



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Third Session

Alberta Hansard

Thursday afternoon, March 9, 2017

Day 5

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta
The 29th Legislature

Third Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (ND), Speaker

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Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (ND)
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)
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Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (ND)
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Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (ND)
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Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (ND)
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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),
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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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Kleinsteuber	

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, March 9, 2017

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Good afternoon. Be careful the ice of March. Please be seated.

Introduction of Visitors

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is my absolute honour to introduce to you and through you a man who I deeply respect and admire. He's a veteran Canadian politician whose social democratic values are shared by New Democrats across our country and here in this very Chamber, and this, of course, is former Saskatchewan Premier Roy Romanow. I'd love it if you stay standing, Premier Romanow, while I speak about you.

He led our neighbouring province for more than a decade. He's well known and should be honoured by us for his tremendous work as a staunch supporter of medicare, supporting and advocating for stable, accessible public health care for each and every Canadian. We had an opportunity to chat earlier today about how it's always important to make sure that the national stage is aware of your local needs, and he certainly did an excellent job of that. As head of the royal Commission on the Future of Health Care in Canada Mr. Romanow fought hard for supporting stable, accessible public health care for all, and last June Mr. Romanow was named co-chair of the board of directors of the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness, adding his leadership and expertise to the national movement to eradicate homelessness across our country.

Even nearly 20 years after leaving political life, Mr. Romanow continues to dedicate himself to serving the Canadian people and helping make life better for our country's most vulnerable. I'd ask that former Saskatchewan Premier Romanow please accept the traditional warm welcome of all members of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome, sir.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you Trevor Buttery, who is my office practicum student from MacEwan University in the social work program. He is in his first year and has been an outstanding addition to our team. He joins us today in recognition of Social Work Week, and I will be speaking more on this later this afternoon. Trevor, please rise and accept the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Fort Saskatchewan elementary school. There are 64 students up in the gallery behind me. They are accompanied by their teachers, Mrs. Laura Simpson, Mr. Tyler Nyznyk, and Mrs. Cindy Flaman, and they also have chaperones Mrs. Monique Bandura and Mr. George Braz. I would ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

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

Mr. Horne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I apologize if I butcher the French here. M. le Président, c'est avec fierté que je me lève à la Chambre aujourd'hui pour introduire les étudiants de Broxton Park school. Les étudiants sont accompagnés par leurs enseignants, M. Benoit Mathieu et M. Marcel Turcotte. I would ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome. Bonjour.

The Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Ai Tran. Many social workers like Ai, who works at the Edmonton Remand Centre, work within our justice system to ensure that our communities are safe and supported. We thank you all for your incredible hard work and your advocacy and making a difference in the lives of Albertans. I'd ask now that Ai please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

My oversight. Were there any other school groups, hon. members? Seeing and hearing none, the Minister of Children's Services.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two introductions for you today. First, it is my honour and privilege to introduce to you and through you to all the members of this Assembly a group of compassionate and dedicated advocates for Alberta's children, families, and communities. As part of Social Work Week and in my ongoing work as Minister of Children's Services I'm making it a priority to recognize Alberta's social workers for the work they do to support children and families and to celebrate them for changing lives one client, one child, one family at a time. This week I've had the pleasure of meeting many of them, and I'm pleased to be joined by some of them today, including Lynn Labrecque King, Suzanne MacKinnon, Julie Mann-Johnson, and Charity Lui from the Alberta College of Social Workers; Lina Filomeno-Melchionna-Mcman at the Children's Mental Health Center; and from my own Ministry of Children's Services, Cody Murrell and Carmen Deehan. I ask them all to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Ms Larivee: For my second introduction it's my honour and privilege to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly my dear friend Tracey Marshall, who is a public health nurse here in Edmonton and who I worked with for several years. Along with her husband, Rob, she has parented two wonderful boys, Luke and Drake. Tracey and Rob recently moved to Fort Saskatchewan from my community of Slave Lake, and what has been Lesser Slave Lake's loss is Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville's gain. I miss them very much. I'm happy to see her today, and I ask Tracey to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

