



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Third Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, March 8, 2017

Day 4

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),
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Kazim, Anam, Calgary-Glenmore (ND)
Kleinstauber, Jamie, Calgary-Northern Hills (ND)
Larivee, Hon. Danielle, Lesser Slave Lake (ND)
Littlewood, Jessica, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (ND)
Loewen, Todd, Grande Prairie-Smoky (W)
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (ND)
Luff, Robyn, Calgary-East (ND)
MacIntyre, Donald, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (W)
Malkinson, Brian, Calgary-Currie (ND)
Mason, Hon. Brian, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (ND),
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McLean, Hon. Stephanie V., Calgary-Varsity (ND)
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)
Nixon, Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre (W),
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Panda, Prasad, Calgary-Foothills (W)
Payne, Hon. Brandy, Calgary-Acadia (ND)
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Piquette, Colin, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater (ND)
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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STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

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Dang	Taylor
Ellis	Turner
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Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

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Carson	Orr
Connolly	Piquette
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Drever	Pitt
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Horne	Shepherd
Jansen	Swann
Luff	Yao
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Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

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Anderson, W.	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	McKitrick
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Ellis	Schneider
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Standing Committee on Public Accounts

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Dang	Malkinson
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Hanson	Rosendahl
Kazim	Woollard
Kleinsteuber	

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, March 8, 2017

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Good afternoon. Please be seated.

Hon. members, I would just repeat a message that I've mentioned several times in the Assembly before. I would urge that we be as brief as we can on introductions of guests and visitors, and I hope that you will be able to at the same time give due respect to the parties that are here.

Introduction of Guests

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

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today on your behalf to introduce Jennifer Franki-Smith, who is seated in your gallery. Jennifer Franki-Smith was born and raised in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories. She completed her bachelor of arts in sociology and anthropology from the University of Prince Edward Island in 2016. Jennifer is the public affairs and communications intern with the office of the Clerk at the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories. Jennifer's main duties consist of conducting daily tours of the Assembly, assisting with the production of educational outreach programs, and updating content on the Legislative Assembly website. She is accompanied by Al Chapman, manager of visitor services for the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, and will be observing and learning about our approach to educational programming and public tours. I would now ask Jennifer to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.
The Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two introductions today. First, it's a great pleasure to introduce two strong Alberta women leaders from the Alberta coalition on human trafficking who are seated in the gallery across from me: this organization's executive director, Andrea Burkhart, and a project manager, Amy Wilson. They work every day to ensure that we have an Alberta free from human trafficking. Please join me in welcoming them.

For the second introduction, Mr. Speaker, as we celebrate the contribution of women trailblazers, it's my honour to introduce to you and through you Starr Curry and Tamara Chivers, who are both women who live in the constituency of Edmonton-Glenora. I should also note that they're both seated behind me. Starr Curry works tirelessly to support women in politics. Starr's commitment speaks for itself with the diversity that you see here in our government caucus as she has campaigned for a very long time to get more women onto our NDP ballot. Tamara Chivers is a woman leader from Edmonton-Glenora who balances the challenges and responsibilities of being a mom with her work as a lawyer for the United Nurses of Alberta. She is also a tremendous advocate for equality and diversity, and she signed my nomination papers. Please join me in welcoming them both as well.

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

Ms Sweet: My apologies, Mr. Speaker. You also have two other guests in your gallery today. Sarah Hurcomb and Karine Landry are with the Library of Parliament. If they could please stand, I'd like to introduce them to everyone in the House.

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

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to rise and introduce to you and through you to the rest of the Assembly Aminah Aboughoushe, who is a tireless volunteer in her community. On top of her role as a fundraiser at the MAC Rahma mosque in my riding, Aminah continues to be a busy hockey mom to three boys. She also serves as the secretary on the executive of the Wolf Willow country club community league, where recently she spoke eloquently at their annual general meeting about the rewards of volunteering to serve one's community and thereby convinced three more women to accept nominations to serve. I ask her now to rise and receive the warm welcome of the House.

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

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two very important guests from the constituency of Cardston-Taber-Warner. With us today are His Worship Henk Devlieger, mayor of the town of Taber, and, as well, Cory Armfelt, chief administrative officer of the town of Taber. Both are here trying to meet with ministers to get answers about having the local FCSS moved from the agriplex into an AHS building that has sat empty for two years. I would ask these two individuals to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Ms McKittrick: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate a strong Albertan woman. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you Jennifer Kauffield, vice-president and CFO for Titanium Corporation. Titanium's patented technology Creating Value from Waste recovers lost bitumen, solvent, and heavy minerals from the oil sands tailings stream, materially reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Titanium has also received valuable support from Alberta Energy. Ms Kauffield is a great example of a woman in an executive position in the oil and gas sector, with a career that spans over 17 years while raising three boys. I would like to ask Jennifer to please rise to receive the traditional warm welcome from the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.
The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Nielsen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly two extraordinary women from the riding of Edmonton-Decore. Tracy Patience is the executive director of Dickinsfield Amity House, and just like her favourite superhero, Wonder Woman, she takes her job just as seriously. We also have Badrieha Taha, who is a volunteer and special events co-ordinator at the KARA Family Resource Centre. I'm also proud to be able to say that she is also a constituent of Edmonton-Decore. Dickinsfield Amity House and KARA are both pillars in the community, and these women work tirelessly to help anyone in need. It's truly an honour to have them here today to celebrate International Women's Day. I would ask my guests behind me to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.
The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm thrilled to introduce a fierce and loving advocate, Velvet Martin, from St. Albert. Velvet

is many things, but I believe her greatest joy is being a mom. Velvet's daughter Samantha was born with a rare chromosomal disorder and autism. Samantha died when she was only 13 years old, following many years in care separated from her family. Velvet responded to this life-changing loss by successfully lobbying for changes to Alberta's Family Support for Children with Disabilities Act. These amendments were called Samantha's law. Velvet is president of the Alberta chapter of Protecting Canadian Children and has worked tirelessly for years to protect our children. She is one of the many women whom I'm very grateful for today. I ask her to rise. Please join me in thanking her and welcoming her to this House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Seniors and Housing.

Ms Sigurdson: Well, thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you two powerful women from my constituency of Edmonton-Riverview, Jane Arscott and Linda Trimble. Together they have published several books on the topic of women in politics. Most recently they are both editors of *Stalled: The Representation of Women in Canadian Governments*, which was published in 2013.

Jane Arscott is a member of the First Nations Caring Society and is a board member of Changing Together: A Centre for Immigrant Women. She is a professor at Athabasca University doing research to promote gender parity in Legislatures. She is a proponent of the UN convention on the elimination of discrimination against women and an advocate for gender equality in Alberta and Canada.

Linda Trimble is a professor of political science at the University of Alberta. In 2005 she was awarded an Alberta centennial medal for her research in the area of women and politics and for her community work to persuade women to run for office. She has been counting the number of women elected in Canada for 25 years, and I'm proud to say that our government has given Professor Trimble more women to count.

I would ask them both to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of our Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly two women who are strong leaders in their community. Jessie Trotter is a constituent of mine. She is an advocate for seniors' health and works to organize events and activities with her neighbours at Rosedale Estates, where she makes sure that I visit regularly. Annamaria Edwards is a contract analyst with Enbridge and serves as the president of the Cariwest Festival, a favourite summer event here in Edmonton-Centre that's been contributing to the vibrancy of our city for over 30 years. I ask that they both rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

1:40

Dr. Turner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you four amazing women. From the department of oncology at the University of Alberta: Yvette Labiuk is a proud third-generation Ukrainian Albertan and a graduate program administrator who mothers over a hundred graduate students, and Anaïs Medina Martin, originally from Madrid, Spain, is a post-doctoral fellow in experimental oncology who has studied around

the world, including at Harvard. She's in Edmonton to pursue her dream of doing cancer research. From my constituency of Edmonton-Whitemud: Judy Robinson is a community activist, artist, entrepreneur, and proud mother of three, and Vanessa Desa is a passionate advocate for vulnerable children, youth, and the integration of immigrants and refugees. She's a founding member of Brander Gardens ROCKS and has received a YWCA woman of distinction award. I ask Yvette, Anaïs, Judy, and Vanessa to stand and receive a warm welcome from this House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour and pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all the members of this House my guest, Jan Reimer, the executive director of the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters. Jan is a trailblazer and an inspiration to women throughout our province as Edmonton's first female mayor. We all know about the important work her organization does to support Albertan women. Last December her team launched the Lift Her Up campaign, calling on all Albertans to stand up against sexist or violent language towards women. On this International Women's Day I would like to thank her for standing up for women throughout Alberta and across Canada. I would now request Ms Reimer to stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

Ms Babcock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I am so proud to rise on International Women's Day to celebrate two extraordinary women. I am pleased to introduce to you and through you Wendy Rudiger and Lillian Lubyk. Wendy began working in a nursing home at the age of 14, helping seniors. She has since had a full career as a nurse, persevering through a hiring freeze to work at Calgary General hospital. She is very active in the community of Stony Plain, helping many people either by holding a hand or driving them to the Cross cancer clinic. Lillian is a proud grandmother who spent nine years teaching in Papua New Guinea and 20 years teaching in Canada. She resides in Carvel with her husband and is an active volunteer for CKUA, Folk Fest, and the Kids with Cancer Society. In my riding of Stony Plain the culture of volunteerism is always amazing but no more so than now, today, with these two women. I ask them to please rise and accept the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein.

Mr. Coolahan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Linda Crockett of Alberta Bullying. Linda is a social worker who has dedicated many years to bullying research, and she was a great help in writing my private member's bill. I ask that Linda receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Loyola: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to celebrate two strong Alberta women for International Women's Day. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to this House two incredibly dedicated feminists and advocates for social justice from Amigas Latin-American Women Society, established in 2001, an organization committed to the individual and collective social development of women both

here in Edmonton and in other parts of the world. They're women of my community who I admire and who have been an inspiration in my life, for which I'm eternally grateful. I now ask Nelly Rosende and Marianela Iglesias to please stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Labour and minister responsible for democratic renewal.

Ms Gray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure and a great honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Manal Alnajjar and Tripat Kaur from the Indo-Canadian Women's Association in Mill Woods. Manal moved from Palestine to Edmonton with her family in 2013 after pursuing her master's in education. She has shown leadership by advocating for women's rights, preventing violence against women, and helping to change attitudes. Tripat moved from India to Canada six years ago. She has a master's degree in public administration and a wealth of experience in community counselling. She has been busy helping new immigrants and women fleeing domestic violence.

I'm very pleased that they could join us to celebrate International Women's Day, and I ask them both now to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The Minister of Children's Services.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour and privilege to introduce to you and through you to all the members of this House my friend Dorothy Anderson. Dot is a member of the Gift Lake Métis settlement, is currently secretary for the Métis Settlements General Council, and has a long history of advocacy for Métis settlements, including working with the Métis Settlements Health Board to engage our government on Métis health issues. Dot is a leader and an inspiration to women in her community and across our province. This International Women's Day I'm thankful to her and to all women for the differences that they make in our communities. I would now ask her to stand to receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The Minister of Infrastructure and of Transportation.

Mr. Mason: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. It's indeed my pleasure to introduce to you and to all members of the Assembly two extraordinary women from my constituency of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. Teresa Spinelli is the president of the Italian Centre, headquartered here in Little Italy, which is expanding across Edmonton and even to Calgary. She is an outstanding businessperson, also a founding member of the Viva Italia business association and very active in community and charitable events.

Habiba Abdulle is the executive director of the Alberta Somali Community Centre in my constituency. The centre provides a wide range of services to members of our local Somali community, including help with housing, jobs, training opportunities, child care, and others.

I would ask them to please rise now and accept the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

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

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure on International Women's Day to rise on behalf of my colleague from

Calgary-Foothills and myself to introduce one of the very prominent female reporters in the very, very strong Alberta press gallery here at the Legislature. She joins us regularly. She's a strong voice for a free and open press. She does a wonderful job here, as so many of the women in our press gallery do. I'd ask that Emma Graney rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome. I suspect you may have been here before.

The hon. Minister of Status of Women and of Service Alberta.

Ms McLean: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on International Women's Day to celebrate strong Alberta women from my Ministry of Status of Women. Although they are a small group, these public servants work diligently to provide their best advice, focusing on initiatives that lead women out of lower income situations, reducing barriers that keep women from leadership positions or from running for office, and eliminating and preventing violence against women and girls. I'm pleased to have them here with us today on International Women's Day.

I also want to celebrate strong Alberta women working in their communities to advance women's equality. Joining us here today are Mary Jane James, Sara Cameron, and Annette Klevgaard from the Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton and Muriel Venne and Gwen Nahorney from the Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women. They are our partners in our work to improve the lives of women and girls. I ask them all to rise in this House, and I ask this House to please join me in providing these strong Alberta women with the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Are there any other introductions? The Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and to all members of the Assembly some of the smartest and hardest working students in all of Alberta, the students of Suzuki Charter School. It's located in the most humble constituency of Edmonton-Gold Bar. They're accompanied by their teachers and parents: Ms Clare Young, Mr. Jason Callow, Ms Shannon Eremenko, and Mr. Stirling Perry. If they could please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome to you.

1:50

Ms Ganley: I rise to seek the unanimous consent of the House to allow the Routine to continue past 1:50.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Speaker: Any further introductions? Please proceed, Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to stand today and introduce to you and through you a group of students – I think between 43 and 46 of them; we're not sure how many are here today – from the beautiful l'école Beau Meadow school in Beaumont. The students are accompanied by their teachers, Mr. Brad Hayes and Mrs. Jolanda Nichols, and a host of chaperones. I won't read them all because I know we have lots of things to do today, but if they would please rise, we could give them the traditional welcome of this House.

Ministerial Statements

The Speaker: The Minister of Service Alberta and Minister of Status of Women.

International Women's Day

Ms McLean: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to celebrate strong Alberta women. Today, on International Women's Day, we recognize the social, economic, cultural, and political accomplishments of women around the world and the ongoing struggle for equality. In 1975 the United Nations designated March 8 as International Women's Day to advance the status of women worldwide. Countries around the world unite every year on this day to restate our dedication to the principles of gender equality. We need this day. Decades later women are still not equally represented in corporate boardrooms or at decision-making tables in public office. In Alberta we have had a thousand male MLAs and only 99 female MLAs, 29 of whom are sitting as members today.

Sadly, Alberta women continue to face some of the highest rates of sexual violence in the country. Changing old ways is not easy, but the people of Alberta asked for change, and our government is honoured to answer that call. We started making history in 2015 by appointing Canada's first gender-balanced cabinet. We launched the Status of Women ministry with a commitment to make the lives of Alberta's women and girls better. And I'll tell you something about my ministry, Mr. Speaker: though she be little, she is fierce.

We are working hard to advance gender equality. After our first year Alberta now has a law that lets survivors of violence break a residential lease without fear of a financial penalty; a minimum wage that will keep increasing, to \$15 an hour, making sure that women who are clustered in the lowest range of pay have a little more at the end of the day; a new disclose-or-explain rule for publicly traded corporations to report on gender equality at the highest levels of their organizations; a grant program that supports community projects and programs that advance our ministry's mandate of leadership, economic empowerment, and ending violence; a partnership with the city of Edmonton and UN Women to reduce sexual violence in Edmonton; Ready for Her, a website to encourage women to see themselves as candidates in the upcoming municipal elections and resources to help them get on the ballot; entrenched gender expression and gender identity in the Human Rights Act, making it illegal to discriminate against anyone on those grounds. We joined the national inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, and we invested an additional \$10 million to increase affordability, quality, and access to child care for Alberta families.

We are building on a legacy of women who fought in their day-to-day lives to be treated as equals. They were our role models, and now it's our turn in this House, in boardrooms, on sports fields, and in law courts. We will continue to be leaders of change. Your government is working hard to make life better for all Albertans, ensuring that the necessary policies, programs, and services are in place for the advancement of gender equality in Alberta. Women shouldn't have to spend the next century fighting for equality. It's time now.

I ask you, Mr. Speaker, and all members of the Assembly to join me in the fight for women's equality. [Standing ovation]

Mrs. Aheer: People may try to use their words to diminish women, our work, and our passion. I have the immense privilege of meeting people every day from every background, and just when I think I can't be surprised, someone will challenge me. Even if I disagree with the challenge, or the words are disagreeable, or the tone or

colour of their words rubs me the wrong way, or we differ in ideology, or if I disagree inherently with their values or their take on life, the content of their conversation, the rudeness, the kindness, the education, passion, the division, the sexual appropriateness or lack thereof, even then, and more often than not, I am so pleasantly surprised by the kindness and compassion of Albertans.

I'm a proud woman who stands here solid on the work of many women who came before me from all nations. India had two powerful women who ran that nation, Indira Gandhi and her daughter-in-law Sonia Gandhi. It's inspirational. Even more inspiring for me: in 1969 my mother-in-law at the tender age of 18 made her way across the ocean by herself, not reading or writing in any language, all the way to Canada to meet up with her older sister. She came from a culture and a village where it was impossible for her to leave the farm without an escort as she could have been raped or killed should she venture out on her own. But she travelled across the sea because her father wanted her to have a better life. She came from a culture and a life that did not always accept all of the freedoms that we are privileged to have here. Today, even though things have changed and she comes from a time that does not always align well with today's values, I seek her wisdom. I argue with her, I trust her, I don't always see eye to eye with her on many issues, but I respect the conversations and always leave the conversation having learned something.

As women we provide the humble template for that which we want to see: our hopes for future women and our desire to encourage and protect them as they make their way on their terms into careers where they are needed, where they belong, and where they are honoured. To me, this inspiration comes from the many pioneering women before me who are here now in this building. They are the faces of the women across the aisle and on this side, and my hope is that we will not engage in polarizing politics.

I have been attacked many times by those who don't agree with my politics, in horrible and distasteful ways, and, believe me, I do not stand and will not stand for it. However, words, to me, are an expression, and they've been used throughout history in poetry, music, to express, no matter how pretty or profane.

On this day, March 8, 2017, that celebrates International Women's Day and the awesomeness of being bold for change, this means ending discrimination and ending violence. Let's take action to empower, not to destroy, to elevate and not belittle, to honour those incredible souls that engage in discourse and common purpose that moves us forward.

To the women who have inspired me, to women who supported and encouraged me: you are my enduring heroes and my reason for continuing, no matter the insults, the condemnation, the platitudes, the nonsense . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member?

Mrs. Aheer: . . . and no matter what other . . .

The Speaker: Could you wrap up the comments?

Mrs. Aheer: I will respond, and I will not hide. You will not shame me because I'm a woman.

2:00

The Speaker: The Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to request unanimous consent for responses from the third party and the two independent members.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-South East.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on behalf of my Progressive Conservative colleagues to recognize International Women's Day. I'm especially proud to stand as a Member of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, a province where so much trail-blazing took place with respect to women's rights. Three of the Famous Five, the group of women who launched the famous Person's Case, sat in this very Chamber. Among them was Irene Parlby, who served as the MLA for Lacombe from 1921 to 1935 and was the first female ever appointed to cabinet in Alberta. It's a privilege to be a member of this Assembly where such remarkable women once served and continue to serve the people of Alberta.

Nearly 100 years after Irene Parlby and her colleagues Nellie McClung and Louise McKinney were elected, women in our province and around the world still face serious challenges when it comes to equality. Women still earn less than their male counterparts. Women are still vastly outnumbered by men in boardrooms and in leadership roles.

As we've seen time and time again in Alberta and elsewhere, female public figures face a level of online abuse that as a man I will never experience. This kind of abuse keeps other women from entering public life in the first place. I know I have more than one colleague in this Chamber today who has been subjected to this gendered, sexist, and misogynistic treatment. To all those who have faced online bullying and abuse being women, I am truly sorry that you had to experience that. This behaviour is a scourge on our society and is completely unacceptable. By rejecting this hateful, discriminatory element of our society and carrying on with their work, these courageous women set a remarkable example for all Albertans. They embody the 2017 International Women's Day theme, Be Bold for Change.

I join with all Albertans in celebrating the invaluable contributions that they all make as women in every facet of our lives and pledge to use every opportunity to take bold action myself to advance the goal of equality.

Thank you.

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

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. An honour to stand with the Liberal caucus on this important day of celebrating women. Today we celebrate the achievements made in gender equality over many years. Just over 100 years ago women did not have the right to vote. Even 50 years ago the franchise was still withheld from our First Nations women. Today women hold 1 in 3 seats in this House. While there is still much progress that needs to be made on many women's issues, this is an encouraging trend. I look forward to seeing it continue into the future.

