturers in the Nisku industrial park would be shut down due to the recession, but because of the direct cargo access, they can ship to buyers around the world and keep people employed here in Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for this opportunity to speak and reply to the Speech from the Throne. There is much more potential in Alberta than this government has ever recognized, and for everyone's sake I hope we can unleash much more of it to get out of this recession in Alberta.

Also, Mr. Speaker, you know, I visited the Canadian consulate in Mumbai and the Canadian High Commission in New Delhi and met with the Alberta tradespeople, and I did the same thing in Tokyo. I met with the Canadian trade commissioner and his staff and Alberta's managing director there. They're all doing a great job. They need a little bit more encouragement on finding ways to diversify the markets. That needs political leadership. This government can actually do much more.

I recently found the India itinerary of the agriculture minister. I felt it was too light, and the stakeholders he was meeting were not the best return for the money and time he spent there. He could consult with his opposition critics, whichever ministry is travelling. We are here to help and collaborate. That's the job of any elected official here, to make sure that we advance the cause of Alberta in the international market because we are in a recession. We are all in this together, and we have to find ways to get out of these economic difficulties we're in.

On behalf of the Wildrose and all my colleagues we are here to help the government bring in good policies that will improve Alberta's economic conditions. With that, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Under 29(2)(a) are there any other questions or comments to the hon. member?

Seeing and hearing none, the hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Ms McKittrick: Mr. Speaker, M. le Président, I would be tempted to talk about my recent travels overseas, but I think I'm going to limit my response to the throne speech this morning. First of all, I would like to thank the Lieutenant Governor, the Right Hon. Lois Mitchell, for her speech outlining the government's agenda for the session of the 29th Legislative Assembly. I would also like to thank her for her remarks reminding everyone of the 150th birthday of Canada, that we are going to be celebrating in 2017. I liked the explanation as to why she was wearing the special purple robe and the significance. As someone who became a Canadian citizen on Canada's 110th birthday, I recognize the significance of this birthday and the privilege of calling Canada my home and the honour of serving Alberta as an MLA.

In the Speech from the Throne Her Honour reminded all Albertans that we are an open and inclusive society built on enduring values: compassion, hard work, and justice. Albertans come from every part of the globe. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be a government MLA with my colleagues that truly represent a diversity of backgrounds of Albertans. This is important to not only myself but also to many Albertans. The reason I became a Canadian citizen was because Canada is an open and inclusive society where everyone has the opportunity to reach for their dreams. No one is excluded. It is important to remind oneself often how easy it is to exclude people and how easy it is to perceive others as different, as a threat, or as not welcome.

During my maiden speech I mentioned that as a daughter of a French Jew I have lived all of my life with the consequences of what happened to his family and friends. This should not be happening to our Muslim neighbours or the LGBTQ-plus community. I am proud of a resident of Strathcona county who after the massacre in the mosque in Quebec invited community residents to write messages of love, peace, and welcome to our Muslim neighbours who are building a mosque in my riding.

11:10

One of the first actions of community building I did when I became an MLA for Sherwood Park was to form the Strathcona diversity committee. This committee is comprised of strong, passionate residents from a wide range of faiths, ethnic backgrounds, ages, and interests. This committee has shown incredible leadership. Members have taken the initiative to promote diversity through hosting events, writing articles for local newspapers, and spreading the message of unity and diversity through the daily actions in their lives. This committee hosted a blanket exercise led by youth, and one of these youths organized a Christmas potluck for the LGBTQ-plus youth in the community. These are, I believe, common values in Alberta, and it was an honour to invite two members of this committee to witness the reading of the throne speech.

As stated in the Speech from the Throne, "the Alberta government has signed new relationship agreements with Treaty 8 and the Métis Nation of Alberta" and is continuing to pursue other agreements. An ongoing issue for our First Nations communities is the lack of clean drinking water, which is deplorable. I know the challenge of access to clean water for drinking, washing, cooking,

and daily activities. It means the constant search for water for infant formula, washing clothes, and the huge expense to households. In light of our government's commitment to the principles of the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples I am happy that addressing the critical need for access to clean drinking water on-reserve is a priority.