Cortes-Vargas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly a group of individuals representing Ministik and Uncas parent councils in the wonderful riding of Strathcona-Sherwood Park. Today we have with us Pauline Gurnett and Elizabeth Buzenus from Ministik and Laura Rasmussen and Elyse Chatterton from Uncas. I would like to thank them for their dedication and

contribution to our rural education system. Their dedication is a continual source of inspiration to me. May my guests please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure and honour to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly members of the social work community who work in Alberta's social and community service sector to make life better for Albertans each and every day. I am pleased that we are joined today by several social workers. They include Rick Guthrie from Alberta Community and Social Services; Nimir Rasiklal Raval and Martha Sellu from The Family Centre; Bernadette Iahtail from the Creating Hope Society of Alberta; Lovenia Satdeo from strengths foundation; Missa Mvuezolo, a student at Lurana Shelter; as well as Darcy Shields, Claire Ssembatha, and Bukola Salami, who are public members of Alberta College of Social Workers.

This week in Alberta we are recognizing Social Work Week and celebrating the accomplishments of these dedicated, hard-working professionals, and as a former social worker myself I have a tremendous appreciation for the work that these individuals do, and as minister I am continually thankful for their contribution to our province. I ask my guests to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise today and introduce to you and through you Ms Jodi Miller. Jodi is on the Alberta Party board, and she's also the president of the Alberta Party Calgary-Elbow Constituency Association, which, as you all know, means that I have to do pretty much everything Jodi tells me. Jodi is a shining example of long-term commitment to our community, and she works very hard to make our province a better place every single day. If I can ask Jodi, please, to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

1:40

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

Ms Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm delighted to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two of my constituents, Liz Hagell and Neil Kirkwood. Liz was a nursing instructor at Red Deer College for a number of years and is a champion equestrian and beekeeper. Neil has worked with special-needs students and taught high school social studies during a teaching career that has spanned over 30 years. He still substitutes from time to time. They've made a significant impact in the Red Deer area, and I'm honoured to welcome them here today. Will Liz and Neil please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm delighted to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Master Warrant Officer Scott Tanner. Scott has served in the military for 28 years and is currently appointed as a sergeant major of the 3rd Canadian Division Support Group signal squadron. He is here today as part of a course for the members' professional development plan through Algonquin College. I would like to thank Scott for his

service to Canada, and I'd like him to please rise and remain standing to receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Seniors and Housing.

Ms Sigurdson: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two separate introductions today. It's my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you three accomplished professionals who are teaching a new generation of social workers as this week is Social Work Week in Alberta. This is a great time to acknowledge social workers and that I, too, am a social worker, to acknowledge my dear colleagues and friends. Please rise when I say your name. Rick Enns has practised as a registered social worker in Alberta since 1991 and holds a PhD from the University of Alberta and a master's of social work degree from the University of Manitoba. He's the associate dean in the Faculty of Social Work for the University of Calgary's central and northern Alberta region in Edmonton.

David Flomo is the program chair of social work at NorQuest College's Faculty of Health and Community Studies. He holds a master's degree in social work and is an active volunteer in the ACSW. He is also an international man, having come from Liberia, studied in Ghana, Kenya, the U.S., and now calls Alberta home.

Kathaleen Quinn is the director of the school of social work at MacEwan University. She holds a master's degree and has extensive years of practice in health care and education.