The theme of this year's International Women's Day is Be Bold for Change. Across Canada, Alberta, and the world individuals and organizations are honouring this day by encouraging women to be bold and, by doing so, with the full support of real men, create real change.

I particularly want to acknowledge the work of Ask Her, a group in Calgary that's working to encourage the greater representation of women in municipal politics. Ask Her recognizes that one of the reasons so few women hold public office is that they are too rarely asked to run. As such, they encourage Calgaryans to seek out strong, qualified women in their communities and ask them to take leadership roles. This year Ask Her will ask 20 women to run for Calgary city council. At present only two of the city's 14 councillors are women, a meagre 14 per cent. Ask Her aims to achieve 50 per cent

female representation on council after this fall's election, and they have my full support.

Our province, our country, our society are made better when strong, passionate, engaged women are involved in their communities and bring their voices to the table. This International Women's Day we have much to celebrate in the progress women have made. I encourage women, especially young women, to continue to press forward, be bold, and take the lead in creating the change we all so desperately need.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [Standing ovation]

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

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed an honour to speak on International Women's Day. Yesterday my staff and I were talking about the controversies spurred by that reprehensible *The Red Pill* feminist ideology. Of course, I was shocked by the entire idea, but I have to admit that I was shocked even further to hear about the ingrained sexism that some of the women on my own staff have faced in their recent past.

I was told that in a recent role one of my staff was told that she wasn't capable of being on the communications team because, quote, women disrupt the morale of the men; or was encouraged to run for secretary, not VP, because women are better organized; or was called sweetie or darling at a board meeting; or was told that she was only hired in a senior role because the boss wanted to, quote, get it wet. If that makes you uncomfortable, it should. These sound like stories from 40 years ago, but they're stories from less than two years ago. This is what many women in Alberta struggle with every day.

Now, recently I was asked if I am a feminist. Well, I was raised by a strong single mother. My wife is a strong, smart leader who makes a difference every day, and I am honoured and lucky to be the father of two intelligent daughters, who deserve to grow up in a world where they don't worry about sexual assault or domestic violence and they have exactly the same opportunities as any man. So, yes, I am a feminist. The real question is: who is not a feminist?

Despite the challenges that persist in our society, I am encouraged by the work I see women doing every day to strive for equality even in situations where some want them to fail. Today the daughters of the vote sat in the House of Commons. These inspiring young women refuse to go unheard, and I hope they continue to inspire other young women to become involved in their communities. I want to recognize the countless women who live their own quiet activism every day, shaping communities and making change.

So I do have hope, hope that we will become more aware of the work still to be done to create a truly equal society. I have hope that the next generation of young women will live in a world where opportunities are limited only by their capabilities and desires, not by their gender. I hope to be able to work alongside the strong women in my life, both personally and professionally, and among all of you here to create a better world for all of our daughters.

If we call out sexism when we see it, if we seek to create opportunities for women to take on leadership roles in elected office, in senior staff positions, in business, in community, then we will be taking concrete steps towards building a truly equal society.

Thank you. [Standing ovation]

Oral Question Period

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

Justice System Delays

Mr. Jean: Crime is up across the province, and over the last two years Alberta has seen very serious cases being dropped. The problem is only getting worse, and today we found out that the Justice minister sent out a brand new protocol just last week advising prosecutors that it may not be worth pursuing serious violent crimes due to the resources required. We're talking about murders and sexual assaults. This is sickening. This means victims will likely see the accused criminals walking free on our streets. How on earth did the Premier or anyone in this government possibly think this was a good idea?

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The opposition doesn't know whether they are coming or whether they are going. One day they call for cuts. The next day they're calling for more money. Yesterday another Wildrose bozo eruption, and today it's the Keystone Kops in this House. Those folks broke things. We're working to fix it. We've got real leadership from the minister. She'll be happy to answer the remainder of the questions, but I have to say: Wildrose talk is cheap; leadership is action.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

2:10

Mr. Jean: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Here's the NDP government's new position, and I quote: even once a file is determined to be prosecutable and is serious or violent and, therefore, a priority, it may still not be worth prosecuting to the fullest extent possible. End quote. Tell that to the victim of a sexual assault, tell that to the family who's lost a loved one, or tell that to the growing number of Albertans who are quickly losing any faith in the ability of our justice system to keep our streets safe. These victims deserve every single effort to make sure violent criminals are kept behind bars for as long as possible. Why are you doing this?

The Speaker: The Minister of Justice.

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We want to ensure that Albertans have a justice system that they can be confident in. Backlogs developed over decades. When the decision in Jordan came down, we had to respond very quickly. That's why we've given prosecutors the tool to focus on serious and violent crimes. The triage protocol is explicit. Things will not be lost as prosecutions merely because of timing, but prosecutors are empowered to make the decisions necessary to focus on serious and violent crimes.

Mr. Jean: Well, I think it's disgusting, Mr. Speaker.

Here's what Rick Woodburn, president of the Canadian Association of Crown Counsel, has to say, and I quote: how are you going to look into the eyes of a victim's family and say that we're not going to do that because we don't have enough money? That's ridiculous. Triage under the government now means fewer resources for serious and violent crimes. That's not how this is supposed to work, and this is not what you're supposed to do as a government. Today Albertans feel less safe than ever before. The NDP has been in charge for over two years. How are they letting this possibly happen?

Ms Ganley: Mr. Speaker, no victim ever wants to see their accused person walk free without a trial, and neither do we. That's why we've taken the necessary steps to ensure that our prosecutors can focus on serious and violent crimes. The opposition's story just

doesn't add up. One minute they call for more resources, the next minute they call to cut and slash, and now they're calling for more resources again. We're taking leadership to ensure that serious and violent crimes are prosecuted.

The Speaker: Second main question.

Carbon Policies

Mr. Jean: This government is blowing through a billion dollars just to destroy our coal sector here in Alberta. This policy is killing jobs, killing livelihoods, hurting historic Alberta communities, and it is hurting Alberta families. So I was shocked on Monday to see the economic development minister actually stand up and tell coal workers, "We have your back." Well, I'd hate to see what it looks like when you don't have their back. Does the Premier honestly believe that spending \$1 billion to destroy our coal sector is having coal workers' backs?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, I know that math can be difficult for the members opposite, but let's review a couple of simple equations. Let's take one made-in-Alberta plan to deal with climate change plus the courage to try a new approach after years of the same old dead-end path that failed to get us new market access. What does that equal? Two new pipeline approvals and \$14 billion in direct investment, thousands of good jobs for Albertans. Our plan is working, and your plan just doesn't add up.

Mr. Jean: Well, I've been all around Alberta, and in Hanna I met a husband and wife that were forced to sell their home and now live in their car. This is not an abnormal story in Alberta anymore after this NDP government, and it's not a joke. This is serious. Your policies are hurting people's lives. I can tell Albertans one thing for sure. I haven't heard from any of these communities or these workers that you are listening to them at all. I'll ask the Premier a simple question: when will she and her ministers hold open town halls in these communities so they can look in the eyes of the men and women whose livelihoods they're destroying?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, our agreement last year with electricity companies opens the door to good, long-term, cleaner electricity jobs. This means that electricity will be green and long-term for Albertans who rely on those jobs. We've visited and met with community leaders in Hanna, Leduc, Wabamun and will be visiting soon with more impacted communities, including Edson and Forestburg. We're open. The only ones who are covering their ears are the members opposite.

Mr. Jean: Here's the reality of life outside of the dome for many Albertans right now. In Hanna, for instance, while you laugh, their mayor is estimating that 10 per cent of the workforce is going to disappear. Folks have seen a carbon tax come on their farms and their ranches and their businesses, and life is really tough right now. I know that the government thinks they're doing the right thing, but if they want to show Albertans they have their backs, here's some free advice from the Official Opposition. Premier, just reverse the carbon tax, stop the billion-dollar, job-killing coal shutdown, and start having Albertans' backs.

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, this side of the House has Albertans' backs. It's that side of the House that's completely out of touch. They want to paint a bleak picture and scare community leaders with misinformation about the workforce. They can choose to be apologists for coal and ignore the devastating health and environmental impacts of it, or they can stand up, be leaders. That's exactly

what this government is doing. We're going to keep standing up for Alberta families while they keep fearmongering. That's not leadership; this is.

Child Death Review System

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, last fall Albertans were shocked and outraged to learn about the tragic killing of four-year-old Serenity. We know that at the time of her death she was severely malnourished and underweight and she had bruising all over her body. She died more than two years ago. Sadly, we know she's not the only child in this province who has been failed by those in charge of protecting them. Can the minister please update Albertans on this file? Has a cause and manner of death been determined yet, do the police finally have everything they need, and is anyone over there – anyone – seeking justice for poor little Serenity?

The Speaker: The Minister of Children's Services.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for his commitment to getting justice for all children in Alberta. Certainly, every single member in this House was outraged about the lack of support that we have for many children in care. You know, we really need to improve a system that has been broken for a long period of time. That's why we have the all-party panel, to work together to ensure that the processes improve and we finally do it right for those kids. I'm really thankful for the commitment of all the parties who are at the table, and I look forward to the ongoing work to bring forward recommendations to make it better, finally.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, I'm part of the minister's panel on children in care, and each time that we've asked about Serenity, the NDP chair has shut us down because we aren't allowed to talk about her case. We aren't told what went wrong. At best we get the chance to ask one or two questions of presenters while so many questions are left unanswered. The NDP are even refusing to create transcripts of the panel meetings. Given that we can't actually talk about Serenity at this panel, does the minister think her panel will deliver justice for Serenity or any improvements for the next Serenity?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again, I know that everyone in this House is committed to improving the system for our children in care. Obviously, the death review process needs some changes. That's why we have the panel in the first place. That panel is designed to improve the reviews in the first phase but then, moving into phase 2, to finally get to the root problems as to why children are in care in the first place and making the changes necessary to make life better for them and their families. This is not about a witch hunt on a particular case. This is about working to ensure that Alberta children in care finally get the care that they need.

Mr. Nixon: Albertans are angry when they hear about our system failing children in care. During the panel meetings we keep hearing that there were 73 reported deaths of children in care, and apparently 11 are proceeding to statutory review. Despite years having gone by, none of these reviews are finished. Senior bureaucrats say that it's very complicated work and it takes a long time, but our children don't have a long time. Serenity isn't even included in those 73 deaths. Will the minister please tell Albertans if Serenity's death is even being investigated by her department and why it takes so painfully long for her department to complete a review?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Every single one of us is outraged by what has happened in the past, and I am definitely one of those people. Obviously, the processes that were developed in the past are not okay. We need to change them, and we are moving forward to change them as quickly as we can. We are doing that through a process in which we engage families, we engage workers, we engage all those who have been affected by this to ensure that instead of the existing processes with many separate reviews, we can finally get down to the bottom of this and do this right going forward.

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

2:20

Justice System Delays

(continued)

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, it's another day and another crisis in Alberta under the NDP. Our Justice minister is directing Crown prosecutors to let violent criminals go because they may take up too much court time, and that includes – wait for this – alleged murderers and sexual predators. A triage protocol, accepting plea bargains: why don't we just do the NDP's version of *Let's Make A Deal*? To the Justice minister: are you on the side of criminals, or are you on the side of victims?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government came into a system of significant court backlogs that built up under that party over there. We have been taking action to address those backlogs. We are moving forward because Jordan forced us to move very quickly with the triage protocol to ensure that serious and violent crimes are prioritized. We know that more resources are necessary, and we will have more to say about that very soon.

Mr. Ellis: Minister, I think you need to focus on the four fingers that are pointing back at you.

Mr. Speaker, thank you. Given that last year I asked why you were cutting the budget for Crown prosecutors and given that your government put on a hiring freeze that left 35 positions open when 50 prosecutors were desperately needed and given that we warned the minister that the consequences of reducing the budget for Crown prosecutors would create havoc, to the Premier: is this job just too much for this minister?

Ms Hoffman: Absolutely not, Mr. Speaker. We have one of the most competent, focused, diligent Justice ministers that this province has ever seen. And it is true that she inherited a heck of a mess from the guys who just asked that very same question. So guess what? She is focused on making sure that she moves forward with Jordan's decision as the guiding legislative focus. We have to; it's a court ruling. And she has to make sure that we're continuing to increase where we need it so that people can get justice. For the folks on the other side who are always calling for cuts, keep this in mind because it's important that we invest in making sure that we do get justice.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Second supplemental.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you. We didn't call for cuts. We want to support the victims of crime.

Given that this government is proposing legislation right now that is supposed to strengthen the rights of victims of sexual... [interjections]

The Speaker: Hon. members, keep the volume down on this side.

Mr. Ellis: Given that this government is proposing legislation right now that is supposed to strengthen the rights of victims of sexual violence and given that the minister quietly provided a directive to drop sexual assault cases when the Crown has a, quote, slim likelihood of conviction, which is a major change from the current threshold, to the same minister: how can you one day be an advocate for victims of sexual assault and revictimize them the next day?

Ms Ganley: Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth. We have empowered prosecutors to focus on serious and violent cases. It has always been the case that where there is no likelihood of conviction or it's not in the public interest, those individual Crown prosecutors have been empowered to exercise their discretion. We know the system is under significant pressure. There have been significant backlogs, and that's why we're taking action to get it fixed. I have no idea why the opposition can't get their stories straight. One minute they want me to cut; one minute they want me to spend. They have no idea what we're doing. We're moving forward with a real plan.

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

Opioid Use

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A briefing note I obtained from the Calgary Police Service shows the further impact that opioids, including fentanyl, are having on policing resources in the community. In 2016 the Calgary Police Service responded to 223 overdose calls, including 111 fentanyl-related charges. These numbers have risen dramatically every year for the last five years. There's also been a corresponding spike in property crime driven by addiction. To the Minister of Justice: if the government has all the resources it needs, why do these numbers keep going up?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. We know that fentanyl and addictions are best attacked on a health front by ensuring that we have the necessary treatments, and that is why our Associate Minister of Health has been moving so quickly to ensure that we have treatment beds available, that we have replacement therapies available, that we have naloxone available. I'm in regular contact with the Calgary police and every other police service. They support the approach that we are taking, and we will move forward together.

Dr. Swann: That's a bit of a stretch given the chief of police's comments in the last month.

The danger of falling victim to an opioid overdose doesn't end once people are arrested. A letter I received from the Justice minister just last month admits an unprecedented 10 Albertans died in custody last year. Two of the deaths have been confirmed to be the result of overdoses; six more await the final ME, medical examiner, report. There were also 27 near deaths – 27 – that were prevented by emergency intervention in remand and corrections. To the minister: how are you investigating these deaths, what are the results, and what actions are you taking to prevent this?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The safety of our inmates and our correctional workers is of the utmost priority in the correctional division. We know that fentanyl has a much more deadly effect than other drugs. We do know that that can cause some challenges. I think that we should await the actual statistics before we draw any conclusions on that, but corrections officers take steps every day, including searches, intelligence, and we're even investigating body scanners, to ensure that our inmates are as safe as we can make them.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The opioid crisis is pervasive, affecting urban, rural, First Nations, and all economic classes, and it crosses all government jurisdictions. Beyond Health it includes human services, Education, Justice, and First Nations. We need a clear, comprehensive, evidence-based strategy. So far the government has failed to deliver this. To the Premier: when will a comprehensive, government-wide strategy for the opioid crisis be tabled in the Legislature?

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for his question. My door continues to be open, and we've been pleased to receive some of his feedback as well as the feedback of others throughout the province, whether it's with regard to Health, Justice, human services, and so on. We continue to work on pulling all of those pieces together. The member is absolutely right that more can and must be done. I'm confident that the associate minister is taking those recommendations into consideration, and we'll be happy to update this House in a timely fashion as we continue to move forward.

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

Services for Persons with Disabilities

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In Calgary-Currie, organizations like the Association for the Rehabilitation of the Brain Injured help people recover from brain injuries and strokes. They have recently come under funding pressure due to the United Way cutting back on their support. ARBI has responded with fundraising efforts and, where they can, cuts. However, it is not enough. To the Minister of Health: how is the ministry supporting organizations like ARBI?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. During tough economic times I understand that organizations funded by the United Way are feeling additional pressures lately. The Association for the Rehabilitation of the Brain Injured provides continued service to help Albertans with brain injuries, and we are grateful for the work that they do, integrated within the community, outside of hospital, or in long-term care as well as working with all partners. That's one of the reasons why AHS is currently providing \$400,000 in funding to ARBI to provide community-based care for Albertans in need of ongoing supports for brain injuries. I thank the member for bringing this additional point to my attention.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is good that we are continuing to fund these important services. However, again

to the minister: are there other sources of funding available to organizations like ARBI?

Ms Hoffman: Thank you again to the member for the question. My department is certainly experiencing tough financial times like all are, but we know that it's important to consider extraneous situations as they do arise, so we're willing to hear from the member and other community organizations in an ongoing way. If an organization has a proposal, I'd be more than pleased to consider it and see if there's something that can be done. This afternoon we'll be considering supplementary supply. I think folks know that times are tough, but I think it's important that we do look at the realities that are happening on the ground in this specific situation as well as others.

2:30

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that organizations which provide support to PDD clients have also been affected due to the decrease in support from United Way, to the Minister of Community and Social Services: what steps has your ministry taken to ensure that PDD service users continue to receive the support they deserve and need?

The Speaker: The Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member. For thousands of Albertans PDD is not just a program; it's a comprehensive set of supports to promote their safety and inclusion. That is why we have increased funding for PDD by \$22 million to meet this growing demand. We have been prioritizing access to PDD services for people who have health and safety risks to ensure that their needs are met in a timely fashion. Our government is protecting and strengthening the services that Alberta needs during tough times.
Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Addiction and Mental Health Services

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Associate Minister of Health. There's an unfortunate lack of co-ordination, clarity, and collaboration between Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services. These two bloated bureaucracies historically have been ineffective in staying abreast of the health needs of Albertans, particularly in the areas of mental health and addictions. This is resulting in disengagement of the front-line workers and a drug abuse recurrence rate that is demoralizing both clients and staff. What is the minister doing to improve the working relationship of the two organizations to get Albertans the services they require?

The Speaker: The Associate Minister of Health.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. As one of the major health providers within the province of Alberta, particularly when it comes to mental health, the role that Alberta Health Services plays is invaluable, which is why they've been a key stakeholder as we move forward with the recommendations from the Valuing Mental Health report. We will have more to say about that in the coming days. Certainly, we've been reaching out to community providers as well as across ministries throughout the government and within Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services to ensure that we've got co-ordinated efforts and supports for Albertans, regardless of where they live in our province.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this health crisis is extremely complex and that complex issues require complex solutions and given that a holistic approach must balance harm reduction with other measures addressing mental health and addictions across the lifespan of an individual, with the intent of reaching all vulnerable children and teens, including First Nations and Métis youth, what has this government done to develop a balanced approach that addresses the underlying causes of addiction through mental health, rehabilitation, and education?

The Speaker: The Associate Minister of Health.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm really thrilled for the opportunity to continue to talk about some of the collaborative work that we've been doing. A big piece of the response, particularly around mental health and addiction supports, has been to work with our partners in Education, Indigenous Relations, and within the communities to ensure that we've got the supports that are appropriate. Where possible we are reaching out to indigenous communities to ensure that there are culturally appropriate supports, recognizing that a lot of the challenges that are sometimes faced by indigenous peoples are rooted in a history of oppression and colonialism and that part of reconciliation is . . .

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

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Stoney Nakoda First Nation reports that up to 60 per cent of the adults living on the reserve are battling drug and alcohol addictions and given that many of the other First Nations communities in Alberta are also being devastated by drug and alcohol addiction and given that fentanyl tends to be the main cause of drug-related deaths within the larger mix of drug and alcohol abuse on-reserve, outside of providing naloxone, what help is this government giving to First Nations communities struggling with the fentanyl crisis?

The Speaker: The hon. associate minister.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The impact of the opioid crisis on First Nations communities, both on- and off-reserve, is something that our government takes very seriously. One of the communities that has been most impacted is the Blood Tribe, which is why we're proud that the work of the Cardston Suboxone and methadone clinic has been able to support quite a number of members of the community both on the Blood reserve but also in the surrounding communities. We are continuing to work with First Nations partners to ensure that we're working together from a nation-to-nation perspective and providing culturally appropriate supports both on- and off-reserve.