Mr. Speaker, the leadership the government is showing in terms of relationships with First Nations has inspired municipalities, schools, and other institutions to model the government's leadership and acknowledge the treaty lands they are located in. I am delighted that my own municipality of Strathcona county is starting a process to make such a statement at the start of council meetings.

Mr. Speaker, it is difficult not to cheer for the work being done by the government to advocate for the building of pipelines to get our oil to tidewater. This was achieved because of the clear vision of the government to work with diverse sectors to demonstrate how a strong economy and a clean environment can and must go hand in hand. As my riding is part of the Industrial Heartland, I often meet with oil and gas executives and tradespeople. They appreciate the work done by the Premier and her ministers to promote the need for pipelines and market for oil. They also appreciate the guidelines around emissions and clear environmental standards. The Kinder Morgan pipeline will be starting in Sherwood Park. It will provide employment for many in my community and throughout Alberta. I will actually be able to watch the pipeline construction from my constituency office, and I look forward to it being constructed.

In late 2016 the Minister of Economic Development and Trade and the Minister of Energy announced the first grants for the petrochemical diversification program. The first grants were awarded to companies in the Industrial Heartland. This was great news not only for constituents of mine but for construction and oil and gas workers throughout the region. The plant site will be built, adding value to our energy resources, and will be producing the chemicals needed to produce plastics that are used all over the world. More grants will be announced later, when the Energy Diversification Advisory Committee makes its recommendation on how to find ways to get more value and more jobs from our energy resources.

Mr. Speaker, over the past year the government has made great headway in showing its commitment to improving Alberta's environmental reputation as part of our highly effective and realistic economic diversification plan: renewable energy businesses, retraining for workers, solar installation companies, geothermal and wind energy businesses as well as the creation of several boards and foundations to support the work of this growing sector. In Sherwood Park we have formed the Strathcona county environmental committee so that we can identify local expertise and promote awareness of this wide-ranging and quickly growing renewable energy sector in our county.

The government has recently completed the Anthony Henday ring road to the relief and delight of not only my constituents but everyone who works and lives in the capital region suburbs. More infrastructure projects are being planned to make up the infrastructure deficit inherited from previous governments. It is especially important that school construction keeps pace with enrolment projections, and I look forward to seeing the completion of schools announced for the Elk Island public and Catholic boards.

The recent announcement of renovation funding for social housing and seniors' projects was important in ensuring that the existing stock of housing is maintained and remains suitable for habitation. I am delighted that in the projects funded the Robin Hood Association will be able to renovate some of their group homes and the Strathcona Shelter Society will be able to make the

much-needed repairs to A Safe Place, the shelter for women and children. These infrastructure programs are keeping our skilled workforce employed in Canada and providing oil and gas companies with alternative projects.

Now, Mr. Speaker, school fees. After hearing about the promise in the throne speech of a reduction in school fees and the tabling of Bill 1, An Act to Reduce School Fees, a constituent contacted me to say: thank you for the reduction in school fees. This constituent is a single mom with three teenagers. This woman's income is high enough that she doesn't qualify for government subsidies or credits. Her family income provides stability but no frills. Last year the cost of instructional fees and transportation for her kids' designated school was close to \$2,000. She is extremely grateful for the savings she will experience next school year. This savings can now be added to her children's education savings, which will continue to benefit the family financially as time goes on. This is a direct increase in the quality of life for this family, and it will make these kids' futures easier to navigate.

I can identify with this constituent. When my children first started school, we lived on a limited income. I remember the challenges of budgeting for school fees and the embarrassment of asking for a fee waiver, letting the principal know that I was not supportive of an expensive field trip because my family's budget had no room for it. No child or family should be in the position of struggling to pay for fees in our public school system. On behalf of this constituent and, I know, many other parents I would like to thank the Premier and the Minister of Education for this step in ensuring that all children in our public school system are not embarrassed about their family's financial situation. This government is truly making life better and more affordable for Albertans.