I'm honoured to acknowledge these leaders here today, and I'm proud to say that I've taught at all three of their faculties. I ask the members of the Assembly to give them the traditional warm welcome.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Ms Sigurdson: My second introduction is for Natasha Semenjok. Natasha is my constituency assistant in the magnificent riding of Edmonton-Riverview. She is also a social worker, with a diploma from MacEwan and a bachelor of social work from the University of Calgary. She is a field placement supervisor for social work students in Alberta and co-chair of the social action, social justice committee with the Alberta College of Social Workers. Natasha's dedication to constituents of Edmonton-Riverview is exemplary. I am so fortunate to work alongside her in the service to constituents. I ask the members to please give the traditional warm welcome.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The Associate Minister of Health.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly members of the social work community who work in our province's health care system. During Social Work Week we are joined by social workers who provide quality health care and support to Albertans with dedication and compassion and who work to make Alberta a better place. The ones I'd like to introduce you to today are Margaret Brown, Jo-Anne Beggs, and Andrew Mah from Alberta Health Services; Nana Mumford from Alberta Hospital; Nicole Darko from Leduc Home Care; and Neisau Sampson from St. Albert & Sturgeon Primary Care Network. I would ask them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Labour.

Ms Gray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to introduce to you and to all members of this Assembly Jennifer Hollett. Jennifer

is the head of news and government at Twitter Canada. An award-winning TV reporter and producer, Jennifer has over a decade of experience at CBC, CTV, and Much music. She helped to develop the super PAC app, helping to make political TV ads more transparent in the 2012 U.S. election. She studied public policy at Harvard University and is a strong advocate for women's and girl's rights. I would now like to ask Jennifer to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

Members' Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Social Work Week

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my privilege to rise today to honour social workers here in Alberta and across Canada. This is an opportunity to show our gratitude and respect to the professionals who support Albertans in many different areas, including disability services, employment services, income support, and child intervention, to just name a few. This year the theme is The Power to Empower. I have the incredible opportunity to highlight the next generation of future social workers training for tomorrow.

Trevor Buttery, a placement student in my constituency office, is a first-year social work student at MacEwan University. He chose this profession after working at the Tegler Youth Centre in my colleague's riding of Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. The youth centre empowered Trevor to see the value in creating authentic, lasting relationships that are an important part of a healthy community. These skills became essential and necessary, leading him to pursue a career in social work.

I have been able to observe Trevor as he sharpens his skills. I am so proud to see him grow in his practice of effective advocacy and communication over this past year. Trevor is a great example of the path that many take in becoming social workers. I myself was impacted by a social worker I met who then became a role model for me. She empowered me to pursue a career to help others.

As professionals, social workers make a difference in the lives of so many Albertans. They do so through their professionalism, compassion, and commitment to help and empower others to make a better life. I encourage everyone to continue to thank social workers throughout the year. To all the social workers across Alberta, know that you are appreciated. Your government thanks you for all of the work that you do. Happy Social Work Week.

Co-operation on Economic Development

Mr. Smith: Government is about vision. When conducted properly, it is a carefully orchestrated performance that combines the wishes of the people with the possibilities of the future to produce a harmonious vision, all orchestrated by leadership acting as the conductor of the symphony. When the individual sections are brought together properly, there is a synergy, and government can actually work for the people, as it is intended to do. All of society benefits.

We have seen on many occasions over the last two years how this government is not working for the people of Alberta. Some sections of the orchestra have never been consulted. The government wind section is blowing too much hot air too hard. The percussionists are banging an environmental drum that is drowning out the rest of the financial instruments. Sometimes the audience and musicologists in the opposition try to help the government keep up with the changing times and find a new tempo.

Every once in a while a different conductor takes charge and can make the sections of the band work together in new and harmonious ways. We have a new conductor in the Drayton Valley-Devon constituency, and we are beginning to hear the orchestra tune itself up. Under the direction of the regional hemp committee different sections such as Biocomposites and Hempco; the towns of Drayton Valley, Devon, Warburg, Calmar, and Breton; the counties of Brazeau, Wetaskiwin, Parkland, and Leduc; the Clean Energy Technology Centre; and the Leduc-Nisku business association are all tuning up to compose the industrial hemp supply chain that will diversify the regional economy and create jobs and wealth. A beautiful tune, indeed.

The business sector, local government, and even the provincial government are working together, and the symphony is about to begin. With a little seed capital to develop a few more notes to complete this musical score, Albertans . . .