The Speaker: Thank you.
The Member for Calgary-Hays.

Status of Women Ministry Initiatives

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On this International Women's Day I want to commend the Member for Calgary-Varsity for her work as Minister of Status of Women, the ministry dedicated to the advancement of gender equity and the reduction of harm against women and girls.

Given that the ministry's most recent annual report on page 11 refers to stats that show Alberta has one of the highest rates of violence against women and given your collaboration with the city of Edmonton to create safer spaces, to the minister: how much safer

should a woman or girl in Edmonton feel today as a result of your work, and why?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McLean: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the lovely question. I'm very happy to report on some of the work that the city of Edmonton is doing with the United Nations safer cities initiative. They are currently working on the scoping part of that project. The ultimate goal is to make streets safer for women and girls in the city of Edmonton, and we're hopeful that we will gather learnings from other cities that have engaged in the safer cities initiative as well and that those learnings will then be able to be implemented across the province of Alberta.

Thank you very much for the question.

Mr. McIver: "Scoping" and "learning" sounds early, so we'll hope for an update later on.

Again to the minister. Given that on page 13 of the same report you refer to progress in Albertans receiving high-quality programs and services and given that that sounds like it could be good but little detail is attached to that high-minded objective, here is a chance to brag, Minister. What does that progress actually look like, and how will Alberta women and girls recognize that progress in their daily lives?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McLean: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. As he's pointed out, Alberta women and girls deserve to feel free from threats of violence. They ought to feel that they have choice and that they in reality do have choice, so our government has taken important steps to ensure that women and girls can seek leadership positions, have stronger economic outcomes, and be free of violence. To that end, we've increased funding for women's shelters so that more second-stage shelters are available. We also increased funding to 11 sexual assault centres. We joined the inquiry into missing and murdered . . .

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

Mr. McIver: Thank you. I appreciate that. We'll look forward to prevention as well, but thank you for the answer.

Given that on page 23 of the ministry's annual report the Auditor General notes that "the ministry's work is mostly internal to government" and given that one of your main purposes, as stated on the same page, is "decreasing violence against women and girls in all its forms," to the ministers: when will you turn your efforts external to government so that your efforts will protect even more women and girls from violence in all its forms, not just in government but across Alberta?

Ms McLean: Thank you again for the question. I'd like to take the opportunity to address two things. First of all, our internal work does lead to external work.

The other thing is how we do that, Mr. Speaker. We've implemented a gender-based analysis requirement in all of the policies, across all ministries, so all decisions that are made take into account women and girls, how they benefit, and how they might be excluded from a policy. That has led to the additional funding that I mentioned. It includes our partnership with the I Believe You campaign and our continued funding of that on the prevention side. We've also invested additional dollars . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Economic Downturn in Calgary

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, while Calgarians are losing jobs, the city of Calgary has signalled that property taxes are going to go up. With the NDP government tinkering with the electricity market, Enmax can no longer pay a dividend to the city of Calgary to keep the property taxes low. To the Minister of Energy: why is your government making life more expensive for Calgarians in the middle of an economic crisis?

The Speaker: The Environment minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to answer on behalf of the Energy minister, who is of course promoting Alberta's energy industry in Houston this week. Of course, our government is making life better for Alberta families by capping electricity rates.

Mr. McIver: Point of order.

Ms Phillips: The members opposite would put Albertans back on a roller coaster of skyrocketing electricity prices from the failed deregulation experiments of the previous government. What we are doing is making life more affordable by capping those electricity rates for small farms, for small business, and for families. That's our commitment to Albertans.

2:40

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Panda: It's all hot air with this minister.

Mr. Speaker, given the 30 per cent vacancy rates in downtown Calgary the city is going to penalize business owners in the suburbs with higher property taxes because the NDP took away the Enmax dividend. Given that the NDP is also raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour, to the minister of economic development. Under your watch thousands of small businesses in Calgary closed. How many more will you close to support your ideological policies?

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

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to start off by saying that our government has introduced a number of initiatives to help cities like Calgary during this economic downturn. We recognize that they're going through a very difficult period. I do want to point out the fact that all of our initiatives – lowering the small-business tax, our investor tax credits, our headquarter attraction program for Calgary – this opposition voted against in the 2016 budget. As opposed to our government, that's taking action to partner with the city of Calgary and other communities around the province, this party just would rather do nothing and vote against any incentives.

Mr. Panda: Given that the unemployment rate in Calgary is over 10 per cent and my constituents still can't get retraining through Alberta Works though they are educated, experienced and they're just trying to save their house and retirement and given that Alberta Works contracts out services to third-party providers, who won't help my constituents unless they meet narrow criteria, to the minister of social services: how does a laid off 50-year-old qualify to access retraining?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. We have increased funding to Alberta Works and all

its programs so that Albertans can get the supports they need. Under their plan they would have cut \$2 billion, which would have impacted these services that Alberta Works and other programs are providing, gone even further down, and made the situation worse. We are strengthening the services that Albertans need. That's the choice we made. They would cut, slash, and burn those services.

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

Drinking Water Regulations Health Services Building in Taber

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Red tape seems to spring like a well from this government, and unfortunately it has real consequences, as in the case of the Barn Store in the beautiful hamlet of Mountain View in my riding. The store owner was ordered by Alberta Environment to install a commercial source of water at a cost of millions of dollars in order to stop using the residential groundwater well that they have been using for generations. Such action would effectively shut their doors. To the minister of environment: if water is fit for human consumption, why differentiate between residential or small commercial?

The Speaker: The Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. In fact, I just wrote to the hon. member's constituent, signed the letter this morning. The fact of the matter is that Environment and Parks has a number of regulations to keep drinking water safe. We have those regulations in place, unlike the members across the way, who would repeal those regulations and simply, you know, leave Albertans without the clean, safe drinking water that they're looking for and without the infrastructure to support it because they would also cut those programs.

Mr. Hunter: I don't think they're going to be happy about that response, Minister.

Mr. Speaker, given that someone in the department of environment doesn't think groundwater is good enough for a small store and motel but it's fine for residential and given that Mountain View's Barn Store draws their water from the same aquifer as the school, the church, the art gallery, the garage, the seniors' care home, and other businesses, is the minister of environment prepared to stop this nonsense, rescind the noncompliance letter, or pony up for a 26-kilometre waterline to Cardston?

Ms Phillips: Well, once again, Mr. Speaker, first of all, I have responded to the member's constituents directly, but second of all, this is a side of the House, the Wildrose, that would have cut our infrastructure budgets, that would have cut our water transportation funding. So it is a little bit rich from a side of the House that would have cut infrastructure investments by \$9 billion to now stand in their place and ask for more. They have to decide which side they're on. We're on the side of clean water and well-supported communities.

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, they don't need any more light bulbs. They need good solutions.

Another example of red tape is found in the town of Taber. Given that AHS has a building that they aren't using and that the government has already indicated they would like to sell to the town of Taber and given that Taber needs the building to house the local FCSS, that is having to use a section of the Taber Agri-Plex, which, incidentally, they have to be out of by June, and given that the AHS building has sat empty for two years due to government red tape

and indecision, how long will the people of Taber have to wait before this government gets the deal done?

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. I am in the process of considering the ability to ask AHS whether or not they would like to dispose of the building itself to be able to hand that over to the town of Taber, which would have the first right of refusal, which might be able to facilitate that. So this is something that we are actively considering.

With regard to light bulbs, Mr. Speaker, I know the members opposite don't want us to turn on the lights. They don't want us to shine a light on the fact that they continue to have these bozo eruptions on the other side. On this side of the House we're going to keep helping everyday Albertans save money on their electricity bills, and we're going to make their lives . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister. I'm just trying to think of a good joke to bring a little humour in here.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

Calgary Gravel Pit Operation

Mr. Rodney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The NDP claim to care about Albertans and claim to consult with them, but their words and actions often indicate the opposite. Many weeks ago along with the residents of Bridlewood I wrote a letter to the Transportation minister about the new monstrous gravel and asphalt plant in their community. I also sent him 13 pictures since we have no indication that he's seen it with his own eyes and have asked him personally about this. No public consultation was ever done on this, and notices were in mailboxes only after the plant was built. When will the minister provide detailed answers to the issues raised by the residents in that letter?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I've taken the letter that I've received from the member and I've had an opportunity to discuss it with him. I have asked the department to prepare a report so that I can give complete and full answers to him in this House, and when I've received that, I will do so.

Mr. Rodney: This is time sensitive, Mr. Speaker. Given that the plant did not appear on ministry maps and given that it is to run nonstop for several years from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. every single day and given that the noise and smell and potential carcinogens very negatively impact the quality of life of the residents, can the minister please table in this Legislature here today all of the environmental and health studies that were conducted before the operation was built that would prove that all of the concerns of these fine Albertans are wrong about this megaproject in their neighbourhood?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I indicated to the hon. member, the matter is under review, and when I have an answer for him, I will provide it.

Mr. Rodney: Don't cause damage and then do a review.

Given that there is a similar situation in West Springs – and we're happy to work for other MLAs as well – despite the concerns being illustrated in the media and given that workers on-site often must wear masks because of silicosis but that residents have been given

no information on this and given that there's been no public government response to anyone in either West Springs or Bridlewood and given that the residents are happy to work with government to ensure that these operations are located on sites that are most appropriate for all involved and given that critical consultation should have happened long ago, will the minister commit today to meeting face to face this week with residents from both communities about this urgent issue? If so, when? If not, Minister, why not?

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, I'll remind the hon. member that one of these gravel pits is in the constituency of the Member for Calgary-Bow, and she has organized a meeting with her constituents. We had officials there from Transportation to answer questions, and we're pleased to do the same thing for this member should he choose to undertake it.

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

Opioid Use (continued)

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In both this House and in my community I've spoken strongly in favour of harm reduction, practical policies and strategies that reduce the negative health, social, economic consequences of substance use. As such, I've been proud to support Access to Medically Supervised Injection Services Edmonton as they work to establish sites in our community. However, in talking with community residents, I found that some are unsure of the role our government has played and will play should their federal application prove successful. To the Associate Minister of Health: can you clarify what part our government has played and will play in this process?

2:50

The Speaker: The hon. associate minister.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'll take a moment to thank the member for his advocacy on this issue. As we look for ways to respond to the opioid crisis in our province, our government is proud to be expanding harm reduction efforts, including supporting supervised consumption services. This includes letters of support from the provincial Minister of Health, the chief medical officer, and the Minister of Justice, which will be forthcoming as part of the application process to the federal government. I was also pleased to stand alongside members of AMSISE as they launched their public consultation process, which was supported by a \$230,000 grant from this government.

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

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that community members also have some concerns that investing in harm reduction alone is not enough and that it is also important to provide more opportunities for users to access treatment and supports to achieve sobriety, to the Associate Minister of Health: what actions are you taking to help Albertans break the cycle of substance abuse?

Ms Payne: Harm reduction, without a doubt, saves lives, but we know that addiction is a chronic issue that needs sustained and systemic action. We are taking those actions collectively, pulling together ministries and community groups through the valuing mental health initiative to help educate and prevent addiction, to intervene and treat substance abuse, and to give people the social supports they need to break the cycle. This includes expanding treatment beds available for children and youth, increasing access

to Suboxone and methadone clinics, and through primary care doctors.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My last question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. Given that Ambrose Place, a local housing facility implementing principles of harm reduction, has successfully housed 42 individuals who were chronically homeless, drastically lowering the costs of supporting them through our health care or justice systems, what investments will you be making to help build and operate supportive housing across our city and throughout Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member. Everyone deserves to live with dignity and opportunities to thrive. That's why we provided \$13 million in the '15-16 budget for housing projects that support complex-needs clients, and we have invested more than \$77 million in the housing first program throughout this province. We do know that housing first reduces the use of the corrections and health systems, and that is the reason that our government is protecting and strengthening these services to make a difference in the lives of Albertans.

Thank you.

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

Drivers at Risk for Medical Reasons

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In early spring of last year I requested the government amend the Traffic Safety Act similar to that of our two neighbouring provinces, where they require mandatory reporting of medically at-risk drivers by physicians and optometrists. This legislation has been in place in British Columbia since 1996 and in Saskatchewan since 2004. To the Minister of Transportation: when will you join our neighbours, protect our citizens, and address this critical safety issue?

The Speaker: The Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I've had the opportunity to recently review two fatality inquiry reports by judges here in the province. I read them both very carefully. Of course, it's always a tragedy, and these are designed to help us prevent the repeat of these tragedies. I'm looking very closely at the recommendations with respect to the medical issue that the hon. member has made, and all I can say is that I take that very seriously and he should stay tuned.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that bills 16 and 36 last year both opened the door for amendments to the Traffic Safety Act and given that on both occasions I approached this minister to add this important amendment but was denied on both occasions, to the Minister of Transportation: what is preventing you from dealing with this critical safety issue?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, nothing is preventing me from dealing with it. You know, with the greatest respect to the

hon. member, I take a judge's recommendation based on an inquiry into an actual situation very seriously, and we're going to be taking a look at that.

I get lots of suggestions for amendments that would tie up the whole Legislature with Transportation amendments, and as much as I would love that, Mr. Speaker, my colleagues would not.

Mr. Hanson: Mr. Speaker, we recently received a copy of the fatality inquiry into what was determined to be the avoidable death of Megan Wolitski and now the recent passing of her classmate Maddie Guitard. This preventable tragedy devastated their families, the school, and our entire community. The most troubling part of this report to me was the statement that this tragedy could have been avoided by a simple \$25 SIMARD test, a screen for identification of cognitively impaired, medically at-risk drivers. To the Minister of Transportation: when will you respond to the recommendation of the inquiry and amend the Alberta Traffic Safety Act?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. As I said in the answer to his first question, I've reviewed both of these recommendations based on the fatality inquiries. I have looked very closely at the recommendations therein. I'm considering what action needs to be taken, and he needs to stay tuned.

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

Provincial Debt

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since the NDP formed government, Alberta's credit rating has been downgraded twice despite assurances to the contrary from the Finance minister. Major concerns of credit-rating agencies: our ongoing deficits and mounting provincial debt to the point that it may be perceived as unserviceable. Yet the minister says that he has a plan to get us back on track. To the Finance minister: will you commit to a responsible debt repayment plan today or give Albertans your predictions on postbudget credit downgrading? As the saying goes: say it ain't so, Minister.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much. I'm not sure who said: say it ain't so. A baseball player. Yogi Berra, I think.

What I can tell you is so is that the budget is coming out next Thursday, so you're going to have to wait to find out more about where our numbers are with regard to all of that. You know, this dire kind of gloom-and-doom presentation from across the floor just needs a little tuning up here. In this fiscal year we expect to spend 2.4 per cent of our revenue on debt servicing. Do you know where B.C. is at? They're at 5.5 per cent. We're in good shape. We have the fundamentals going. [interjection] You're not asking the question; he is.

The Speaker: Might I remind the two members that their comments should continue to go through the Speaker's chair.

First supplemental.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and you're welcome, Joe. But it isn't a contest to try and beat British Columbia.

Given that this government was recently given a fiscal gift of \$1.3 billion and given that irresponsible fiscal behaviour delivered just \$100 million of that to Alberta's bottom line and given the spend-thrift ratio of revenue-to-deficit reduction would require a revenue increase of a paltry \$140 billion to deliver a balanced budget, to the

minister: how do you plan to generate such additional revenue by 2024 when neither a punitive carbon tax nor your musings about a PST could ever deliver a balanced budget to Albertans?

The Speaker: The Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much. You know, it just astounds me: a fiscal gift? We qualified to get those payments for Fort McMurray from the federal government. We put those to Fort McMurray so that they wouldn't be suffering. We're not sure what they'd do under your government. We're focused on making life better not only for Fort McMurray but for everybody in this province. The collapse in oil prices has meant a significant dip in our resources, but we've got the back of Albertans. You would let them suffer.

The Speaker: Second point of order noted.
Second supplemental.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that by 2019 this government will have spilled so much red ink that a typical Alberta family of four will be burdened by over \$53,000 of provincial debt and given that this four-year debt burden would take each household 25 years to pay off at a rate of \$270 per month, again to the minister. You say that you have the backs of Albertans, but the real question is: how much debt will you load on the backs of Albertans before you slay the debt monkey and present a credible and responsible debt repayment plan?

3:00

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, debt is very important. We're carefully watching that as we go forward. But you know what that group couldn't do? They couldn't balance the budget on \$100 oil. They never did. We've got the lowest tax jurisdiction – maybe thanks for that – we've got no PST, we've got no premiums for health care, and we've got no sales tax. We're working through this, the most significant recession in a generation. You couldn't do it. We're doing it over here.

Ms Ganley: Mr. Speaker, I rise to request unanimous consent of the House to waive Standing Order 7(7) to allow for the Routine to continue past 3.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Speaker: For the record, before we begin, I think there were a total of two points of order.

Members' Statements

Justice System Delays

Mrs. Pitt: Mr. Speaker, a strong judiciary is the cornerstone of a strong democracy. Under the NDP government's watch we are watching that cornerstone crumble. When a victim comes forward after a crime has been committed, they need assurances that they will see their day in court. That should be the priority of our Crown prosecutors, and that should be the directive from this Justice minister. Instead, the priorities of the NDP government have been clearly shown in a memo sent to the Crown prosecutors entitled prosecution service practice protocol. It shows in black and white that fiscal constraints are hampering our justice system. It spells out that there is a clear gap between the resources allocated to Alberta's Crowns and the number of viable charges laid by the police, and the blame for that gap rests squarely on the shoulders of this government.

It tells our Crown prosecutors to accept the status quo. That status quo has seen charges stayed for first-degree murder, impaired driving, and assaulting a peace officer. This minister's directive tells sexual assault victims, whom they claim they support, that their case may not go to trial if there's a slim chance of conviction. It allows a system where, instead of focusing on the most serious cases and getting them to trial, it is acceptable to take a plea to a lesser offence. That could mean seeing someone who has killed a loved one be sentenced to second-degree murder when they full well could be charged with first-degree murder if they had their day in court.

Let's be clear. According to the president of the Canadian Association of Crown Counsel no other province is known to be staying cases because of a lack of resources. We need to do better. Our democracy relies on our judicial system to be responsive to the people and to instill confidence that justice will be served when a crime is committed. On behalf of women – no – on behalf of Albertans: shame on you.

International Women's Day Violence against Women

Ms Fitzpatrick: Today I take the United Nations challenge for International Women's Day, to be bold for change, and I take the opportunity to remember: to remember a daughter, a mother of three young children, a physician, Elana Fric, found dead December 1, 2016, at 40 years of age; to remember January 3, 2015, when members of the Edmonton Police Service entered a residence in north Edmonton to find Thuy Tien Truong, 35, along with seven others, murdered through an act of domestic violence; to remember and acknowledge all of the Jane and Janet Does throughout Alberta because every day in Alberta these scenes of horror play out for so many women and children on the run just to stay alive.

I also take this opportunity to acknowledge that there is still much to be done. It was with horror this past week that I heard of the ruling finding a taxi driver not guilty of sexual assault on his passed-out, drunk female passenger because there wasn't enough evidence to prove the woman's lack of consent, with a blood alcohol level three times the legal limit to operate a motor vehicle. We cannot defend a system where the right to drive a car is more easily removed than the right to protection of person.

I will not forget the evidence dismissed, those who have suffered, those who have died, and those children who are left traumatized by domestic violence. Today I pledge to be bold for change, to do everything I can through words and action to bring an end to disrespect, an end to domestic violence. This is why I am a feminist. Will you join me . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.
The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Government Policies

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Uncertainty in this province is killing jobs and investment. No one is blaming this NDP government for the price of oil, but they are blaming this government for making the situation in Alberta worse with their policies.

There is uncertainty in the oil and gas sector. This government chose to do a royalty review soon after they were elected and implemented a carbon tax, which, when compounded with the low price of oil, further drove away investment.

There's uncertainty in the agricultural industry. This government passed Bill 6, which caused Alberta farmers much unneeded stress

and expense, and the carbon tax added yet another expense for them for things such as fertilizer.

There is uncertainty in the forest industry because of the mountain pine beetle and the caribou management plan and decreased timber allocations because of cutblock retention increases. Added to this, there's still no answer on whether a new softwood lumber agreement will be struck.

There is uncertainty in the coal industry as this government is shutting down coal-fired electricity generation.

There is uncertainty in municipal development. Developers will have to pay more off-site levies, and they do not yet know what that looks like.