In the throne speech Albertans were reminded of the natural beauty that is part of the wealth we have all inherited and that that natural inheritance must be protected and passed on for future generations to enjoy. As an MLA I am privileged to visit different parts of the province and meet individuals and elected officials who are taking the protection of our natural heritage seriously. Some of my favourite examples are the sasquatch project in Clearwater county; the North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance and their wonderful, informative book; and RiverWatch, a group that focuses on providing students an opportunity to learn about water and its conservation.

Mr. Speaker, a couple of weeks ago I attended a conference of lay and ordained leaders in Christian churches who gathered to talk about creation care. This gathering included farmers, who saw the results of climate change yearly; theologians, who understood the message of the Bible as humans called to be good stewards of the earth; and members of the green church network, who work with churches to green their buildings and build environmental sustainability programs, including energy efficiency.

The Canadian Foodgrains Bank is an institution heavily supported by Albertan farmers and started by church groups. This organization has a climate change fund. Their brochure states: each of us has a role to play in addressing climate change. Fortunately, more Canadians today are recognizing the frightful consequence of climate change and their role in generating the greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to it. The Canadian Foodgrains Bank brochure encourages individuals to reduce their emissions and to contribute to the climate change fund by calculating their greenhouse gas emission and donating it to the fund. So when I hear the opposition remarks about how the impact of humans on the Earth is negligible and that there is no acceptance of the work that the government is doing on renewable energy and energy efficiency, I would like to encourage my colleagues in the

opposition to pay more attention to what these community leaders have to say.

I am delighted that the new mosque in Sherwood Park has made environmental sustainability one of the core pillars for their new building. The government's energy efficiency agency programs will be helping individuals and congregations to explore how they can save money and increase energy efficiency.

But, Mr. Speaker, it is not only faith communities that will benefit from the energy efficiency agency programs. There are currently about 10 groups in Alberta exploring the development of community solar energy projects that will provide electricity for communities, members of co-operatives, and community associations. These groups can be found all over Alberta and are made up of a wide range of individuals who are committed to using renewable energy.

11:20

Mr. Speaker, the throne speech is dedicated to making life better for Alberta families, ensuring that Albertans' health care and educational needs are met and continuing to develop good jobs for Albertans.

Le discours du Trône est dédié à la vie plus facile et meilleure pour les familles Albertaines: accès aux soins de santé, aux écoles et institutions d'études supérieures, et à des emplois bien payés. That's the translation of the sentence I just said in English.

Mr. Speaker, as an Albertan I am proud of the government's work towards creating a strong, diversified economy that will see Alberta through the ups and downs of the resource industry and that will make life better for Albertans for generations to come.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Are there any questions or comments under 29(2)(a) for the hon. member?

Mr. Rodney: Yes, sir. With respect, just a quick question for the hon. member. I'm just curious. Can you tell us who it was in opposition, any of the parties, who said what you said that they said about climate change, someone here that said on some occasion that they don't think climate change is related to human activity? Who said it and where? What are the details? Can you quote *Hansard* or any other document, please?

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

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm grateful today to have the opportunity to rise and give my response to the Speech from the Throne. I'm grateful to be an Albertan, and I'm grateful to represent the good people of Cypress-Medicine Hat.

I want to start by complimenting the government on the 25 per cent reduction in school fees. I'm absolutely proud of the fact that in my two campaigns as a Wildrose candidate, in 2012 and 2015, we absolutely realized, Mr. Speaker, that these mandatory fees were a huge hardship on Alberta families, got in the way of the equality and the direction that was best for our education system. Of course, in both campaigns we campaigned on a hundred per cent eliminating these mandatory school fees. If memory serves me right, I believe the government actually campaigned on a 50 per cent reduction, so 25 per cent is good, sort of a failure, sort of not measuring up to where they set their initial goal. I'm wondering the possible reasons for that, and maybe I'll touch on that as we go. But hats off to the government. You're headed in the right direction to making life more affordable for Alberta families, to making it so that our children have more opportunities. So thank you for that.

I want to put the next series of my comments on what I've heard several times in the last several months in Alberta. I bump into

investors who say: we were going to invest in Alberta, but we decided to go to Saskatchewan instead. I heard of a company that is putting hundreds of millions, billions, into the petrochemical company in the Gulf states at the same time as they reviewed going into Alberta and decided not to because of the political climate. Whether it's the high per capita spending started by the last government and drastically continued by this one, whether it's the high taxation, whether it's the carbon tax, it's costing us all – it's costing us all – jobs, opportunities, investments, costing in taxes that we can put to worth or costing individual Albertans and individual companies the opportunity to be even more successful than we know the good Alberta companies can be.

I always like to try to put myself in the shoes of my constituents, so I want to start with this point in this way. I had an elderly gentleman come to my office and show me his utility bill, how it was up approximately \$266, how large parts of that seemed to relate to the carbon tax, tears in his eyes, how it meant that he had to miss a trip somewhere with his family.

Later that day I had a younger Albertan, a friend of mine, come in, who two years ago in the oil and gas industry made \$120,000. Mr. Speaker, he had just accepted a job for \$1,800 a month. I absolutely can't imagine what my friend and his family are going to have to go through to make that happen.

My first point is a small one, but for some reason it still bothers me. This happened on the day that I got the notice that we were going to have the throne speech on Thursday. I still don't understand that. Of the 87 of us, there are 50 or 60 of us that the taxpayer pays for us to come in and out of the city. It started at 3 o'clock on a Thursday; we were done at 4:30 on a Thursday. At what point do we start caring about taking money from Albertans? At what point do we start caring about value for taxes? I don't know. Cabinet, I'd ask you to consider that each and every time. An Albertan somewhere has to get out of bed, an Albertan somewhere has to take a risky investment decision so that we can be here. Please don't waste their money.

You know, I've heard the other side talk about how this throne speech is a way to enhance quality of life and government programs. So much of it, to me, is an attack on families, communities, and charities. I want to start with what I've been told is the biggest per capita deficit in Canadian history since World War II. The biggest per capita deficit. It's almost \$11 billion just to keep the lights on, for operating. If we add the \$7 billion the government says that they want to spend on infrastructure, that's an \$18 billion deficit. With 4.1 million Albertans, Mr. Speaker, it will take years to dig out of this hole.

Mr. Nixon: Decades.

Mr. Barnes: Yeah, exactly. Decades.

You know, I understand that this year alone it's \$714 million of interest. So while our government, our cabinet doesn't look for efficiencies, let me tell you what that \$714 million could have bought instead, Mr. Speaker. That's the construction of about 24 schools. That is some side of 5,950 nurses or teachers, annually, never mind the social programs, never mind letting Albertans keep their own money so that they can go to support restaurants, so that they can go and buy clothes, so that they can travel to Cypress Hills or Banff or Jasper, so that they can truly make their own decisions to make our economy strong. And then I think: well, where does this interest go? Who collects this interest? Not too much of it is ordinary, everyday Albertans, those two gentlemen that I talked about that were in my office. No. The people that collect interest are the rich. Non-Canadians own a lot of our provincial government debt, I'm sure. Big corporations, no doubt, own a lot of our debt.

So \$714 million taken from the pockets of hard-working Albertans . . .

Mr. Hanson: Just this year.

Mr. Barnes: . . . just this year. You're absolutely right. Just this year, and escalating, costing our children, our seniors, our communities, our charity services, and paying the rich of the world. It's not a philosophy I subscribe to. It's not something I believe in. It's not something I would do.

You know, then I want to talk a little bit about the carbon tax. A lot of Albertans were hopeful that this new government would be different than the last government, who after 44 years maybe had a certain way of doing things, who maybe was a bit hard to consult. But the Premier came to Medicine Hat for the first time about a month ago, and she was asked a question about why it took so long to come to Medicine Hat and if that was a problem. If I heard the answer right, it was: no; it was okay because her ministers had been there, she'd heard some consulting, and Cypress-Medicine Hatters and Medicine Hatters were happy with what she was doing. Sorry; but I thought: are you kidding me?