There is uncertainty in the tourism industry in Alberta. Taxes that used to be collected and put directly back into tourism are now being siphoned off into general revenue, leaving yet another industry unsure as to this government's ability or desire to advocate for them.

There is uncertainty for families in the province because of increased gas prices, home heating, and food costs because of the NDP carbon tax.

Mr. Speaker, this government needs to provide Albertans with certainty and stability in these tough economic times.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Latin American Women in Alberta

Loyola: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [Remarks in Spanish]

The Speaker: Hon. member, you will be providing a copy of that in English.

Loyola: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Translation] It gives me great pleasure to provide a greeting of solidarity to all the women of Alberta and specifically to the Latin American women who have created in Alberta their own home. On this International Women's Day I want to acknowledge, thank, and celebrate the great contributions made by Latin American women in this province. We also commemorate many women who have passed away but who in life struggled to create equality and justice.

This history begins in the '70s with the first wave of Chileans fleeing the military dictatorship. The '80s and '90s, because of wars and persecution, brought the Central American wave. They came from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua. In those years they also came from Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil, and Peru. In the most recent wave they have come from Colombia, Venezuela, and Mexico, largely for economic opportunities.

All these women, although from different countries, share a strong work ethic and a desire to make life better for their families and all Albertans through their immense contributions to our province and communities. They are our sisters, daughters, mothers, neighbours, and companions. They are businesswomen, professors, artists, activists, and students. They are doctors, nurses, teachers, engineers, managers, politicians, and most, at the same time, mothers dedicated to the upbringing of the next generation.

This International Women's Day I thank all these Latin American women, who, like my mother, fight for their families, for gender equality, for human rights, and for the rights of Mother Earth. We owe them a tremendous debt of gratitude.

Thank you very much. [As submitted]

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

3:10 Symons Valley Ranch

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to tell you about an interesting property in Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill, Symons Valley Ranch. The property was purchased by the Jones family in 1968 and has been transformed a number of times in its history. The rowdy barn dances of the late '60s and '70s led to the construction of three banquet halls, a lounge, and a restaurant in the 1980s.

Operations took a difficult turn in 1989, when a fire destroyed the three halls, but that didn't stop the party at the Symons Valley barbecue ranch. The ranch was reconstructed bigger and better with logs, vaulted ceilings, hardwood floors, western light fixtures, and private courtyards that improved the rustic cowboy castle and created a space for a farmers' market. Many memories were made at the ranch, including corporate Christmas parties, wedding receptions, and my own Stampede barbecue last year.

On January 26 around 6 a.m. a fire started at Symons Valley Ranch near the far north side of the riding. The property was home to the Symons Valley market, a year-round farmers' market with 33 vendors that has become a focal point for the neighborhood and drew customers from across the city. I liked going and buying fresh fruit and vegetables there, and there was always something interesting going on like showcasing local artists.

Recovering from the devastating fire has been a challenge that has been ably led by Tracy and Ken Aylesworth, the managing partners of the market. Since the fire they've organized a T-shirt drive to raise funds – you can purchase the T-shirts at many places around the city; check out www.symonsvalleyranch.com for information – and a pop-up market that over a thousand people visited last Saturday.

They're planning another pop-up market on the 18th at the ranch. Just head north on Symons Valley Road past the fire hall, and you'll see it on the left. I'd like to urge everyone in the Calgary area to visit the market, support our local small-business owners, and make sure you bring cash because they couldn't save the ATM from the fire.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Energy Efficiency Programs

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. How do you make a light bulb more expensive? It's simple, really. Get the government to buy it and install it for you. Sound ludicrous? Well, that's exactly what the Alberta NDP government is doing. Their new residential no-charge energy savings program will send installers house to house to replace night lights, light bulbs, shower heads, faucet aerators, power bars, and – you got it – thermostats.

Now, when you hear “no charge,” you think “free,” right? Well, no. That's not correct. This program will cost tens of millions of dollars. Who's paying for it? Well, you know the answer to that one. You are. You know that carbon tax that you see on your heating bills and fuel bills? Well, the government is using your money, that they've collected from you, to give you – you guessed it – light bulbs.

Now, obviously, I have serious concerns about this program. To start with, the NDP government hired Ecofitt, which is an Ontario-based company, to do the work. That means that regardless of where they hire installers from, at minimum the profits of this program will be going out of province. That's carbon tax money headed out of Alberta. The NDP must think Albertans are stupid. Why else would they hire Ontario-based Ecofitt to receive tens of millions in tax dollars for this boondoggle?

Unlike the NDP, Wildrose knows that everyday Albertans can see that it doesn't make sense to use taxpayers' own money to fund this program. Oh, and for those Albertans who upgraded their lights and thermostats on their own, they aren't going to see any benefit. The Albertans I talked to would rather have their money stay in their pockets instead of government taking their money and offering them free installation of power bars and light bulbs.

This was one of our concerns about the carbon tax, how the government would spend that money. Corporate welfare for an out-of-province company for a service that Albertans are fully capable of doing on their own is a classic example of government waste. At least now we know how many Albertans it takes to change a light bulb. The government has hired . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees

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

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As members are aware, Mr. Peter Hourihan, who has served this province well for many years as Ombudsman and Public Interest Commissioner, will be retiring from these roles in April. As it is not anticipated that the search committee appointed to find a successor will have completed its mandate at that time, the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices has issued a report, which I am tabling today, that recommends the appointment of Mr. Joe Loran as Acting Ombudsman and Mr. Ted Miles as Acting Public Interest Commissioner until such time as a replacement for the Ombudsman and Public Interest Commissioner is appointed. I have the requisite number of copies of the report here.

Introduction of Bills

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

Bill 201 Justice System Accountability Act

Mr. Jean: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased today to introduce Bill 201, the Justice System Accountability Act.

I can't think of any more important bill to bring to this Legislature, especially at a time when we're losing out on opportunities to prosecute people that may be guilty of crimes. This particular piece of legislation would remove, first of all, the cloak of secrecy surrounding the performance of our justice system, and it would seek accountability for a system that is seeing serious charges being stayed, justice delayed, and justice denied.

The bill will compel the minister to track the length of investigations, track the length of trials, sources of adjournments, mistrials, and the number of charges withdrawn, reduced, and stayed by the Crown prosecutor or the judge. The minister will be also required to report this information to the Legislature on an annual basis – we believe in transparency here on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker – so that we can all work together to resolve the backlogs and bottlenecks preventing victims of crime from receiving justice and make sure that our streets are safe and Albertans understand that the streets will be safe in the future.

I trust that I can count on all of the members from all of the parties for their support on this particularly important bill, that will see justice finally come back to Alberta. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 201 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-North West.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Interesting. We heard the opposition yell “take responsibility” a number of times in question period today, so indeed here’s their chance.

In a follow-up to yesterday’s documents, in the wake of the Wildrose on Campus declaration that feminism is cancer, the Wildrose opposition was quick to distance themselves from this club, but apparently the club appears to have been well entrenched in the culture of the party. I have five copies of a document here. This is the Wildrose newsletter from the 2015 annual general meeting in which the Wildrose on Campus club is . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member, table the document. I’m sure they can read it.

Ms Jansen: . . . featured on the front page, and certainly in their AGM have a central place.

The Speaker: Hon. member.

Ms Jansen: I table the five copies.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Ms Jansen: Wait. Sorry, Mr. Speaker. I have some more tablings.

The Speaker: Oh, all right.

Ms Jansen: Thank you.

The Speaker: It took so long.

Ms Jansen: I wonder what they do for the clubs that they don’t vouch for.

Mr. Speaker, another photo from the Wildrose on Campus celebrating a visit from eight Wildrose MLAs and a lovely picture on Facebook. I table that.

Certainly, here’s a page from the antifeminist Wildrose on Campus featuring the Member for Strathmore-Brooks, and he actually appears as their special host at campus week. There you go. Thank you for that.

The Speaker: How many more do you have, hon. member?

Ms Jansen: Just a couple more, Mr. Speaker. I beg your indulgence.

The Speaker: Very quickly, please.

Ms Jansen: Certainly.

An article here from the *Gauntlet* magazine, where the antifeminist Wildrose on Campus endorses Jason Kenney, also, as it happens, endorsed by most of the PC caucus for leadership of a new far-right party. Here is the article for tabling, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. member.

Ms Jansen: Finally, Mr. Speaker, the Wildrose on Campus, disavowed by many far-right politicians yet managing to attract so much attention from them . . .

3:20

The Speaker: Editorial comment limited, please.

Ms Jansen: Of course, Mr. Speaker.

And I have a large collection of, certainly, wonderful photos from the federal Conservative politicians.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today. One, a copy of a letter from the Justice minister from February 2, 2017, outlining some of the deaths in custody over the past year.

The other is from the strategic services division of the Calgary Police Service, outlining some of the activities of the police service related to the opioid crisis in Calgary.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’ll avoid full on members’ statements for this. Yesterday we had a spirited debate of the political nature of the Public Affairs Bureau, when there was a point of order from the Government House Leader criticizing about calling out the Public Affairs Bureau as political. For the next 14 days of the sitting I’m going to be tabling a new quote every single day from the Government House Leader, where he calls the Public Affairs Bureau political in different ways. I’ll abstain from reading it because he has amassed a whole library.

The Speaker: I would appreciate that. Are you tabling it now? Is that right?

Mr. Fildebrandt: I have five copies to table today, and I have 14 more to table every single day of the sitting for the delight of the Government House Leader.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Mr. Hinkley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’d just like to table the Cree prayer that I delivered in . . .

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker. I’m sorry. Just on a point of order and not because I wouldn’t enjoy seeing the various quotes, but *Hansard* is an official record of the House.

The Speaker: Hon. member, I think you’re just signalling at this stage in our discussion that there will be a point of order. We’ll deal with it after we finish this.

Could we start again, please. The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Mr. Hinkley: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much. I just wanted to table the Cree prayer that I delivered in my response to the Speech from the Throne. It has the Cree translation and the English version as well.

Thank you.

Tablings to the Clerk

The Clerk: I wish to advise the Assembly that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of the hon. Ms Hoffman, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health, pursuant to the Health Professions Act, Alberta College of Social Workers 2014 annual report, Alberta College of Social Workers 2015 annual report, College of Dietitians of Alberta 2015 annual report, College of Registered Dental Hygienists of Alberta 2015 annual report, College of Hearing Aid Practitioners of Alberta 2015-2016 annual report.

The Speaker: I believe there is a total of four points of order if I recall correctly. The first one to the Government House Leader. Am I correct?

Point of Order

Referring to a Member by Name
Addressing Questions through the Chair

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, yeah. That was a case of the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek referring to the Minister of Finance by his first name in the House and speaking to him directly rather than through the chair.

The Speaker: Yes, I noted that. I actually referenced it. I think the hon. member corrected it on the record, but I would like him to reinforce that he did.

Mr. Gotfried: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I withdraw that comment, and I apologize to the minister.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Cooper: Minister Ceci.

The Speaker: Opposition House Leader, I heard that as well.

I believe there was a point of order, in fact two, raised by the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre. Is that correct?

Mr. Cooper: That is correct. I'd be happy to withdraw those on behalf of the member.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Back to the Government House Leader. I believe there was a fourth point of order.

Point of Order

Tabling Public Documents

Mr. Mason: Yes. Mr. Speaker, not that I didn't want to enjoy the daily exposure to my own wise words in this Assembly; however, as the *Hansard*, which the hon. Member from Strathmore-Brooks indicated he would be tabling, is already a record of the Assembly, it is not subject to tabling because it's already part of the record. In the past Speakers have ruled those kinds of tablings to be out of order.

The Speaker: Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and speak to this point of order. While I know that my hon. colleague from Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills pointed out the brevity of which the Government House Leader has had the opportunity to serve here, I just might make two quick comments. One, I know that he is the dean of this House, and he would know that there is no standing order that would prevent the tabling of that. I also know that he would know that a long-standing tradition of the House is, yes, that one is able to table a *Hansard* document from a previous session, just not from a current session. I'm a little surprised to hear the argument today, and I know we all have lapses from time to time, but I'm certain that you, in fact, sir, will find this to not be a point of order at all.

The Speaker: Hon. members, given what I've heard from both sides of the House, I think I'm going to have to do a little research and come back with a ruling on this particular order.

Orders of the Day

Committee of Supply

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

The Deputy Chair: Good afternoon, everyone. I'd like to call the Committee of Supply to order.

Supplementary Supply Estimates 2016-17, No. 2
General Revenue Fund

The Deputy Chair: Just before we get started, I'd like to remind everyone of the Standing Orders 59.02 and 59.01(6).

Hon. members, before we commence this afternoon's consideration of supplementary supply, I will review briefly the standing orders governing the speaking rotation. As provided for in Standing Order 59.02, the rotation in Standing Order 59.01(6) is deemed to apply as follows:

- (a) the Minister, or the member of the Executive Council acting on the Minister's behalf, may make opening comments not to exceed 10 minutes,
- (b) for the hour that follows, members of the Official Opposition and the Minister, or the member of the Executive Council acting on the Minister's behalf, may speak,
- (c) for the next 20 minutes, the members of the third party, if any, and the Minister, or the member of the Executive Council acting on the Minister's behalf, may speak . . .
- (d.1) for the next 20 minutes, the members of any other party represented in the Assembly or any independent Members and the Minister, or the member of Executive Council acting on the Minister's behalf, may speak,
- (e) for the next 20 minutes, private members of the Government caucus and the Minister, or the member of the Executive Council acting on the Minister's behalf, may speak, and
- (f) for the time remaining, to the extent possible, the rotation outlined in clauses (b) to (e) shall apply with the speaking times set at 5 minutes as provided in Standing Order 59.02(1)(c).

During the first rotation speaking times are limited to 10 minutes. Once the first rotation is completed, speaking times are reduced to five minutes. Provided that the chair has been notified, a minister and a private member may combine their speaking times, with both taking and yielding the floor during the combined period.

Finally, as provided for in Government Motion 5, approved by the Assembly on March 7, 2017, the time allotted for consideration is six hours: three hours this afternoon and three hours tomorrow morning.

The Committee of Supply has under consideration the 2016-17 supplementary supply estimates, No. 2. I will now recognize the hon. President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance to move the estimates.

3:30

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'd like to move the 2016-17 supplementary supply estimates, No. 2, for the general revenue fund. When passed, these estimates will authorize an approximate increase of \$1.6 billion in voted expense funding and \$125 million voted capital financing financial transactions for the government. These estimates will also authorize \$141 million of the previously approved voted amounts to be transferred amongst 14 departments.

The estimates are consistent with the fiscal plan as presented in the 2016-17 third-quarter fiscal update and will authorize an increase and transfer for the following 18 departments: Advanced Education, Agriculture and Forestry, Children's Services, Community and

Social Services, Culture and Tourism, Economic Development and Trade, Education, Environment and Parks, Health, Indigenous Relations, Infrastructure, Justice and Sol Gen, Labour, Municipal Affairs, Seniors and Housing, Service Alberta, Transportation, and Treasury Board and Finance. The ministers for these departments, including myself, will be pleased to answer any questions from members of the Assembly.

Before we get into the discussion at Committee of Supply, I'd like to say just a few words about the largest element of this supplementary supply, the costs associated with the Wood Buffalo wildfires. While the numbers before you are in black and white, roughly \$499 million for the wildfire response and \$240 million for the wildfire recovery, they don't really tell the story of unimaginable courage and determination by first responders and the people of the affected communities. This wildfire was one of the most challenging disasters to have ever faced our province, indeed the country, and through this disaster Albertans came together like never before. I believe that all members of this Assembly can be proud of who we are as a province and of our commitment to one another in these tough times.

Let me wrap up these brief comments by expressing my enduring respect for the courage demonstrated by first responders who battled the beast this past year, and let me commit once again to those affected by the wildfire that this government and all Albertans indeed remember, support, and want you to know we have your back.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks. Hon. member, do you want to go back and forth?

Mr. Fildebrandt: I'll go back and forth.

The Deputy Chair: Okay. Thank you so much.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you, Minister, for being here for the discussion and consideration of supplementary supply. I've missed you over the break, and I'm glad we could do this again. I'm going to ask questions that'll be mostly short and pointed, and I'd appreciate short, pointed answers on topic.

Of extreme concern – much of the supplementary supply here is connected to the third-quarter fiscal update provided a few weeks ago. In the third-quarter fiscal update the minister admitted to being in direct contravention of the Fiscal Planning and Transparency Act. This is in regard to \$1.1 billion for the early phase-out of coal. A part of this can be noted in a transfer to the Department of Economic Development and Trade, on page 34 of the supplementary supply. That is a fraction of the overall amounts allocated for the early phase-out of coal. The third-quarter update admits that it is in direct contravention of the Fiscal Planning and Transparency Act.

The government effectively had two different options. One, it could be in violation of public-sector accounting standards by not booking it all in one year, or it could book it in one year and be in violation of the legislation. The minister effectively had to pick one of those two. I'd like to give the minister a chance to explain why he chose to be in violation of his own legislation, passed about a year and a half ago.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you, Madam Chair. Actually, there were two ways that this could have unfolded. The first was the way that the Auditor General had identified. The other was to do as we were planning to do, which is to treat this as a contingent liability that could be paid out over 14 years. That is also in compliance of

public-sector accounting standards. So there's no accuracy to what the member is saying.

Secondly, I do want to say that, you know, the 1 per cent in-year spending increase limit that was exceeded in '16-17 was due to a one-time anomaly that was not anticipated. We took the Auditor General's recommendation and booked that all in '16-17, reported the coal electricity plant phase-out expenses of \$1.1 billion as is identified in the Q3.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Okay. Thank you very much, Minister. No, I want to bring this . . .

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, I recognize that during estimates outside of the House there's an ability to cut each other off, but because you committed to going back and forth, you have to wait till the . . .

Mr. Fildebrandt: But I've already had an answer, and it's pointless.

The Deputy Chair: . . . you have to wait until the minister is finished speaking.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Okay. Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: He's entitled to 10 minutes.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Chair. No, I've already stated to the minister that he is in compliance with accounting standards because they booked it on a single year. He had two options for this spending. The \$1.1 billion is, in the opinion of this side of the House, money that is virtually incinerated, for which the taxpayers are getting absolutely nothing in return. That is beside the point, though. The point is that this is illegal spending, that it is in direct contravention of the act.

Now, this kind of legislation has no penalty for government. You don't go to jail. You don't pay a fine. You just have to pretty much admit that you broke the law.

I'm looking at page 15 of the government's own third-quarter fiscal update, where they state that they are in contravention of the act. The Auditor General said that this needed to be booked as a single year, bringing it in line with public-sector accounting standards, but it does bring it in violation of the Fiscal Planning and Transparency Act. I'm looking for a simple yes or no, if the minister will admit that this is in contravention of the Fiscal Planning and Transparency Act.

Mr. Ceci: I'll read what it says in the Q3. "As there is no exclusion in the [Fiscal Planning and Transparency Act] for this extraordinary expense, the \$1,132 million increase in operating expense results in a lack of compliance with the FPTA." So it was a lack of compliance, and I've put it right here for everyone to see. And it was only because of the Auditor General's view, insistence, that we had to book it this year, though we could have booked it differently, over 14 years, and that would have also been in compliance with standards of public accounting.

3:40

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you. Yeah, I remember not being in compliance with my teachers and doing homework sometimes. There are normally penalties for it. But I appreciate the minister's candour, that they admit that they have broken the law, that they are not in compliance with the law.

Now, \$1.1 billion was transferred from Environment and Parks to cover the cost of administering the climate leadership action plan, otherwise known as the CLAP, for consumer rebates. My question

is: is this the entire amount needed to administer the CLAP rebates, or will this amount be needed every single year?

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, Member.

Mr. Ceci: You know, the Minister of Environment and Parks is not here right now. But they've provided me with some details.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. minister, just to remind you not to reference anybody that may not be in the House, please.

Mr. Ceci: I'm sorry. I didn't hear you.

The Deputy Chair: Just a reminder to refrain from referencing anybody who may or may not be in the House.

Mr. Ceci: Okay. Thanks.

I'm happy to have a minister of the Crown address this issue when they're in the Chamber later today or tomorrow during Committee of Supply.

The hon. member mentions \$1.1 billion again. I don't know. Are you going back to talking about the booking of this \$1.1 billion, or are you talking about the rebates, which is something different?

Mr. Fildebrandt: The rebates.

Mr. Ceci: You're talking about the rebates. I don't think those are the same amounts.