11:30

First of all, Minister of Labour and minister responsible for democratic renewal, thank you for coming to Cypress-Medicine Hat on your trip. But I clearly heard, as you did when you met with all of our small-business people, when you met with our job creators, that they were absolutely opposed to how fast the minimum wage had gone up. They want to pay their employees well. I think they all pay them more than minimum wage. But the overall theme that I kept hearing was: "It took 15 years for it to go from \$5 to \$10, and now in three years you're going to go from \$10 to \$15. How in the world are we going to adjust to that? How are we going to adjust to that without some labour changes, without some price increases that we may or may not be able to pass on." That's what I heard.

Same on the carbon tax. At least 70 to 80 per cent of Cypress-Medicine Hatters that I talked to are absolutely opposed to this and opposed to it for a number of reasons. I was at an ag conference the other day where the speaker said that only four-tenths of 1 per cent of the world has a carbon tax – four-tenths of 1 per cent of the world – and here we are in one of the coldest parts of the world, one of the most remote parts of the world, where transportation and travel are not an option. We're not given recognition for our forests, our greenhouses that regrow and replant and refurbish, so much of those carbon capture trees. We're not giving great recognition to our ranchers. I think it's \$13 billion I've heard. The value of carbon sequestration in our grasslands and our ranches is worth \$13 billion a year, so compare that to the \$5 billion you're taking out of the economy annually. Guys, guys, we're already there.

That's before we talk about how this carbon tax, because everything is transported so much in Alberta, is going to be compounded every step of the way. It's going to be so inflationary. If a good has to move three or four times before it's finally completed, carbon tax will be added every step of the way. The inflation will be phenomenal, making it very, very hard for our families, our seniors to afford this.

Then carbon leakage. I'm told about the plants that aren't looking at Alberta, the plants that won't expand, the plants that are looking to jurisdictions without a carbon tax because it will save them tens of millions of dollars, and I think: "Oh, my goodness. Not only was this the worst timing possible for something like this, this will be a wealth destroyer. This will be a job destroyer." As the Premier to the east of us has pointed out so capably, western industries are

structured more and they're more sector-specific based on carbon. How is a federal tax going to pass on any level of equity and fairness?

I want to take a second in the time I have to talk about Cypress-Medicine Hat. We have a lot of good things going. Our people are industrious, our people are strong and entrepreneurial, and our people are hoping to take advantage of the fact that we have the most days of sunlight in all of Canada. We have some of the best winds in all of Canada. They are looking for the opportunity to be included. Like so many other parts of the province we're often thought of as the forgotten corner. Possibly when it took the Premier two years to come and see us, that was reinforced, but I think that's a small thing, actually.

For years – for years – the southeastern part of Alberta was the leader in providing wealth to the Alberta treasury through the royalties on natural gas, through the Suffield military base, where Alberta Energy started and EnCana and Cenovus grew out of it. That's not the case anymore, colleagues. The price of gas is low. Unemployment is high. My goodness, it's hard to go a day without talking to somebody who hasn't worked for two years. The good news the last little while is that it sounds like 20 or 30 per cent of them are back to work. They used to work at \$40 or \$45 an hour, and now they're telling me two things. They're now working for between \$20 and \$25 an hour, and they're working in Kindersley or Estevan, Saskatchewan.

So don't forget us. I mean, we're independent, we're proud. We have a strong petrochemical industry, Methanex, Canadian Fertilizers. We have a Goodyear tire plant. A lot of us were disappointed when the petrochemical money wasn't brought our way. If we're going to transfer taxation and people's hard-earned money around, please don't forget a part of the province that might need it the most. I do know that we've talked lots about the trade corridor and opening the 24-hour border at Wild Horse for our connection to Montana. Again, that's an important thing. I do know that the Minister of Economic Development and Trade is on it, so thank you for that. But please, please don't forget us.

I want to talk a little bit about pipelines before I close. I'm disappointed to see that once again political propaganda is getting in the way of facts for the NDP.

The Speaker: Hon. members, are there any – the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: I'd like to hear a little more from the hon. member in regard to pipelines. I was quite interested in where he was going there.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you to my colleague. There's a section in this throne speech entitled Building New Pipelines in which the speech claims: "Making life better starts with coming to terms with an economic reality that past governments failed to address. Alberta is too dependent on selling its energy products to one customer." And then it goes on.

This line is problematic, Mr. Speaker, for a few reasons. It's not true that previous governments failed to address market access. Of course, with a change in government in the States, we're on the verge of gaining Keystone XL, an expansion that will see an increase of our commodity to that one customer, but this will benefit Alberta's economy. It will benefit the Americans as well. In a show of working together and in a show of getting our asset to market, I'm grateful for that.

Previous Conservative federal governments had built pipelines, and I wonder why it's so hard for this government to acknowledge it. You guys know that they exist. A lot of you were there protesting

when they were being built. You know, the Harper government built four major pipelines. It was responsible for brand new pipelines like Keystone phase 1 from Hardisty, Alberta, to Roxana, Illinois. This was built in June 2010. Mr. Speaker, the Alberta Clipper, Enbridge line 67, was built in 2010. It was also responsible for major pipeline expansions like the Kinder Morgan anchor loop, which was expanding an already existing Trans Mountain pipeline, completed in 2008. The Enbridge line 9 reversal was completed in November 2012.

You know, guys, I'm so cheering for you and for Alberta and for all of our good industries to get the two pipelines. There are many, many conditions that need to be met, and I hope we get there. Albertans need this. We especially need access to the west coast. The truth of the matter is that the federal Conservative government got four lines done while we were stalled on Keystone. I think the Americans built more pipelines in America than the entire length of the Keystone would have been. So I guess the truth and the reality need to be discussed.

11:40

I want to talk a little bit about the idea of social licence. You know, if social licence was real, we have our carbon tax, so where's the Northern Gateway approval? Where's the Energy East approval?

Mr. Bilous: Working on it.

Mr. Barnes: I hope you get it.

You know, Energy East, I understand, is like 15,000 construction jobs, 3,500 annual jobs, and it's entirely, entirely in Canada. We have the mayor of Montreal possibly blocking it. We're looking at some of the stuff with Trans Mountain, where there are groups that are still opposed to it, possibly the B.C. NDP party – not possibly; I think they have come out against it. That will make that an interesting election. We've had some success, principally with Keystone. We have two pipelines tentatively approved. We have four that federal Conservative governments got through, and for the jobs and the commodities that that will provide for us we are grateful.

I want to talk a little bit more about Keystone XL, Mr. Speaker. I was surprised it did receive no mention in the throne speech. It's a huge opportunity. It's a huge opportunity for our producers, experts, safety conscious, socially conscious people that are experts, the best in the world at bringing the product out of the ground to the pipeline.

The Speaker: Thank you. I'm sorry; time has lapsed on 29(2)(a).

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Dr. Turner: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed a pleasure and an honour to rise and present remarks in response to the Speech from the Throne by the Lieutenant Governor. I was really impressed with her delivery of this. I think that she was enthused, as I was, with the contents of that speech. I remarked on the feeling and the emphasis that she put into that speech, and I'm pleased to respond to it.

I also want to mention your services, sir. In the introduction to the speech the Lieutenant Governor said, "We are reminded again of the bedrock importance of this institution to the democratic life of our province." It's only through the work of your office in this Legislature as well as in the precincts of the Legislature that the value of our democratic life is seen. I particularly want to commend you on the current exhibit that was opened on the evening of the Speech from the Throne, Alberta and the Great War. If none of my colleagues here have gone through the exhibit, I really would

commend that exhibit to them. As I mentioned yesterday, there's a tremendous amount of relevance of that exhibit to our current situation.