Mr. Fildebrandt: No, no. This is a different question you're talking about.

Mr. Ceci: But you mentioned \$1.1 billion.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, although you are going back and forth, if I could . . .

Mr. Fildebrandt: I can clarify.

The Deputy Chair: Could we maybe get – yes – the Member for Strathmore-Brooks to clarify his question for you, Minister?

Mr. Ceci: That would be great. If he could clarify the exact amount and the exact page, then we would all be a lot clearer here.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Yeah.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.
Please proceed, Member.

Mr. Fildebrandt: I'm not sure if the minister is all here right now. No. Thank you.

Madam Chair, I'm referring to \$1.1 billion, not for anything to do with the early phase-out of coal; I'm referring specifically to rebates. Money was transferred from Environment and Parks to Treasury Board and Finance. I'm referring exclusively to rebates right now.

Mr. Ceci: You know, the money that was transferred is being transferred and made available to Treasury Board and Finance, and it will be accessed over time by CRA to address the rebate situation, going out to Albertans who qualify. So this is for more than one year, obviously. It's for several years. CRA has a contract with us. The \$1 million that's in my budget: that money is being remitted back to CRA for this service. So I can speak specifically to the service CRA is giving us. That's in the neighbourhood of \$1 million. The climate change levy monies that are going back to Albertans will

be more than that over the years. But that's not all in one year, so it's \$1 million.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Fildebrandt: I'd like to thank the minister for the answer.

The cheques delivered to Albertans came, if I'm not mistaken, just one to two days into the new year. I'm not sure exactly how much carbon tax had been collected, my own tax evasion efforts aside. Not much tax had been collected, obviously, in order to be able to distribute that money first. The rebates were sent before people actually paid the taxes. Could the minister explain where the money for those rebates came from since the revenue had not yet been collected and if the government borrowed to issue them?

The Deputy Chair: Just to clarify, Member, do you know where that line item will be in the supplementary supply? Have you been able to find it?

Mr. Fildebrandt: I am referring to monies transferred to Environment and Parks for the rebates, and I'm asking specifically where the money came from in Environment and Parks to supply that money. There were rebates. Environment and Parks sent money to Treasury Board and Finance for rebates. I'm wondering where that money came from. It couldn't have been collected through the carbon tax because it was issued two days after the coming into effect of the carbon tax legislation. Where did that money come from, and was it borrowed?

The Deputy Chair: I'm just again trying to clarify what page it's on, though, and if it's in this actual document because we have to make sure we're sticking to actual questions that are related to supplementary supply.

Mr. Fildebrandt: It is. I'm referring very specifically.

The Deputy Chair: Would you be able to help me out to find the page? Page 44: does that sound right?

Mr. Fildebrandt: Page 44, line 10. Between pages 42 and 44 there's lots of information about transfers concerning the carbon tax rebates. I would like to know where the revenue generated for those rebates came from. In addition, was any of that borrowed?

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Ceci: I think what the hon. member has done is that he's just pointed to the Environment and Parks section and said: it's somewhere in there. That's fine. The money was not borrowed. The money comes from the monies that were in Environment and Parks beforehand in 2016. That money was collected by Environment and Parks. I believe it was for SGER, and that money . . .

Mr. Fildebrandt: Sorry?

Mr. Ceci: The specified gas emitters program. That's the money that was – there were monies available. It wasn't borrowed.

It wasn't January 2; it was January 5 that cheques started to arrive.

Lastly, your tax evasion efforts weren't in January. They were on December 31, so I think you weren't paying any carbon levies at that point. It only came in after midnight.

The Deputy Chair: I'm just going to caution the both of you about the tax evasion comments. I mean, we could just move on to the next question.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Well, I still like talking about rebates if that's okay.

An Hon. Member: The chair's job is to save them.

An Hon. Member: From themselves.

Mr. Fildebrandt: I appreciate the commentary from the chair. Appropriate or not, it's taken well.

Mr. Cooper: She's helping.

Mr. Fildebrandt: She might be trying to help.

Thank you, Minister. Okay. So the money wasn't borrowed. You say that it came from the department, that the department already had money collected. Is that to say that the carbon tax rebate money provided to Albertans did not actually come from the carbon tax, then?

Mr. Ceci: No. It came from a similar payment around emissions, so it did come from carbon emissions payments.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Only one round of rebates was delivered to consumers thus far. How do we know that this is the entire cost needed to administer the plan if only one round of cheques has thus far gone out?

Mr. Ceci: You're talking about my ministry and the million dollars that CRA is under contract to provide for this year. So that's this year.

The Deputy Chair: I just want to be cautious that we're not sliding into the budget and that we're actually speaking to, again, the need for the money in the estimates.

Mr. Ceci: It's in here.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Madam Chair, I assure you that we're talking about the estimates. There is a significant amount of money transferred for these rebates, and we're trying to get to the bottom of this.

The Deputy Chair: Okay.

Mr. Ceci: The administration of it.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Absolutely. This is in addition to money spent by the CRA. How many people were employed to administer these rebates?

Mr. Ceci: Madam Chair, that's up to the CRA. They are the ones who are doing the, I guess, cheque issuing based on qualifications of Albertans through their income taxes. It's not unlike the Alberta child benefit, that has been delivered to families since June 2016, I think, when the first Alberta child benefit cheques went out to families.

Mr. Sabir: August.

Mr. Ceci: August 2016.

Using the same approach, the CRA has, you know, appropriately resourced the number of people that they need to make that happen for Alberta. That's wherever that is in Ottawa.

3:50

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

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you. Eight hundred thousand dollars was transferred from Environment and Parks to provide information technology to administer the CLAP rebates. We were under the understanding that Canada Revenue Agency was going to send out these payments. What is the purpose of this \$800,000 if Canada Revenue Agency is administering these rebates?

Mr. Ceci: That's on the rebate side. On the collection side of the levies there needed to be upgrades with regard to, you know, the thousands of points of providing the monies to the government of Alberta. On the collection side there needed to be upgrades to IT. On the rebate side there is a contract with CRA.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Just to be clear, none of this \$800,000 has anything whatsoever to do with providing rebates. This is purely to do with collections.

Mr. Ceci: Sorry. Yes. That's my understanding, Madam Chair.

Mr. Fildebrandt: If Canada Revenue Agency had all the information on Albertans to send out the rebate cheques and they mailed them out, what did this money go towards – sorry. The \$1.1 billion from earlier: what money did that go towards that CRA did not do?

Mr. Ceci: Madam Chair, I think I just want to go back and address this in maybe a more holistic way. The operating expense transfer amount of \$1 million from Environment and Parks is requested to provide funding for the cost of administering the climate leadership plan consumer rebates.

Secondly, the capital investment transfer amount of \$800,000 from Environment and Parks is requested for information technology development to administer the climate leadership plan consumer rebates.

Mr. Fildebrandt: I want to bring this back to transfers for the early phase-out of coal in compliance with legislation, the Fiscal Planning and Transparency Act. That's obviously an area of great concern to members of the Official Opposition and, I think, in fact, all private members of this House around governments complying with their own legislation. We'll recall that the Minister of Finance introduced a debt ceiling, I think, of 10 per cent of debt to GDP, 15 per cent of debt to GDP, which I think lasted approximately six months before they repealed it as it became apparent that the government would not be able to comply with their own legislation. They repealed other pieces of the fiscal accountability act, which had already been gutted by Premiers, but they replaced it with the Fiscal Planning and Transparency Act, which was a pretty low bar to set. It did not allow the government to exceed 1 per cent of in-year expenditures without the authorization of the Legislature. That would seem to be a pretty low bar to set considering the strength that this legislation had in the early 2000s and the subsequent watering down we've had around our fiscal framework legislation.

Can the minister comment on: what are the chances of the government breaking its legislation around this again? He's called this an extraordinary exception. I know that he had to choose either to not comply with public-sector accounting standards or to not comply with the act. He's called it extraordinary, but we know they've repealed their own legislation in the past when they've found they were running into potentially violating it. Could the minister give the House any assurance that this is not going to be a regular function here, that they're either going to repeal their own legislation when they're in potential violation of it or just admit that they're in violation of it?

One of the basic functions of any Legislature since the Magna Carta has been that parliament has the sole authority to vote funds to the government. When the government can exceed those funds without the authorization of parliament, they are violating a sacred constitutional history handed down to us. If the minister would like to explain why his government is in violation of this.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

The next speaker. Member, would you like to go back and forth, or would you like to . . .

Mr. Hanson: I'll go back and forth, but I'd like to hear the answer to the previous question.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you. I appreciate you using up some of your time for this answer. You know, I just want to correct some anomalies with what was said across the aisle or some things that were wrong from across the aisle. The first thing is that there were two interpretations of public-sector accounting standards and the ways, the possible treatments, that \$1.1 billion could be booked. The other professionals and indeed professionals in my department felt we could book it over 14 years as a contingent liability. You know, being prudent with going forward and involving the Auditor General, we asked what the Auditor General would feel about this, and his views were different than ours, though ours weren't incorrect. It was an interpretation of the same public-sector accounting standards. People viewed them differently. His view was the one we ultimately supported, so we booked it over one year. We are doing that because of the views of the Auditor General.

Actual payments, though, to pay off this money – it's an accounting treatment – are going to be over 14 years, and those monies are coming from the climate leadership plan. This is strictly an accounting treatment. So we are doing that.

Subsequently, with regard to the 1 per cent rule I can tell you that Alberta's population continues to grow. Alberta's population has the fastest rate of growth amongst provinces, and combined with the economic downturn, this put tremendous pressure on government programs and services.

Our government was committed to providing those services, obviously: stable education, stable health care, and social services. Our student population ballooned larger than expected, and we wanted to fulfill an important commitment to provide per-student funding to all of the schools who had students in them. We increased our expense to the health area primarily because of supports to physician compensation and drug costs. Additionally, we addressed the funding for this person's caseload growth, which was in income support, persons with developmental disabilities, assured income for the severely handicapped, and child interventions.

So our government made the choice to ensure that all of these things would be covered as opposed to not doing them and recklessly, you know, throwing Albertans to the winds. That in large part is the reason why the financial transparency and the FPTA were breached. It also is the reason why we have identified that here.

With respect to any questions about the budget, that will come out next Thursday, you'll just have to wait and see where we are with regard to all of that, and I look forward to lots of discussion in the future about it.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

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

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Most of my questions are regarding the Fort McMurray wildfire and the spending that has gone on and resulted from that. Regarding the wildfire

how much in total amongst all government departments is being requested in this supplementary supply towards wildfire response, relief, and recovery?

The Deputy Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you. As I said earlier, you know, the amount of – other ministers can probably address it more specifically, but I think I talked about two numbers here. One was \$499 million, and the other was \$250 million. I think that it was in the area of \$249 million.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you. From a cursory review I see \$739 million from Municipal Affairs and an additional \$252 million from Ag and Forestry for wildfire disaster emergency assistance. That's a total of \$991 million, almost a billion dollars, two-thirds of this supplementary supply request. Would you say that this incredible sum might be the result of the original cuts to wildfire management, line 7.1 in the last spring's budget, or do you still consider our warnings about that as fearmongering?

4:00

Mr. Ceci: You know, I don't think I made those statements personally, but I will say that the amount in our budget with regard to wildfire preparation of \$200 million is appropriate and is something that we will continue to do going forward just as it has been done in the past. That gets you ready for wildfires; that's not the funding for wildfires. To that extent, I think Albertans would say that this government – and I've heard the mayor of Fort McMurray say it, too – had their backs, that whenever they requested support, we were there to make sure that they had the financial and other resources necessary to address that conflagration, the worst that Canada has ever seen. So rather than commenting on what you said or didn't say or what a person on this side said or didn't say, I will say that we appropriately funded every instance that was requested to address the wildfire.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Hanson: Of the \$252 million for wildfire disaster/emergency assistance in the Ag and Forestry supplementary estimate, how much is for contracting of air tankers from out of province above and beyond our normal contract?

The Deputy Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you. I apologize that I don't have that off the top of my head. Obviously, another ministry is responsible for that. I'm hoping that they'll be able to provide you with all of that information when next they are here.

I will just say that the supplementary estimates for the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry reflect additional investments in addition to wildfire protection, and though you haven't asked about this, but you may, they talk about crop insurance and agricultural support programs, energy efficiency programs, and value-added industry development. Those are all the things that that supplementary estimate, in addition to the one you're asking about, specifically addresses.

Mr. Hanson: Well, I'd appreciate it, if you don't have the information available, if we could get a written response to my question. That would be awesome.

You probably won't be able to answer this question as well, but how many days were the additional air tankers contracted for? Do you have that?

Mr. Ceci: I don't, no.

Mr. Hanson: Has the department reverted to a 123-day contracting period for air tanker groups?

Mr. Ceci: You know, I should be writing these down so that I can get you those follow-up answers, or you could provide them to me.

Mr. Hanson: I'll get you a copy. It will be on the record as well.

Mr. Ceci: Okay.

Mr. Hanson: Again, how many air tanker groups and aircraft are contracted from Alberta, how many are contracted from out of province, and how many total aircraft?

Mr. Ceci: I suspect that those answers would be on the top of the appropriate minister's head when he gets here.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. minister. A cautionary again. If you could refrain from mentioning anybody who may or may not be in the House, please.

Hon. member, please continue.

Mr. Hanson: We can direct these to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Why does the government insist on using AT-802 Fire Boss aircraft, which carry a fraction of the load and speed of a CL-415 Super Scooper?

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, maybe the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry would like to answer the question.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much. Maybe he can help me. I'll repeat that question. Why does the government insist on using AT-802 Fire Boss aircraft, which carry a fraction of the load and speed of a CL-415 Super Scooper?

The Deputy Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Chair. Thank you for the question. I don't know for aircraft, but I do know that our wildfire disaster assistance is well funded. Last year is an example and 2015 is another example of where our resources that we have – our personnel, our first responders, whether they be wildfire personnel from Agriculture and Forestry or from the municipality or from other first responders – did a fantastic job, last year in the Fort McMurray fire and others as well.

With that, our air tanker crews that we contract out have also done an amazing job. You know, we'd seen some criticism last year about not having enough, but I had an opportunity to be there myself. Aircraft were back to back even in the sky, so we had no opportunity to add any more aircraft. I am confident that the aircraft that we are using are adequate. I have understanding from officials from my department that they have been adequate and continue to be so.

Other resources, if needed: as we've done in the past, we have had international contracts from our partners within the United States and, frankly, world-wide, including Mexico and South Africa. So I'm confident in the advice I've got from the department that the aircraft that we have are more than adequate.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. member.

Mr. Hanson: Okay. We'll get to some money questions, and perhaps we can get some answers. It doesn't matter who answers, actually. Of the \$1 billion being asked to be voted to cover the cost

of this disaster, one, how much is to replace Crown assets lost in the fire? How much will be recovered from insurance on Crown assets? How much is to reimburse municipal fire crews from Fort McMurray and from outside of Fort McMurray, and how much will be required to cover private contractors hired to help put out the fire?

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Treasury Board and Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Those specifics are not before us, obviously. They're with ministry officials, and those people could probably tell you. We're just talking about the rolled up amounts, and that description is not in this either.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Hanson: A question for the Minister of Finance: has Treasury Board authorized the borrowing of funds to cover this \$1 billion fire?

Mr. Ceci: No, not specifically. The government of Alberta borrows money regularly to address our fiscal plan. This, obviously, was something that impacted our fiscal plan, and we have the assistance of the federal government in terms of remitting back to Alberta about \$500 million in coverage for some of this cost. The available monies within the government of Alberta were used to cover this. The various ministers came forward to address cost pressures, and through Treasury Board and Finance and, ultimately, Executive Council we supported those requests for finances. So borrowing specifically for this did not occur.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Hanson: Have any bonds been posted on the market to obtain this funding?

Mr. Ceci: As I just said, borrowing for this purpose was not specifically done. The government of Alberta has borrowing needs, obviously, and those monies are laid in or borrowed in advance. This impacted our fiscal plan. We addressed it with monies that the government of Alberta had, and we got payment back from the federal government as quickly as we could to offset our expenditures.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Hanson: I'll share some time with the hon. member.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

Mr. Stier: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm not here that often. I'm glad I was recognized easily. Good afternoon, everyone. As my role primarily here is Municipal Affairs, I'd like to address some questions to the minister.

Minister, congratulations on your new position. It's one of the ministries that does affect most people's lives in Alberta. I know it is a big, big, big act, about 800 pages. My book is that thick, and there are a lot of notes. I'm sure yours will get that way, too. I'd just like to glance over what we can today. If you have some information that you need to go and catch up on at some point perhaps, a written response would be much appreciated in respect to that, please.

4:10

So let's start, then. I'd like to direct you to the supply booklet, page 68, that's under Municipal Affairs. There are a number of items there that we're going to be talking about. Let's start with line

9, if you will. Line 9 basically says that there's \$748,000 there. We're just wondering: is that allocated mostly to the wildfire? Is that what it is related to, or how exactly is that being allocated within that budget line? For example, is it going to maybe a managing director's office, some new operations, or policy and support? Could anyone over there perhaps shed light on what that is for, please?

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you to the hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod. I respect that he's got 15 years of municipal experience, so I'm looking forward to working with him going forward. Is it 15? I think it's 15. Sometimes I do my homework here.

Mr. Stier: On council for four.

Mr. S. Anderson: Is that what it was? Okay.

Yeah, you know, I do have that \$748,000 that you were talking about there for the Alberta Emergency Management Agency. I don't have the specifics of how it was allotted, so the specifics I would have to get for you from my staff. I know that they're probably checking on that right now as we speak. Obviously, from May 23 to 26 the wildfire part of this was what was going on in the MD of Opportunity. As a state of emergency was called, more than 5,000 residents were displaced, so part of that was to go to there. When we're dealing with that, the DRP funding is what we're talking about.

Like I said, I'll have to get the specifics for you, but I have no problem doing that for you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. member.

Mr. Stier: Yes. Thank you. To move on, then, let's have a look, therefore, at line 13, which kind of follows that line of thinking. We're just wondering: at what number does a disaster really get its own line in the budget like this? Perhaps the Finance minister might know more about that. I'm not sure. This is a separate line item. It wouldn't normally be there if it was in a regular year, but we've got Wood Buffalo there. Is there a number that a disaster has to reach before it gets into this kind of a document?

Mr. S. Anderson: Well, that's a great question. I'm not sure if there's an actual limit to get into a line item. That's something that I would like to know. I'll have to ask about that specific one. I mean, obviously, I do have the line items for the different ways that these were spent, you know, with urban interface wildfire, Red Cross, contingencies, and so on. But I don't know if there's a threshold on that.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Stier: Yeah. Thanks. Okay. Thank you. I understand that's kind of a vague one at this time.

Let's move on to line 9, then, again. Just so you know, I recall from the budget estimates last year that the budget for disaster recovery is usually budgeted at \$200,000 despite the fact that since the '09-10 era the average disaster recovery supplementary budget is around \$214 million. That's the average. Even if we take out the 2013 flood, the average overall for a number years has been about \$54 million, so why does the department not budget a little bit more for these natural disasters? Why is it sitting at \$200,000?

Mr. S. Anderson: Back to the previous question about when there's a DRP. We just open up an event, and there's no number for it.

Sorry. That last line item that you were talking about, did you say 9?

Mr. Stier: Right.

Mr. S. Anderson: Did you mean 9 or 8?

Mr. Stier: Oh. Excuse me. I'm not working on the right number. I apologize. Once again the question was: normally every year we see \$200,000 in that line. You know, it seems that over the past 10 years there's been an ongoing amount of money spent as a result of disasters that do happen. Why do we always seem to have that number of \$200,000 in there?

Mr. S. Anderson: I think it's more of an accounting thing. We don't have a disaster every year, and we can't budget specifically for – you know, we deal in hypotheticals, I guess, right? So it's one of those things.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

The second 20 minutes is now up. Who would like to go next from your caucus? You will carry on? Okay. The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

Mr. Stier: Thank you. So let's move away from that.

Municipal assessments and grant administration, page 68, line 3: can you explain where the \$146,000 may be going, please?

Mr. S. Anderson: That's line 3 you're looking at, the \$146,000 for municipal assessments and grant administration? Is that what you're saying?

Mr. Stier: Right.