The Lieutenant Governor also in that first paragraph said, "We gather today on Treaty 6 land." I don't think that's been mentioned today, but I think that's something that should be repeated again and again and recognized that it's an honour and a privilege. I respect that we are here because of the work of the original inhabitants of these lands. One of the things that I've really enjoyed that was facilitated by your office, sir, was the recognition of the Métis Association of Alberta and the event that was held in the rotunda. Many of the people in this room attended it, as did representatives of civil society and of treaties 6, 7, and 8 First Nations. It was a very important recognition of the very important role that the Métis of Alberta have made to this province.

A similar event was held, again under your auspices, for Black History Month just within the last few weeks, again organized by one of my colleagues, the Member for Edmonton-Centre. Over 450 people attended that. I can tell you that my constituents who attended that event were very gratified at finally getting some recognition.

I'm one of the older members of this Legislature, and I've lived in this province for almost 40 years. I have to say that over those 40 years I've witnessed a lot of changes in this institution. The one that I'm, of course, most proud of is the change that occurred on May 5, 2015. The reason that I ran in that election was not to defeat the ex-mayor of this city although I'm proud of that, and that's probably going to be on my political tombstone. What I'm proudest of is that I played a small, small role in the election of the current Premier. Our Premier and her cabinet have completely changed the tenor of the government of this province, and I am extremely proud to have played a small part in that and to continue to play a small part in that.

I want to just record some of the things that have happened over that period of time since May 5, 2015. I'm particularly proud – and I mentioned this in a member's statement previously – that we opened the Nellie Carlson school in Edmonton-Whitemud. Nellie Carlson is a phenomenal leader, educator, great-great-grandmother, and we're very proud in Edmonton-Whitemud to have her name on a school that had been promised by the previous government for over 12 years. In May 2015 the Premier promised that we would get that school built. In September 2016 that school was opened to over 900 residents of my riding as well as my colleague in Edmonton-South West.

That's not the only school that was opened, of course. Everybody in this Legislature knows of a school that's been opened in their riding because we are an education government. We are going to promote the best of public education and advanced education, make sure that training and apprenticeships are developed. That's going to be a focus of this government.

I'm going to come back to things that are important to my riding. The Alberta child benefit and the child care pilot study that's going on, \$25-a-day child care: very, very important to all the families in my riding, particularly those that have young children that need child care.

I'm also pleased – and I'm going to come back to this – with the climate leadership action plan, that was announced in November 2015 and which is already showing a lot of benefit. It does give us social licence. We did get two pipelines approved, and there's more to come.

11:50

Not to forget my Calgary colleagues, another advance that I'm very proud of is the funding and the planning and the building of

the Calgary cancer centre. Our party ran on this in the May 2015 election, and it's another example where our government has come through. I can tell you that this is a very positive measure in cancer care in Alberta. I happen to work here in Edmonton at the Cross Cancer Institute, and I can tell you that all of the oncologists, nurses, and other staff are really pleased that, finally, Calgary is going to have its equivalent to the Cross Cancer Institute.

I also want to mention something else that happened that you may not think would apply to a relatively well-off area of Edmonton like Edmonton-Whitemud; for instance, banning door-to-door sales of various products. That's a scourge on seniors, and I've got a lot of seniors in my riding. These folks need to be protected from predatory door-to-door salesmen. I think that the measures that have been introduced and discussed in the Speech from the Throne are really helping in this regard.

Talking about predatory, we also got rid of predatory payday loan operations. Again, this affects all Albertans, whether or not you're in a riding like Edmonton-Whitemud or any other riding. We need to make sure that consumers are protected from unscrupulous business practices, and I'm really proud to be associated with that.

Another thing that I want to mention – it was alluded to earlier today – is the way that Albertans of all stripes have come together to deal with disasters like the fires in Wood Buffalo. I want to bring it to the context of Edmonton-Whitemud. Last June I was very pleased to be able to speak at the graduation at Lillian Osborne high school, which is in the beautiful riding of Edmonton-Whitemud. The principal is actually the spouse of an ex-Premier of this province, and despite our political differences she was happy to have me speak at the event. At the event I learned that Lillian Osborne high school actually had about a dozen students graduating from there who had been students in Fort McMurray, and I know that there were many other schools in Edmonton and elsewhere that did this. Now, they did this without asking for additional monies or asking for special recognition. This was the Albertan way to respond, and our schools and our teachers and the school councils responded very well.