Mr. S. Anderson: Yeah. Okay. Sorry. I had it written down here different, too. Basically, with that money there Municipal Affairs is working with Transportation and Infrastructure on ways that the climate leadership plan can support our municipalities. So with an area of opportunity where we can work in partnership on climate change to protect health and environment and the economy, we will do so. We heard from AUMA and Calgary and Edmonton that to significantly reduce these greenhouse gas emissions, municipalities need to work together, you know, whether it be on energy efficiency or renewable energy or land-use planning or transit or what have you. So we have spoken with AUMA and these municipalities, and, you know, this is the number that we've used to allocate here. The funding that's in the supplementary estimates is part of the steps that we're taking to move in this direction. I'll be working with the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation a little more on this going forward.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. member.

Mr. Stier: Yes. Thank you. My next question actually goes back to line 8, again on page 68, and the question is: is the public safety increase of \$200,000 related again to the wildfire? If not, can you provide some context as to where this might be going?

Mr. S. Anderson: Sure. Yes, the \$200,000 that you're looking at on line 8, public safety, is an increase for the firefighter certification initiative, and it's funded by the increased revenue that's collected. Part of the ongoing commitment is that the office of the fire commissioner will administer provincial certifications to ensure the quality and effectiveness of the fire search and rescue training program. This will be across the province and with entities both public and private. So that \$200,000 is to support that initiative, and it's fully funded through exam and certification fees. It's consistent with the office of the fire commissioner's mandate to oversee the

fire search and rescue systems. It is covered by the fees for the exams and certification.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Stier: Thank you, Madam Chair. Let's move on, then, if we could, Minister. Line 4 on the same page 68 is good old MSI, and it's under the operating side. It's coming in about \$1.7 million under budget. I did a quick check of the estimates back some years ago, 2009-2010, and at that time only once did MSI under operating run a surplus. It was internally transferred to capital. What was the cause of the unspent amount in this? Do you know? Was this a single municipality failing to use up all of their operating funds, or is the program as a whole reporting under budget?

The Deputy Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you. The MSI program was designed, you know, obviously, for municipalities so they can focus on their priorities. Last year five municipalities that received the MSI operating converted their funding to the MSI capital for that \$1.712 million. So the savings were found because of lower than budgeted gasoline and diesel sales in Edmonton and Calgary. The sales determine the amount of the basic municipal transportation grant that the two cities get, and under that BMTG each municipality receives a formula-based grant. It provides a sustainable, predictable level of funding for them. Lower than budgeted gasoline and diesel sales in Edmonton and Calgary meant the savings.

4:20

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Stier: Thank you, Madam Chair. Again, if I could, on page 68 we'll move on now to line 6, if you will, Minister, grants in place of taxes. We've got \$1 million in there, and I'm just wondering again about that lesser amount. Was that the result of lower assessment values for provincial properties? If not, where is the savings coming from specifically, please?

The Deputy Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. S. Anderson: All right. Sure. Sorry, I'm just trying to find where I had my information in here. I've got lots of papers to go through.

The information I've got in front of me: if it doesn't answer your question, I'll get something else for you. The cut is part of our Municipal Affairs in-year saving of \$3 million. It doesn't affect the municipalities who are currently receiving GIPOT. The growth in GIPOT was less than anticipated due to lower construction and assessment growth, resulting in a savings of about a million dollars. We are committed to paying the GIPOT to municipalities with Crown property, and there are no plans to change that.

Mr. Stier: On that note, I'd just like to add a little bit here in my remarks on that same subject, same item. The grants in lieu of taxes was quite a significantly sensitive issue in the past couple of years, and to my memory, if I recall, there were a lot of municipalities not compensated for that. So I still remain a little bit curious about what that number is, what it represents, and why it is there. If you could perhaps elaborate on that now or in writing later, that would be fine.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. S. Anderson: Sure. Yeah. I will have to get you a little more information on that to give you a better breakdown if you don't mind. I don't have that off the top of my head.

Mr. Stier: That'd be fine. Thank you.

Line 7 on that same page is the Alberta community partnership, and there's \$1.5 million unspent. I'm just wondering where that's coming from, why that took place. Can you tell us a little bit about that community partnership, what it's about, why it is there, and what it normally serves, please?

Mr. S. Anderson: All right. Community partnership: I'll try to find that for you. Of course, you're asking me questions that – I didn't write down my information for that one. That's fantastic. You know what I said to you earlier: I don't like not having the answer. That's going to drive me crazy. I'm going to have to get that for you. I'm sorry about that, hon. member.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Stier: Yeah. Well, again, with these books that we get, sometimes a guy doesn't see every page in the book, I'm sure. There was quite a list of things there that we had questions on, so I can appreciate your situation.

Okay. Let's move on to capital grants, line 4, same page, MSI one more time. You know, it's probably looking like it's going to come in about \$17 million under budget. We went back through some of the budgets dating back to '11-12, et cetera, and not once in all those years did we have unspent money. It's been chronically underfunded over its entire life. I know that you can't talk about what's happening in the future. Is there any information that you have to give us more of an understanding of: why the \$17 million surplus? This might be a little bit redundant from a question earlier, but I think it would be something that we would like to have. You talked about lower gas and diesel costs and so on and so forth. Do you have any other information regarding that, please?

Mr. S. Anderson: No, I don't. You're right. From the answer before, the BMTG and so on: that's where that comes from. I don't really have any extra information for you on that, and some of the stuff we're still working on, you know. You'll be finding out a little more information coming down the road here. One of the ministers used the words "stay tuned." You'll find out more information soon.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Stier: Okay. There's another add-on to that. Is this perhaps initial money that's been transferred in from the federal government, as an example? By the way, related to that, is there more federal program money coming from the federal gas tax fund, the building Canada fund, or the small communities fund that we aren't aware of and doesn't show up in these documents that you might be able to enlighten us on, please?

Mr. S. Anderson: Sure. Yeah. The federal grant program: the federal gas tax fund obviously provides us with some predictable long-term funding, and obviously under this funding we can, you know, let our municipalities determine how this money is going to be used for their local priorities. There was last year an increase of \$1.162 million in the funding because of a carry-forward in unused funding from the previous year. As you well know, the funding is 100 per cent by the federal government for the gas tax fund.

The building Canada fund: the communities' component is designed for unique infrastructure needs. Obviously, they contribute to our strong communities with a cleaner environment. The projects are cost shared between all three levels, as you well know, and that \$558,000 increase is to carry forward unused administration

funding from the previous year. Like I said, we promised to support these needs of our small communities, so we'll continue to do that.

Mr. Stier: Madam Chair, I'd just like to thank the minister for his responses today in a tough situation. It's one of those first-time situations, and I really appreciate his work so far.

Now we have another speaker. The Member for Little Bow may be interested in talking now. Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Little Bow.

Mr. Schneider: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. My questions are for the Agriculture and Forestry minister. I see he isn't here. What would you suggest?

The Deputy Chair: If you could maybe just direct them to the Finance minister right now.

Mr. Schneider: Sure. He was here, but he kind of disappeared. He might come back.

Supplementary supply for agriculture – you know what, ma'am? The Agriculture and Forestry minister may hear what's going on in the House and determine to come back, so I'll let my colleague . . .

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members of the House, I just need to remind you again: if we could please refrain from commenting on whether individuals are in the House or not in the House.

I will recognize the Member for Airdrie.

Mrs. Pitt: All right. I have some questions for the Minister of Justice on supplementary supply. Under line item 2.1 of the operating budget you have an additional \$3 million there. Can you expand on what that might be for exactly?

The Deputy Chair: Go ahead.

Ms Ganley: Do I need permission to go back and forth, or are we good to do the . . .

The Deputy Chair: Would you like to go back and forth, Member?

Mrs. Pitt: Yeah.

The Deputy Chair: Please, Minister, go ahead.

Ms Ganley: That money is for resolution and court administration services. Those are employees who support the courts, not judges but things like court clerks and resolution clerks and those sorts of folks. That is just as a result of increased pressures on our justice system and trying to keep staffing levels up.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you.

Under 4.3 there's a request for a \$5 million increase for criminal and youth prosecutions. Can you tell me what those funds are going to?

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much. Again, those funds are going to support staffing. Those will be both prosecutors and support staff. Some of those funds are to ensure that we can continue to retain people because even though they're management, opted-out employees and they don't get the same raises, sometimes the increment is in terms of levels. Those are to ensure that we can retain the staff we have currently. We've also had to hire some additional staff to deal with some caseload backlogs we're having and as a result of the bail review. So those are Crown prosecutors and support staff for those prosecutors.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you.

How many prosecutors? Sorry. We're up and down.

Ms Ganley: I do have that somewhere. I can tell you, for sure, that it includes 10 that we've hired recently and 15 more that we're in the process of hiring. I don't want to commit that that's the entire number, so I'll get back to you with more precise figures on that.

4:30

Mrs. Pitt: Okay. If there could be a breakdown of how many are actually in this particular line item on this one – I assume the next one will be in a future budget shortly – that would be handy.

At 6.1 you're requesting an additional \$600,000. It's a pretty low amount of money. Why is it so low? What is it for?

Ms Ganley: Yes, indeed, program support. I believe that that is additional money coming from the federal government for the aboriginal courtwork program, but I will write you a correction if it turns out that that is not the right number.

Mrs. Pitt: Sorry. I need clarification on that. That's money coming from the federal government? Why are you asking for money?

Ms Ganley: When the federal government makes an increase, they send the money to us, but then we have to ask for an increase in the estimates even to spend that money which is coming in. I understand that to be what's happening here.

Mrs. Pitt: Do those two numbers add up exactly?

Ms Ganley: They should do. I believe so.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, Minister.

Mrs. Pitt: I like it when we sit down in other committees, not up and down.

At 6.6, under Public Trustee, you're spending \$1.7 million for the trustee, but why the spending there and not on prosecutor services?

The Deputy Chair: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much. Most of those decisions were made when the office of the Public Trustee and guardian was still in its previous home under human services. It came to us. They are looking to replace their operating systems, and that money is offset by dedicated revenue, so we can't spend it anywhere else. We can only spend it there.

Mrs. Pitt: It's interest from the Public Trustee's fund? Is that correct? Is that the revenue increase?

Ms Ganley: I feel a little like a jack-in-the-box, but, yes, that's my understanding.

Mrs. Pitt: All right. Okay. So you're using the additional revenue from the Public Trustee's funds to pay for government systems changes?

Ms Ganley: Yeah. The project is fully offset by revenues. I mean, the reason for that replacement is that, obviously, they have rather sensitive information of many vulnerable people in their care and custody. My understanding is that they, essentially, need these upgrades.

It also relates to recommendations, as I recall, that came out of an Auditor General's report in terms of how they were tracking and storing data and tracking and keeping track of where things are. These additional systems will also help them to make sure that they

have greater transparency in terms of where their numbers are because they're able to keep track of them.

Mrs. Pitt: Is that an allowable use of funds from the Public Trustee's account, to pay for the systems change? I'm wondering if we're wading into, like, ethical concerns, maybe. I don't know.

Ms Ganley: I am assured that it's a perfectly normal process, but it sounds like my hon. colleague may have something to add.

The Deputy Chair: Okay. The hon. minister.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you. I can supplement on that. I believe the Minister of Justice is right. Under the Public Trustee legislation there is a provision for the use of the funds from that account, so it is consistent with that legislation.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

Hon. member, do you have any more questions?

Mrs. Pitt: Yes, I do. Correctional services, line item 8: you're requesting \$14 million. Can you let me know where it went and why it wasn't budgeted?

Ms Ganley: That increase of \$14 million is for manpower pressures. It's essentially to deal with increases in inmate population growth. We've seen a significant spike . . .

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. minister. The first 60 minutes are now up.

We will be moving on now to the third party. I will recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you for the opportunity to ask some questions.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, sorry. Are you going back and forth, or did you want to take your . . .

Mr. Gotfried: Back and forth, please.

The Deputy Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Gotfried: I'll start out with the Minister of Municipal Affairs. It's understandable that the rebuilding from the Wood Buffalo wildfire is an important priority for our province. The \$1.3 billion in supplemental supply will hopefully go a long way to help tens of thousands of Albertans rebuild a community that has contributed so much to the vibrancy of Alberta's economy and to our public coffers through regional resource extraction. My first question is: what are the government's priorities in the Wood Buffalo rebuild?

Mr. S. Anderson: That's a pretty open question, I guess. The two words that we use are "recovery" and "repair." I think that what we want to make sure of is that the money is in the hands of the municipality, where it needs to be. They know what's going on on the ground, obviously, with the disaster funding and things like that. I had the opportunity to be up in Fort Mac a couple of weeks back to announce another \$20 million for them and to see the rebuilding, what's going on up there. I would say that our priority is the rebuild – there are a few different priorities, I would think – of the houses and the businesses that were lost, and I think the other one is making sure there's funding there for mental health, which is a huge, huge issue.

I was able to speak to a gentleman up there when I was there about the things he's doing. He's rebuilding his house. He's

probably one of the most positive people I've ever met in my entire life.

Yeah, we're trying to make sure that the priorities are that the money is there when they need it. We want to make sure that we have their backs. That encompasses a whole bunch of different line items in here, whether it's, you know, support services or grants or what have you. I mean, it's a pretty broad-based thing.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Minister. I know that you're relatively new to your portfolio. I'm sure you will be as diligent as you possibly can, but I think what's important to Albertans and to the residents of Wood Buffalo is this government understanding what the critical infrastructure and services are. I guess to that point: given that you're going to be turning a lot of this money over to the municipality, it sounds like, and, I'm sure, overseeing that, do you have a timeline on when the critical infrastructure – let's just call it that: critical infrastructure and services – will be fully restored in Wood Buffalo given this investment?

The Deputy Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you. Well, obviously, you know, one of the other things that is a priority is just supporting families. As far as a timeline goes, the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo is in charge of the rebuild. We're here kind of to, as I said, have their backs. So they would know best on the timelines and on how things are going. When I was up there, they did indicate that it's going well. Things are going fairly smoothly. There are some glitches, obviously, here and there. As far as a timeline, they haven't really told me when they think full recovery will come. They've cleared off all the debris, all the things that were there from the fire. All that is gone. So it's basically in rebuild phase now. But as far as a timeline, they would know best on what that is.

4:40

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you again, Minister.

Again, I understand that this is a very big investment for Albertans and also very critical to the restoration of the vibrancy of that community and a very strong part of our economic engine. This is a big investment. I would hope, again, that there's an opportunity for you to work more closely with the municipality to really identify that critical infrastructure and the critical services and to get timelines on that.

What I'm also interested in, again, is to ensure that Albertans are getting the value in terms of what we're doing with that. What are you doing to mitigate the impact of project cost inflation through oversight of competitive bidding or other controls, workforce housing to ensure that we have the labour in place, and things that we've heard of such as the drywall tariffs that are affecting some of the costs, particularly as it relates to the cost of rebuilding public infrastructure in the region?

Mr. S. Anderson: Well, I would say that we're in contact with the regional municipality on a constant basis – you know, I wouldn't say daily but frequently – to understand what issues they're going through. Like I say, we're in a support role for them right now. So when we get information, like you were saying, about drywall and things like that from them, then we can investigate or help them however they need. It really is one of those – response and recovery are happening, and we're supporting what they're doing. It's really the information we get from them day to day.

I know one of the things that we did up there for the home builders is an interim pilot program. Basically, we didn't want fly-by-night people coming in and taking advantage of vulnerable citizens, so we made sure that there's a little bit of checks and

balances as far as information goes on the builder side of it just to make sure that, you know, these people that are rebuilding aren't taken advantage of by shell companies and things like that. That's something that we're trying to do on our end to help out, and it's working well. People are getting the information they need. They know where these companies come from and what they've done before, if they're financially viable, and that it's not just a guy in a pickup truck coming out and building their house.

Anyway, we're doing little things on our end on that side, but we are relying heavily on the municipality to let us know if there are any issues that we can help with. It's an ongoing thing that's going to last a long time, but we'll be here as long as needed.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Minister.

Again, recognizing that this is a new portfolio for you and that it will take you some time to get up to speed, particularly with significant expenditures in this particular instance, have you had a chance to identify what expertise you may have in your department that can help Wood Buffalo, again going back to such items as procurement and, as you mentioned, maybe working with some of the province-wide associations like the Home Builders' Association to ensure that there's protection both within the industry and from different levels of government? Have you identified some critical areas with this investment that actually may be beefing up some of the resources in your department to assist Wood Buffalo?

Mr. S. Anderson: Sure. Yeah. I mean, obviously, the staff that's in our department has done some incredible work over the last year with the people in Wood Buffalo. We are working with the Canadian Home Builders' Association on some of these things, like I mentioned, making sure that these builders are competent and financially viable and things like that. Just like after every disaster, there's a third-party review that's ongoing. We're waiting for the information to hear, you know, what can maybe be done better or tweaked or what have you. We have made sure that the experts are in place that we need, but again that's using the municipality as well and their expertise and what they know of their builders on the ground and the people in the areas, too. Our Alberta emergency folks are unbelievable, so we've relied on them a lot, too, and on the people on the ground.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. member.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you. I'd like to switch questioning over to the Minister of Finance if I could and go back and forth if you're amenable to that, Minister.

The \$1.72 billion that we're seeing also includes over \$300 million in new spending. That's in addition to over \$200 million in savings achieved by Alberta's front-line workers despite increasing demands on Alberta's services. We saw \$215 million in savings in Health on page 46 – that's a whopping .0109 per cent, but savings are savings; we'll take that – and \$16 million in savings in Environment and Parks, page 42, and \$7 million in savings in Transportation on page 78.

Minister, since this government continues to claim that savings and efficiency can only come from cuts to front-line workers and services, which front-line workers and programs were cut to achieve these savings in these departments?

The Deputy Chair: The hon. minister of Treasury Board.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much. You know, we're finding efficiencies all across government, and we are doing that by asking all the ministers. I've had a process of sitting down with all the

ministers, and then they come up with savings within their departments. For instance, on salaries and supplies, supplies was an area and salaries was an area where there was \$121 million achieved in the last year. That was because we reduced those budgets in '16-17 for services and supplies and for salaries.

We have a hiring restraint on, so not everyone is being put into positions that are vacant. Those requests are having to go up to the deputy minister level, and they're also having to go up to the Public Service Commissioner's level for outside of government.

The other savings achieved were \$28.5 million from freezing management salaries. We have just recently moved also on a compensation framework that'll achieve \$16 million in savings going forward for the highest paid CEOs of agencies, boards, and commissions. We have undertaken those efforts and will continue to do that in budgets going forward. It's just the way we do business, to find savings and to make sure it happens.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. member.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Minister, I find this very interesting because, again, I think we've been told many, many times in this House that there are no opportunities for cuts without cutting front-line workers, yet you've found millions and millions of dollars in savings here. To identify those savings, in my world you actually have to find them in the budget, find out where you can cut them, to quantify them to give us, certainly, millions and millions of dollars of savings. So I'm a little surprised that you can't present to us something a little bit more detailed, particularly in Health: \$215 million. You don't get that without sending everybody back into their budgets and finding things with a fine-tooth comb, recognizing that it is only .0109 per cent of the total budget. You did have to find those somewhere so you didn't have to cut front-line staff, again, as we've heard time and time again.

Let's look at maybe the Health budget: \$215 million in savings. Will you be able to deliver to us specifics on where those savings were achieved and demonstrate to Albertans that it wasn't from cutting front-line staff?

The Deputy Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you. With regard to Health, you know, there would have been additional costs and pressures in that area had there not been an amended agreement with the AMA. The AMA came back to the table in November 2016, and they amended an agreement that, had it not been amended, would have taken them to 2018. Some of those savings are in that area with physician costs – they would have been higher – savings resulting from the amended agreement signed by the AMA in November 2016.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. member.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Minister, that's actually a great example of the kind of detail I'm looking for. Could you give us the numbers on the savings from that AMA renegotiation or contract or agreement that are part of this \$215 million?

Mr. Ceci: Obviously, the particulars are most known by the minister responsible for those areas, but I can tell you that I regularly hear that minister talk about \$500 million in savings going forward over the next two years.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. member.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you. Minister, you brought that one up, so I thought maybe you had the numbers already in your hands there.

Minister, I think one of the concerns we've got is: are these one-time savings, or are these sustainable savings? I'd like you to tell us a little bit more. With these numbers, are these one-time events, or are any of these savings sustainable through future budget cycles?

Mr. Ceci: That's a great question. With regard to the AMA agreement, obviously it's during the term of that agreement. Subsequent to negotiations, we'll see where that agreement is in 2018. You know, I was a bit of a broken record with some of my colleagues that we needed to find in-year savings. We did that both in budgets '15 and '16. Some of those savings are on a one-time basis, and some will take money permanently out of their budgets and our overall operating budget, so the percentage is not something I can recall off the top of my head. But it is a good question to ask, if they're permanently out, and the answer is that some are one-time, which get us to our in-year savings goal, and some are permanently out, which will not come back.

4:50

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you again, Minister. Again a little bit short on some of the details I'd like to see, but I'm sure we'll see those as we go forward, particularly those that are sustainable savings, not just one-time, so that we can see some quantification of that.

What I'd like to ask you now is: what's being done to ensure that the savings achieved in this budget cycle by front-line programs and workers will not be wasted on spending growth that does not deliver additional value for money and front-line deliverables for Albertans? How are we going to actually make these savings work for us so that we don't affect front-line services but we sustain them by not spending them on other growth areas which do not deliver a benefit to Albertans?

The Deputy Chair: Go ahead.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much. You know, I think I provided a bit of this answer before, but investment that's identified in this budget's spending is to provide stable funding for some key programs like education, health care, and social services. I kind of think that those are things that all Albertans value.

We wanted to fully fund student enrolment, and we have kept that promise. That is expected to address an underexpenditure in that area that caused schools to have larger than necessary classroom sizes.

We increased, obviously, the expense to Health, primarily to support physician compensation and drug costs. There were more people going to physicians, so these are driven not by the AMA agreement but more by the use of doctors. Those are good uses, we think, addressing things preventatively and as they need to be for individuals and will keep them out of more acute-care settings.

Additional, obviously, supports, driven by the downturn in our economy. Thankfully, that is starting to turn around, and we're starting to see some green shoots and more confidence from investors, more confidence from businesses and Albertans generally. Those people that were affected negatively by the recession came to our income support offices in large numbers, and we addressed that pressure. I think that that, again, is a good use of tax dollars, to make sure that Albertans aren't left out in the cold by their loss of employment.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Minister.

Madam Chair, I'm going to move on to just a slightly different line of questioning. I'm glad you brought out the green shoots because the trouble with green shoots is that they're very tender and delicious and tend to be consumed quickly before they actually get to grow. The \$1.72 billion request for additional funds represents a 3.78 per cent increase to the \$44.5 billion budget this government asked for last year. Alberta's population growth and inflation were around 1 per cent each, and that's on top of, of course, a 3.4 per cent increase over the prior year's budget. Given that the Finance minister has repeatedly said that it was a priority "to bend the curve," how do you explain this growth in spending, which far exceeds population growth plus inflation even without the funds required for Wood Buffalo recovery? Is this now called bending the subcurve, or are we still on the main curve?

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. minister.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. You know, it's been a really challenging year, obviously. The Fort McMurray wildfire: you didn't take that out of this amount that you're talking about, 3.8 per cent or whatever, but those monies needed to be spent to address the significant natural disaster that was ongoing for 80,000 people. I think any government would spend those monies up front. They would not skimp on that sort of expenditure.

The other thing we did, of course, was to protect more broadly the programs and services Albertans rely on. Especially during the downturn, they were called on by greater numbers of Albertans coming to get the support they needed. We didn't skimp on that either. We thought that that would have hurt average families, and it would have made this downturn even more prolonged had we skimmed. So we chose to invest and not cut. We protected services rather than turn Albertans away from the doors of this government, and we'll continue to work to protect those things that are important to Albertans.

Health has been a particularly challenging area across this country. We are doing things to bend that curve, but that's a work-in-progress that will take some time. Instead of the 6 to 10 per cent increases to that budget that have occurred in the past, our target is to try and get it down to 3 per cent, lower than 3. There are some provinces that talk about success in that area. We need to look more into how they're doing those things.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

We are now moving on to the next 20-minute block, for the members for Calgary-Mountain View and Calgary-Elbow. Do you plan to split the time?

Mr. Clark: Yeah.

The Deputy Chair: Okay. So 10 minutes on the clock for you to go back and forth?

Mr. Clark: Yes, we'll go back and forth if that's all right with the ministers. Thank you very much. I don't suspect I will take the full 20 minutes, and I believe my hon. colleague here – I don't know if he has any questions for any ministers today but, I suppose, will reserve the right to do that. I don't expect I'll take the full 20 minutes.

I will start with Municipal Affairs and, with apologies to the minister . . .

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, I'm just going to interject. It's 20 minutes to be shared between the two of you. I will let the two

of you figure that out. But I just want to be clear that it's 20 minutes for both of you.

Mr. Clark: Yes, 20 minutes combined. Yes. Thank you very much.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Clark: Yes. I don't expect that I'll take much of it.

Let's get after it here. Starting with the Minister of Municipal Affairs and, again, with apologies if some of this is ground that has already been covered, I am very interested in the \$240 million allocated to the recovery effort within Wood Buffalo. Instead of asking a general question about what that's for, I'm just curious if some or all of that is encompassed within the disaster recovery program. Is that DRP money, or is that going out through a different method?

[Mr. Sucha in the chair]

Mr. S. Anderson: You're talking about the recovery, the \$240 million right there? That's what you're talking about? Okay. I don't have the breakdown of that in front of me. I'll have to get the breakdown exactly for you so that I can give you the specifics of it. Yeah, I don't have it exactly, I don't think, how you would like it, and I don't want to give you a broad answer because I don't think that's what you're looking for. But we do get some of that back from the disaster funding. I'll get some more specifics for you, and we'll get that back to you.

Mr. Clark: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Minister.

Just perhaps more specific questions, then, to just get on the record specifically as it relates to the disaster recovery program, and that's, as you've intuited, precisely where I'm going. Is there a certain percentage of this money – some or all; I don't suppose all – that we could expect back from the federal government in reimbursement from the disaster recovery program? That, I guess, itself is one stand-alone question. Is there money that we can expect back at some point through federal disaster recovery reimbursement?

Also, I'm very interested in knowing if you can let me know what number of DRP claims have been made by the municipality, by individuals, and by businesses as related to the Wood Buffalo wildfire, please.

Mr. S. Anderson: Yeah. To your first question there: about 90 per cent of the money back; they've advanced \$300 million already. Once it's all said and done, you know, like, it's going to take a long time for the money to come back to us.

But as far as the – you're looking at claims by individuals? Is that what you're asking about?

5:00

Mr. Clark: I'll just restate my question, and then we'll come back to the federal reimbursement afterwards. What I'm interested in is that, as I understand it, there are at least three categories of DRP claims. One is municipalities' potential DRP claims, one is from individuals, and another category would be for businesses. I'm curious if you have a breakdown of DRP claims filed by municipalities, by individuals, businesses, or by any other category that I haven't captured.

Mr. S. Anderson: I don't have those specifics on me, obviously, but I can look into that for you, for sure, and see what I can find. I don't have the private-sector DRPs because it is an insurable event, but I can ask through my staff and see what information we can get for you.

Mr. Clark: Yeah. Thank you very much. That's really what I'm interested in, is given that it's an insurable event if there are any DRP claims at all. I'm just curious if there are things that fall outside of the scope of what is insurable but potentially fall into DRP. Of course, why I'm interested in knowing that is: do these numbers potentially go up in the future? Are there some liabilities here that we're not aware of? I'd be very interested to know that. If there aren't, obviously, that would be wonderful as well.

Just back to that first question, and I guess I'm focusing specifically on the \$240 million for recovery. I just wonder if you could tell me if the \$300 million that has been advanced by the federal government is accounted for in the \$720 million or so that we're talking about here, or is that over and above the \$720 million? I guess what I'm curious about is this \$720 million number. Could we expect it to go down by \$300 million, or in fact is that \$720 million with the \$300 million from the federal government over and above. And is there more money coming potentially from the federal government that at some point would reduce this \$720 million figure?

Mr. S. Anderson: Yes, there is more money coming. I don't know what it is yet. But the \$300 million was advanced already. I don't think that counts in that \$720 million, but I'd have to check on that for you because I don't have that breakdown off the top of my head, obviously. I do know that it was advanced already, but I'd have to check into that there for you.

Mr. Clark: I don't want you to tell me what's in the budget next week because I know that would be . . .

Mr. Cooper: That would be a short term for cabinet.

Mr. Clark: That may set the world record for shortest time in cabinet, if you were to do that, so please don't.

However, what I'm interested in is whether you have given thought to increasing the amount you budget for disaster response. Generally what I've observed from past budgets is that the disaster response number in the budget is quite low, with the understanding that it's really either a subtext or a nudge and a wink or even perhaps an express goal of: look, if something happens, we'll spend whatever it takes to recover should there be a disaster. But I'm just curious if for budgetary purposes you have given some thought to increasing that number or coming up with a five- or 10-year actual average that you would use to budget as we go forward with this coming budget and future budgets as well?

Mr. S. Anderson: So, no, I'm not going to talk about the budget that's coming out on the 16th. But I think that part of what we're talking about – it's kind of hard to deal in hypotheticals. With that third-party review that's being done, you know, we're going to look at efficiencies and look at the way things were done and look at the way we can maybe do things better going forward. I can't speak to whether that's going to have any effect on how we determine budgets in the future. Like I said, I don't want to deal with hypotheticals.

We have stated before in the House that no matter what, whenever a disaster hits in Alberta, we will make sure that the money is there for whichever municipality, whoever needs it, at that time. We will make sure it's there. That's what the government is there for, to make sure they have the backs of their citizens. Regardless of what that's going to cost, we have to make sure that we're there for people.

I think that the Auditor General has actually indicated that our disaster recovery accounting has been – the best practice is to fund after the event rather than, as I said, hypotheticals, so we will see

what the third party says. You know, we're always looking at our departments and trying to make sure that we're doing things that are going to be best for Albertans, and we'll continue to do that.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, and congratulations to the new minister. I think you're acquitting yourself very nicely in this process. I will move on, and let you relax here for a moment. I will ask the Minister of Finance a couple of questions and then cede whatever time I have to my colleague here if he'd like to use it.

So to the Minister of Finance. I'm very interested in some of the requested increases directly in your ministry that, as I understand it here from the notes, are related to administration of the climate leadership plan rebates. I guess I'm just curious as to why we have an increase here of perhaps not the largest gross number, but what planning went into deciding that budget figure in the first place? Why is it that we need yet more money at this stage of the game for increased administration of the climate leadership plan?

The Acting Chair: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much. Why those items weren't in our Budget 2016: I can tell the hon. member that Budget 2016 introduced plans to implement a price on carbon through a carbon levy on purchases of transportation and heating fuels. Although the budget for Alberta's climate leadership plan is with the climate change office, which is in Environment and Parks, Treasury Board and Finance was expected to incur . . .

The Acting Chair: I apologize for interrupting, but the first 10 minutes is . . .

Mr. Ceci: Can I just finish this? It will just take a second.

The Acting Chair: Be brief, Minister.

Mr. Ceci: Okay. Thanks. Treasury Board and Finance was expected to incur implementation costs, both operating and capital, with regard to the administration of the carbon levy. Getting closer to the launch of that program, our costs and obligations under the legislation became clearer, and new estimates for our costs incurred and budgeted for the coming years were made.

Thank you.

The Acting Chair: So are you continuing, Member for Calgary-Elbow, and then the remainder of the time will go to the Member for Calgary-Mountain View?

Mr. Clark: My hon. colleague for Calgary-Mountain View has indicated to me that he doesn't plan to use his time this afternoon, so I will use a little bit more of the time. I don't imagine I'll use the next full 10 minutes. If that's all right with the minister and the chair.

The Acting Chair: Please proceed.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much. I do want to ask – and I'm very interested as we're talking about the climate leadership plan and administering the consumer rebates – why it is that as the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board you feel that Albertans with a household income of nearly a hundred thousand dollars can't afford your policies, being the carbon tax in particular, why you're rebating 60 per cent of Alberta households or two-thirds of Alberta households by some measures. What's the magic number there? Why were those decisions made? As President of Treasury Board you have a role in approving some of these expenditures. I'm just very curious whether you feel rebates, in fact, defeat the purpose of

a program that is intended to disincent Albertans from certain activity by making it cost more.

Mr. Ceci: I know the hon. member knows that there was an expert panel that gave advice to government with respect to setting up the climate leadership plan for this province, that took us from being a laggard province to a leader province. You'll hear that several times over the coming weeks. Making life more affordable for Albertans is what this government is all about. The expert panel gave advice to government and said that, you know, to appropriately incent and to ameliorate the effects of carbon pricing on both transportation and home heating fuels, this would be the appropriate way to go. Rather than me second-guessing that expert leadership panel that set up the carbon plan, I agreed with it, as members of this government did, and we implemented it.

5:10

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Mr. Minister. I'll finish with one final question, which really dovetails on that question as it relates to just new programs in general. We're looking at the seniors home adaptation and repair loan program. A certain amount of money, which I believe to be \$7 million, was originally allocated for that, but the supplementary estimate here is requesting yet another \$2 million. I'm just curious, again in your capacity as President of Treasury Board, if there's any sort of vetting that goes on, where you say: well, we can achieve a certain amount with this certain new program. Is there any sort of process where you would perhaps push back and say: well, this is what we thought it was going to be; this is all the money we have; and, no, there is in fact no more money no matter how important the program may be?

And let me hasten to add that I certainly take no issue with this particular program. I think it's an important one for seniors to allow them to stay in their homes. But I'm just very curious what that process looks like from your perspective as the one who ultimately controls the purse strings.

Mr. Ceci: Well, that program, obviously, is \$2 million higher than expected because of the applications that have come in to that program, asking for seniors to get loan money so they could repair their homes. It's a worthwhile and positive thing to do, to assist seniors with these costs up front, and it's recovered on the back end when they either sell their property or an estate takes care of that. You know, that's what we hear is important for seniors all over Alberta and, indeed, everywhere, that they want to stay in their homes as long as possible.

My review of that is that the minister comes forward with a desire to address this pressure because the pressure is for the number of applications that come forward. We have provided the minister with that support so they could make the program available to as many Albertans as possible. I look at these things within the context of available funds as well as within the context of whether it is delivering good value. And I can say on both levels, yes.

The Acting Chair: Member for Calgary-Elbow, you're finished with your time?

Mr. Clark: All done.

The Acting Chair: Member for Calgary-Mountain View, are you wishing to ask any questions?

Dr. Swann: No questions.

The Acting Chair: All right. So we're ceding the time for independent members.

The chair will recognize the Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Nielsen: Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. Happy to lead things off over here. One of the problems, of course, when you're kind of last in line . . .

The Acting Chair: Sorry, Member. I just want to confirm that you're combining your time.

Mr. Nielsen: I am, yes, with your blessing, of course, and the minister's blessing as well.

. . . is that some of the good questions got used up here already. But if I may call upon our fantastic Municipal Affairs minister. Although I know you're new to the position, I'm sure that if you don't quite have the answers here, you can get back.

The Acting Chair: Member, through the chair.

Mr. Nielsen: Yes. Sorry.

Minister, I know that this was talked about a little bit earlier, and I'm not sure if I had caught the answer. I was just wondering why the basic municipal transportation grant was lower than budgeted.

Mr. S. Anderson: I did touch on it a little bit, but it is something that's actually a good thing to maybe repeat. The BMTG has different funding models for Edmonton and Calgary than it does for the rest of Alberta's municipalities. So the amount of the grant for Edmonton and Calgary is determined based on the proportion of gasoline and diesel fuel that's sold in Alberta whereas the remaining municipalities receive the grant based on a combination of population, length of primary highways, and other factors, depending on the size and type of municipality. So the reduction to the basic municipal transportation grant, as I had said before to another member, was due to lower than budgeted gasoline and diesel sales in Edmonton and Calgary, which determines the amount of the grant that's for the two largest cities in Alberta.

Mr. Nielsen: Thank you, Minister. I know we had talked about the climate leadership plan here just a little bit earlier, and I was curious about how the funding of the climate leadership plan and implementation was used, and I'm also wondering how this will benefit our municipalities as well.

Mr. S. Anderson: Sure. As many of you know, there are a lot of municipalities out there that are doing great things as far as climate change and energy efficiency. You know, we heard from the Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose about what Wetaskiwin is doing with solar and a whole bunch of things that they're doing, and I would actually like to go for a tour and see all of it. I know that Leduc put a big solar array on their rec centre. Devon is doing some amazing things out there. Those are just examples that are close to us that I know of. We know that municipalities are doing some of these things on their own. They're very concerned out there about the future of our environment and sustainable energy, which is good. The funding that we have for our climate leadership plan: we're working, as was stated before, with Transportation and Infrastructure to look at ways that we can support these municipalities with our climate plan.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

It's a really big area of opportunity, I think, for partnerships in Alberta. You know, we talk about partnerships, whether it be with the MGA or whatever it is in collaboration, and I think this is part of that with our climate leadership plan. We want to make sure that our health and our environment and our economy are protected. I have little boys, so I want to make sure that we're doing what's right for them and, hopefully, for when I have grandkids, possibly, when

I'm a little older. I'm still pretty young. Just because I have white in my beard, it doesn't mean that I'm that old yet.

One of those things that we've been doing is that a few of us had a tour of the AUMA building here. They're doing some really neat things with energy efficiency, so we've been working with them and their members a fair amount to figure out what might work better for them, whether it be with energy efficiency, whether it be with renewables, land use, waste management. Transit is a big one, especially in the big cities but also in the surrounding areas, too, so if we can do things, you know, GreenTRIP funding and things like that.

These are the types of things that we're discussing with all these municipalities to try to help them and work, obviously, in partnership with them and try to make sure that we're doing the right things and sustainable things for the citizens out there. That's kind of a general overview of what that's being used for right now.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Nielsen: Madam Chair, we've had a lot of discussion here, of course, about the wildfires. I was just wondering, because you had alluded to it earlier, Minister: what is the firefighter certification initiative?

The Deputy Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you. Yes, I did kind of just touch on it briefly there. It's a commitment that we have to public safety for Albertans. It's working through the office of the fire commissioner. They provide training courses and certificates. I'm happy to say that the increase in funding reflects an increase in certification. That means that there are more firefighters and more boots on the ground. That's where that funding comes from. The additional \$200,000 that supports this initiative is fully funded through the exam and certification fees. You know, it's kind of one of those, I guess, good things that happened, in a sense, because we know that there are going to be more firefighters out there.

People, I think, have seen what's happened in the past, whether it be Slave Lake or with the fire up in Fort Mac, and they know that we need more help out there. There are a lot of citizens out there that want to do the right thing for their neighbours, and we see that reflected in that. That's a really positive thing, I think, that we're going to have more people out there on the ground in case there is an issue or a disaster of some sort. We don't ever want that, of course, but we know that we need to have people in place when things like that do happen.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

The Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Nielsen: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just switching gears a little bit here, ministry support services saw savings of about \$500,000. How was this achieved, and are there any plans for future savings?

Mr. S. Anderson: Sorry. Can you repeat the first part of the question? I didn't hear it.

Mr. Nielsen: I believe I saw – and maybe I'm mistaken – that there were savings of around \$500,000 achieved. I was wondering how this was achieved. Are there future plans for those savings, or was this just one time?

Mr. S. Anderson: Sorry. My mind was still on the firefighting stuff.

Yeah, actually, it's kind of nice when we can save money, obviously, and find efficiencies through the ministry. You know,

all the ministers are asking our staff to find efficiencies and make sure that we're doing things that aren't redundant, things like that. One of the ones that we did – I mean, it might not sound like a ton of money, \$500,000, but we did find efficiencies in our IT programs. Because it was previously outsourced and we did bring that network maintenance in-house, we managed to save \$500,000. Going forward, of course, we're going to keep looking at things like that, and as technology evolves – I mean, I don't like to speak in hypotheticals, but who knows what we can find out there, right? It's something that we're always trying to do, be more efficient, and we found a \$500,000 efficiency in IT, which I'm happy that my staff did.

5:20

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

Mr. Nielsen: Thanks, Madam Chair. Those are all the questions that I have at this time. I know that my colleague from Edmonton-Ellerslie has some, so I'll cede the time to him.

The Deputy Chair: Are there any other members wishing to speak from the government side?

Seeing none, we will now move to our five-minute rotation for the Official Opposition. The hon. Member for Little Bow.

Mr. Schneider: Thank you, Madam Chair. Supplementary supply for Ag and Forestry is \$332,493,000 plus a little over \$5 million made available from lower than budgeted expenses, and \$6 million from the climate leadership plan has been brought forward for the farm energy program. Can you just tell us what exactly this energy program provides for farmers?