The Minister of Culture and Tourism, actually, gave me the opportunity to hand out a cheque to a project in Rainbow Valley, which is in my riding of Edmonton-Whitemud. This was in support of development of a campground in Edmonton. It turns out that it is the only campground within the city of Edmonton, and I would recommend it to any of you who have friends or relatives that are looking for a place to camp here. It's a beautiful site. That campground was opened, actually, to folks with RVs and other camping equipment from Fort McMurray. Again, without any fanfare they just did it. I can tell you that I met with several of these families that day, and they were very, very appreciative.

I want to actually turn to some of the details that are in the Speech from the Throne. One of them that I want to mention, because it was brought up by a member opposite, is about the B.C. election that's coming up. You know, when I look at what's going on in politics in B.C., I see basically distortion. I mean, every day in the *Globe and Mail* or the *Edmonton Journal* I'm reading reports about how big money is corrupting the political process in British Columbia. It's big money but not to the B.C. NDP; it's big money to the governing party of B.C. This is something that I'm very proud that our government is starting to work at. We're strengthening our democracy. We've taken big money out of politics in this province, and we've still got more democratic reform to go. I'm hopeful that we are going to continue with that.

There's also going to be protection for whistle-blowers, and we're going to be strengthening our conflict-of-interest laws. This is democracy, folks. This is what we have been elected to do, to

come here and make sure that these democratic institutions are protected.

In the few minutes I have left, I'd actually like to turn to making life more affordable for Albertans, and I'm particularly going to focus on what we've done in terms of capping electricity rates and the energy efficiency manoeuvres. You know, electricity is an essential for all Albertans, and we're going to cap the rates below the average price that families have paid over the last decade. If electricity prices go up past the cap, electricity bills won't, and we're going to protect. The question is: who pays? The capping of electricity rates means that our consumers are not going to be the ones that pay. We're going to introduce legislation this session to make the cap law.

I was really pleased to be part of the sponsorship of Bill 34, in which we basically created or allowed the creation of what are called capacity markets. Alberta was an anomaly in North America. Almost no other – I think only one other jurisdiction . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Under 29(2)(a), the Member for Sherwood Park.

Ms McKittrick: Mr. Speaker, the MLA for Edmonton-Whitemud and I share an interest in common. We both attended the recent solar energy trade fair and so on. I know we both have a passion for climate change and the science of it, and we both have degrees, actually, from the same university, so we're both – I would call us really steeped in science. I was wondering if you could comment on a recent article in the *Edmonton Journal* where an MLA from the opposition was asked by a journalist about climate change.

“According to scientists who study this, the majority of the increase is man-made.” The MLA from the opposition said, “You can't say that anymore.” The journalist said, “Why can't you say that anymore?” The MLA said, “The science isn't settled.” I was wondering if you had a comment on that issue.

Dr. Turner: Well, thank you very much for that very, very important question. I think that this is something that needs to be aired greatly, aired even more. Do you believe that man contributes to climate change, or do you not? Is it reasonable that we make every human effort to limit the amount of greenhouse gases that are being produced? I can tell you that just last Friday I made arrangements to have LED lights installed in the constituency office. Not only is that going to save taxpayer money because we're going to be consuming less power; I'm actually going to be responsible for, quote, unquote, saving the planet. We're going to be reducing that.

Now, I also walk the walk in my own personal life on this. Four years ago I had solar panels installed on the roof of my personal residence, and I'm very, very happy with that. What I'm really happiest about is that our government is actually going to be helping Albertans on this with the new grants for solar panel installation, not only on residences but on farms . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

I would move adjournment under Standing Order 4(2.1) until 1:30 p.m. The House stands adjourned.

[The Assembly adjourned at 12 p.m.]

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