The Deputy Chair: Just to clarify, Member, are you going back and forth for the full 10 minutes?

Mr. Schneider: Back and forth, please, yeah. Sorry.

The Deputy Chair: Okay. Thank you.
The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Chair. Thank you, Member. Yeah, the farm energy program enhancements, we had that earlier. You're able to do those enhancements. There are four specific programs. There's on-farm energy management, on-farm solar photovoltaics, the irrigation efficiency, and the accelerating innovation program.

Mr. Schneider: Can I just ask about irrigation efficiency, a little bit of the details of what that might be?

Mr. Carlier: Yeah. Good question. They'll be able to find whatever efficiencies there might be in irrigation. There are already a lot, I'm sure the member realizes. They'll be able to convert to lower energy irrigation systems themselves: pumps, et cetera. I had the opportunity – as a matter of fact, I think it was in your district, Member – to view some pumps that looked to me like they were close to magic; they used so little energy. So whatever we can do around those efficiencies around irrigation. There's a whole suite of different things and new technologies as well.

Two years ago I had an opportunity to have a discussion with the Canadian Jewish council. The irrigations systems they have in Israel are the best because of the dry climate. Personally, I'd like to explore a little bit more what they're doing in other countries. I'm sure we could apply some of that technology here.

Thanks for the question.

Mr. Schneider: There's \$16,621,000 for the Alberta small brewery grant program. There are approximately 40 small breweries in Alberta, and that represents about \$400,000 per brewery. This program was announced late last June, and I just wonder why the government did not make sure there was enough funding available to cover off this program when it was announced.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Yes. Thank you, Member. That was announced in July last year. I believe the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board said, "Beer is good." I think he's saying that a lot all over the province, and I would agree. Yeah, the funding will be available to candidates in this program. As you said, there are about 40 or so craft breweries right now. The program has been extremely successful, and we're looking forward to it being even more successful as well.

You know, it helps out, obviously, small business. It helps them innovate. It helps find that diversification that we all want. It's a good marketing strategy for our barley growers as well. We have some of the best malted barley in the world. I found out something really interesting just a few weeks ago. There's actually a barley grower north of Edmonton that's contracted to Heineken in Amsterdam. Their malted barley goes straight to Amsterdam. Of course, a lot of it goes to Japan as well because they do value our barley.

Thank you.

Mr. Schneider: Anheuser-Busch as well.

You announced this, I believe, as a \$20 million program, if I'm correct, in the summer, in July, apparently. There was a \$20 million program, and we have a budget here of \$16,621,000. I just wonder if there was 3 and a half million dollars paid somewhere else before today.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Yeah. In the supplementary estimates the \$16.621 million is extra money for the program. It has shown great success notwithstanding, you know, that some places around the country are a little bit jealous, maybe, of our breweries. But it has been a success. That's new money allocated for the new program.

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

Mr. Schneider: Thank you. There's \$35,723,000 for the department's grant to the AFSC insurance programs for the provincial share of insurance premiums. Now, do you not already have that money set aside? Is that normally money that would be set aside every year to pay the province's share of this program?

Mr. Carlier: That is the share of the premiums from the province. As I'm sure the member knows, the federal government's is 36 per cent, provincial 24 per cent, and the producers pick up the rest. That's just our statutory obligations to the AFSC for the portion. I suspect that has some flexibility year to year, but for this year that's the amount.

Mr. Schneider: So this is the total amount? I mean, \$35 million: is that what would be expected in the budget from '16-17, or is this more money? If so, why is there a shortfall, please?

Mr. Carlier: That is a good question. I think it's derived much like the emergency funding is as well. You see how the year has gone and what actually has to be paid out, you know, indemnities and

into the pockets of the farmers that have made the claims. It isn't decided until towards the end of the year. That's why it has to be a supplementary estimate. Because you don't know at the beginning of the year, you can't budget what it is exactly, so it has to come towards the end, when you finally get the numbers.

Mr. Schneider: Would some of this money be destined for the snowed-under crops north of Edmonton, north and east and west of Edmonton?

Mr. Carlier: That's exactly right, yeah, for that. There are, I think, five or six counties that actually declared a drought last year, too.

Mr. Schneider: There's \$25,503,000 for the department's grant to the AFSC agriculture income support program for the provincial share of AgriStability indemnities. I guess the question just is: was this shortfall due to the high level of claims on top of poor yields due to weather conditions last season?

Mr. Carlier: Absolutely. That question was on AgriStability, right? It's a little bit different there. AgriStability would go towards income support for lower than normal beef prices, for example. Another portion of that was \$6 million for the bovine tuberculosis wreck that we had in the southeast corner. That was included as well. Interesting to note there that originally the province had to allocate \$15 million for AgriStability, in particular for the bovine tuberculosis, but the federal government then reimbursed \$9 million, which goes then directly back to AFSC's bank.

Mr. Schneider: The \$252 million – some of this question was asked earlier – for wildfire disaster/emergency assistance to provide for wildfire management costs: is this shortfall a direct result of moving the start of the fire season back a month?

The Deputy Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Chair. Thank you, Member. You know, that's a good question. That has nothing to do with it because actually in the past five or six years or so, every year the previous government had bumped that back anyway, right? The changes we made last year to the farm and prairie protection amendment act made that permanent. That's not so much. We still have to have our base budget. That gets the equipment ready, the people ready – the hiring, the new recruiting, whatever that might be – gets the towers ready, the landing strips, all that kind of thing. This is just the money, then, that's needed to actually fight those wildfires that do pop up. That's the money we need to get the boots on the ground.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, Minister.

5:30

Mr. Schneider: Will this ensure that we have the proper coverage of water tanker and other firefighting contracts in place for the season?

Mr. Carlier: You know, this is the supplementary estimates for what we need to cover our expenses now. I can't give anything away that's in the budget, but it's tempting. Yeah, this will be adequate to make sure that we have the equipment that we needed, you know, in the past year, to cover off all our expenses, whether the resource is our own or what we needed from our international partners.

Mr. Schneider: How much of this money is for contracting air tankers from out of province above and beyond our normal contracting?

Mr. Carlier: Good question, Member. I don't have the actual breakdown of what that might be from ours to theirs. I know that last year we had 1,338 wildfires, that burned 611,000 hectares. Now, if you recall, a big chunk of that would be the Fort McMurray fire. It's interesting to note there, as we know in the agriculture . . .

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

We will now be moving to the third party. The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Thank you. Chair, do I have 10 minutes or 20 here?

The Deputy Chair: You have 10 combined if you'd like.

Mr. McIver: Okay. We'll go back and forth if that's okay with my esteemed colleagues across the aisle. Thank you, Chair.

First of all, to the Finance minister if I might. You're out by \$1.6 billion. I guess the first obvious question is: how could you miss by so much?

Mr. Ceci: Well, this was a significant and challenging year for Albertans and for their government. We made sure that we had Albertans' backs through this recession. We had expenditures that we hadn't anticipated, obviously, for emergencies that we addressed, whether those emergencies were in agriculture, whether those emergencies were as a result of the wildfire.

In addition to addressing those significant costs, we also addressed the challenges that Albertans had with not being employed during this recession or losing their work. Income support, persons with developmental disabilities, and assured income for the severely handicapped were all areas that had significant cost pressures that needed to be addressed.

Our student population grew larger than anticipated. We addressed that with full funding.

Lastly, there were health supports that needed to be addressed as well and things like drugs and physician compensation.

Mr. McIver: Okay. I'll ask that question again at another time and try to get a better answer.

In the meantime FTE changes. Can you tell us what difference there was in FTE changes at the end of the year that these supplementary supply estimates will be paying for? In other words, how many full-time equivalents are we adding as a result, please?

Mr. Ceci: Well, we can probably go back to Budget 2016 to see where the full-time equivalents are in that document, and with Budget 2017 we'll have an accounting again for the FTEs. I don't have that off the top of my head, though as I talked about, many of these expenditures are with regard to schools, health care, and income support. Many of these other monies, like for the income support, go directly to Albertans so that they can have a quality of life. I don't have the exact number, but it's coming in Budget 2017.

Mr. McIver: Okay. I'm not very lucky today, Chair. I'm zero for two in answers. But I'm optimistic, so I'm going to carry on.

Minister, do the supplementary supply estimates include any or all of the \$50 million a year in savings in education, or do those savings start later on? Is all or part of the \$50 million in savings reflected in these estimates? That is my question, kind of a yes or no thing.

Mr. Ceci: I believe yes.

Mr. McIver: Okay. Thank you. One for three. I'm good. I appreciate that. We're making progress here. Thank you, Minister.

Now, what were the areas specifically? Where exactly did we save that money in education, please? Since you've confirmed that some of those savings are in education, can you tell me, you know, whether – I'm just looking for exactly where the money was saved, please.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Ceci: Yes. I apologize. That probably is something that he should direct to the other minister.

Mr. McIver: Okay. I'd like to ask that same question to the Education minister, please.

Mr. Ceci: Sorry. I know the full complement of – let me just take a look here. Today is Wednesday. I think there was an agreement, perhaps not with your party but with others, around who would be in seats at what time. That does not come up on Wednesday's agenda; it comes up on Thursday's.

Mr. McIver: Okay. We'll keep trying.

On page 18, on the climate leadership plan, it talks about the transfer of \$50,000 in capital grants to the Alberta energy efficient carbon-neutral greenhouse infrastructure modelling project. I'm tired just saying that. What did we buy for \$50,000 that qualifies as capital? And I only ask the question because of having been the minister of the major capital ministries. You don't get a lot in capital for \$50,000. So what did we need for \$50,000 in the climate leadership plan?

Mr. Ceci: I have a similar kind of answer. Perhaps your party wasn't part of the agreements around who should be in seats at what times. That person is identified, again, on Thursday and not Wednesday.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. McIver: This is most disappointing, Chair, I must say. I'm doing my best to direct my comments towards you. We keep trying.

Employment and income support, \$111 million; \$80 million for benefits for the unemployed. I can appreciate how we need more benefits for the unemployed when so many Albertans are unemployed under this NDP government. My question for the minister is: how much of the \$80 million is actually direct benefits to people, and how much of that is administration, please?

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Chair, and thank you, Member, for the question. My supplementary estimates amount is \$173.2 million, and in virtually all cases the funding will be used to address unavoidable caseload pressures in the following areas. One, that you identified, is income support to people expected to work. The caseload in this program area has grown from 15,622 in October of 2014 to 30,121 in October of 2016. That's an increase of 14,499 cases, or 92.8 per cent. This is a statutory program where somebody qualifies. The qualifications are given in the statute and regulations. The ministry has to provide that. So this \$80 million will go for the most part to providing additional benefits to those who need those benefits.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, Minister.

Mr. McIver: I'd like to say to the minister that I appreciate the information he did give me. I do appreciate it a lot. It just wasn't

the information that I asked for, so I'll ask again. Of the \$80 million, how much actually went out to people in direct cheques or benefits, and how much was to pay for the administration end of it? If you don't mind, please.

The Deputy Chair: Minister.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Chair. I can tell the member what is the split in the overall budget for the income support area per se. This \$80 million was needed to address the caseload pressures. I can say that this \$80 million, all of it, went to address the caseload pressures. Administration costs were there. There may have been some hiring for some positions, front-line positions, where it was absolutely unavoidable, to deal with the amount of caseload pressure. But for the most part, these are monies that were needed to get benefits to Albertans.

Secondly, these income support programs also provide training and retraining so that these people can get back into the job market. So it's going to that end as well.

5:40

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, Minister.

Mr. McIver: Zero per cent administration. That's impressive.

An Hon. Member: That's not what he said.

Mr. McIver: That's not what he said. Okay.

Mr. Sabir: That's exactly not what I said. There are admin costs around this program. That's given in Budget 2016. That has been split, but this increase was needed to get Albertans the benefits they need.

Mr. McIver: Okay. So my question was . . .

Mr. Sabir: So the admin costs are already stated in the previous 2015-16 budget. They are given there in the line items, but these were to deal with the pressures that we were facing. Were we doing just hiring with that? No. For the most part, I am saying that this amount is going to get benefits to Albertans.

The Deputy Chair: Minister, thank you.

We are now moving on to the Member for Calgary-Mountain View. No? Okay.

We will now move on to the government side. We will look to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie. Will you be going back and forth for a total of 10 minutes?

Loyola: Yes. Back and forth with the Minister of Seniors and Housing, please.

The Deputy Chair: Okay. Please go ahead.

Loyola: Yeah. Thank you. Well, before I start, please let me take this opportunity to wish you a happy International Women's Day, Madam Chair. Since I'm asking questions to the Minister of Seniors and Housing, I'll wish her a happy International Women's Day as well.

Of course, I'm referring to page 70 in the document that we have before us. To the Minister of Seniors and Housing. I'm hoping that she can elaborate on the \$2 million that is expected for the seniors' home adaptation and repair loan program. What's the additional funding required for?

The Deputy Chair: Minister, please go ahead.

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the member for the question. Yes. We did ask for an additional \$2 million for that program because it has been enormously successful. Many Albertan seniors want to remain in their communities, and doing home renovations – sometimes we have mobility issues as we age, so sometimes renovating a home so there aren't carpets that can get in the way of a walker or putting bars around the bathtub, all sorts of things, really helps seniors be able to be comfortable and safe in their own home. This program, that we announced last summer, is a very successful program, and many seniors are asking for the funding of the program. So we have a larger uptake than we anticipated, which is a good thing; therefore, we do need an additional \$2 million. Of course, this is to fund the loan program. These funds will come back to us as a government, but it will help seniors now age in their communities, close to family and friends, which we know is where they want to be. It's an excellent program that's serving seniors in Alberta very well.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.
The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Loyola: Thank you, Madam Chair. Once again, I know that the Minister of Seniors and Housing is pretty passionate about this program. In order to help us understand it a little better, I'm hoping that she can give us a particular success story that she's aware of and further elaborate on how this makes life better for seniors.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Seniors and Housing.

Ms Sigurdson: Well, thank you very much, Madam Chair. Certainly, there are many success stories to be shared, but there is one in particular that I'm happy to share, and that's about a couple that live in Sherwood Park. Their names are Jill and David. Jill has multiple sclerosis. This is a degenerative disease, so she has progressive difficulty with going up stairs. They live in a split-level. This program helped them install a lift on their stairs so that she can access the basement and the second floor. They estimated that they can probably live there for 10 more years.

They have this magnificent home in Sherwood Park that they love, very close to their friends and family, a beautiful backyard that they've sort of lovingly nurtured over the years. This program is enabling them to be able to stay in that community, enjoying their surroundings. It's really giving them, you know, an enhanced quality of life. Unfortunately, Jill's disease, her multiple sclerosis, is degenerative, and over time it may get worse, and there may be a time when they're not able to stay in their home. But for now and for some time to come this program helps them. They said that they would have had to move, like, within the next six months, but because of this, it's given them about another 10 years to be able to stay in their own home because they could not afford those repairs without this home equity loan.

I'm very pleased to say that we are supporting seniors to stay in their own homes and their own communities and be able to do that safely and to really enjoy the pleasures of the home that they've lived in for many, many years. Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.
The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Loyola: Yes. Thank you. While I've been door-knocking in my community – and I'm sure it's been the same for many MLAs here in the Assembly – I've heard from a number of seniors who have talked about the importance for them of aging in place and staying in their own homes. I understand how this program is a benefit for

that in a number of ways. I imagine that that's the reason for such a high demand on these programs. I'm hoping that you can elaborate, Minister, from your own experience, on why there's such a high demand on this program.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. minister.

Ms Sigurdson: Well, thank you very much. I mean, I think it shows that there is obviously a need in the community. People do want to stay in their own homes, and they want to make sure, you know, that they can be living safely when sometimes they have mobility concerns. We estimated – it was the first year of the program, so certainly the ministry did their best to estimate, and obviously we're a little bit short, \$2 million short. But it's all good. It's wonderful that so many seniors are seeing the program as an important and helpful way for them to be able to stay in their own homes.

You know, certainly, over time we'll have better data to be able to share about how come there's such a great uptake, but I think it has a lot to do with the need in the community and seniors being well informed about the program. We certainly work with networks of seniors' centres and different groups across the province so that they know about the program. We've done lots of promotion. Seniors see this as a very good opportunity for them to be able to do the renovations that they need in their home. It doesn't have to only be regarding sort of what I've described already. Sometimes you need a new roof, and you don't have the income to be able to do that.

The thing about this loan program is that it's simple interest. You don't have a monthly payment. You only pay when you sell your house or, you know, if the estate sells the house, so you don't have to have that burden of a monthly payment, and it's at prime. These are things that we offer: a much better deal than if you went to the bank.

I think all of these combined have demonstrated to seniors in this province that this program is, really, a helpful program that really supports them, so we're so pleased that there has been this great uptake of it. We're looking forward to supporting many more seniors to be able to age in their communities and their own homes in a safe way.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.
The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Loyola: Thank you. It's wonderful to hear that the program is such an amazing success and that there are so many Alberta seniors out there that are taking advantage of the program. Minister, let me ask you: do you think that the increased demand is manageable?

5:50

Ms Sigurdson: Absolutely. We're very pleased that even more people than we anticipated have taken advantage of the seniors' home adaptation program. As I said, you know, seniors want to be in their communities, close to family and friends, and we're pleased to be able to support them to stay in their own homes.

Some of the things that they're doing are putting in energy efficient furnaces, maybe flooring, windows, things that will support them to have their homes well maintained and, you know, make sure that they're safe for them to stay in their communities. We absolutely have the capacity to support them, and we're pleased to give all these seniors the opportunity to do the maintenance that they really need to do on their homes and really enjoy being in the communities that they've lived in for many years.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, Minister.
The Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Loyola: Yes. Thank you, Minister. You've given us quite a few examples of maintenance projects that seniors have been able to follow through with. I'm just wondering. Could you comment on: what are the most common repairs under the SHARP program? If you could elaborate on that.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. minister.

Ms Sigurdson: Yes. Thank you so much. Certainly, you know, it's really up to the seniors what they identify as the needs they have to repair their home or renovate it in some way, but common ones are widening doorways or hallways to increase accessibility – someone might be in a wheelchair; therefore they need that wider access – and installing walk-in tubs. Oftentimes when you're sitting in a tub, it's difficult to get out. Walk-in tubs, of course, very much enable seniors to be able to have access without having the concern of not being able to get out, which, of course, is very important for their safety. Roof and window replacements: they may not have the funds to replace the windows that they want to have upgraded, and certainly roofs over time deteriorate. That's another common reason that they're asking for this funding.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, Minister.

We are now back to the Official Opposition for 10 minutes of back and forth if you would like. The Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate being able to talk with the Minister of Transportation about these supplementary supply estimates. I have some questions, found on page 78, first of all, Minister. If we could talk about that. In there it says that there's going to be \$210,000 for administering the climate leadership plan, the green infrastructure initiative. I just want clarity if I could. It looks like it's possibly operating dollars for three full-time equivalent employees: a manager, a couple of program service employees. Am I correct in this, Minister?

Mr. Mason: Yes, you are, hon. member.
Do I need to stand up?

The Deputy Chair: Yes, hon. minister, please.

Mr. Mason: I've been here longer than anyone else. I should be able to sit down and answer questions.

The Deputy Chair: Please go ahead, Minister.

Mr. Mason: Yes.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Minister. Levity is appreciated.

Is the ADM of the safety, policy, and engineering division the oversight for this program administration?

Mr. Mason: Well, if you'll just give me a second to find my notes.

I think the \$210,000 in operating expense is to create a work area to lead and manage ministry climate change initiatives and to explore additional policies and programs. This area will develop, monitor, and evaluate policy and program options; work with stakeholders, municipalities, community leaders, and industry groups; and educate and inform the public about the new emission reduction initiatives. The funding is from the climate change and emissions management fund with the Ministry of Environment and Parks. There will be no impact on the deficit.

The Deputy Chair: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Minister of Infrastructure and of Transportation, but pursuant to Standing Order 4(3) the committee shall now rise and report progress.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

Mr. Hinkley: Madam Speaker, the Committee of Supply has had under consideration supplementary supply estimates, No. 2, for the 2016-2017 financial year, reports progress thereon, and requests leave to sit again.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Does the Assembly concur in the report? All those in favour, please say aye.

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed, please say no. So ordered.

Mr. Mason: Madam Speaker, I would like to move that we call it 6 o'clock and adjourn until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. Government House Leader.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:57 p.m.]

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