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

1:50

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

Justice System Delays

Mr. Jean: Our justice system is in crisis, and it's taken the NDP two years to wake up. Today we finally heard the first Band-Aid to try and stop the tide of accused murderers, predators, and criminals from getting their own get-out-of-jail-free card from the NDP government. These positions are badly needed, but the fact remains that this Justice minister's edict to prosecutors to pull resources away from serious crimes has sent a chill throughout Alberta. Why hasn't the Premier asked her minister to immediately reverse this dangerous new NDP policy?

Ms Hoffman: The member opposite couldn't be further from the truth if he tried, Mr. Speaker. He spent 10 years in Ottawa and never once brought up justice resources. We've been working diligently to make sure that we follow the Jordan decision, which is required of the government, and make sure that we're staffing up with the appropriate resources when and where they need it. These guys on the other side like to pretend that they're Keystone Kops: cut one day; staff up the next. You know what? Speaking of Keystone, we're getting progress on three pipelines.

Mr. Jean: Mr. Speaker, we're talking about dangerous criminals. This is a growing problem that's only going to get much worse. Last year in Ontario, believe it or not, 46 trials were stayed due to delays, but just in the last two months there have been over 200 cases in Alberta that have been stayed. In Ontario the Crown prosecutor association is anticipating that there could be an eventual 6,000 criminal cases stayed or withdrawn as a result of this decision. It's troubling. We need to keep Alberta safe. To the Premier: how many accused criminals does the NDP estimate will see their trials stayed this year?

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is one thing for the Leader of the Official Opposition to talk about crime; it's quite another to actually do something about it. We are investing in the system. Let me talk about what the member opposite wanted to do about the justice system. When asked, he said: I think it's going to take a period of time to see where we end up on this matrix. He's

been watching too many movies. We are moving forward on ensuring that the necessary resources are in place.

Mr. Jean: Well, Mr. Speaker, we've been waiting over two years for that, and most of it from this government. The NDP soft-on-crime protocol that was released explicitly states that minor files shouldn't be given the same attention. The question is: what's a minor file to the victim of a crime? In what circumstances is a sexual assault ever minor? Will the grandma from Wetaskiwin who had a knife pulled on her last week in an attempted carjacking just have to accept that these things happen because of this NDP policy? There are real people who are the victims of these charges and crimes. What is the Premier going to say to those victims?

Ms Ganley: Mr. Speaker, if the member had taken the time to read the policy, he would see that it allows Crown prosecutors to focus on the most serious and violent crimes. A University of Calgary law professor and former Supreme Court of Canada clerk said that it was eminently reasonable and one hundred per cent consistent with prosecutorial discretion and that it was guided by principled and coherent policies. The inconsistencies on that side of the House just keep piling up: one day it's "Cut resources"; the next day it's "Add resources." They can't even decide . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
Let's keep moving. The second main question.

Energy Industry Update

Mr. Jean: Just a couple of weeks ago the Finance minister said and assured Albertans that we had turned a corner in our economy, but that's not a reality outside of the dome, Mr. Speaker. Shell is waving goodbye to Alberta, selling almost all of their Alberta oil sands assets just today, and the price of oil has again plummeted under \$50 a barrel. The Premier's plan is not working. Albertans are desperate, hoping the government will finally give them a break and have their backs, but they don't. When will the NDP change course and admit that their plan is simply not working?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, I know that the member opposite wants that to be the case. He's perpetually cheering for Alberta to fail, but on this side of the House we are going to stand up for Albertans, for Alberta jobs, and for Alberta companies. I'm so encouraged that Canadian Natural president Steve Laut stated that over time, opportunities will be explored to increase the capacity of the Scotford upgrader so that more barrels of bitumen which are produced in Alberta will be upgraded in Alberta. That's good news. [interjections]

Mr. Jean: Tell that to the 200,000 Albertans that are out of work.

The Speaker: Keep it down, folks.

Mr. Jean: In the last few weeks I've been to New York, Toronto, and Washington, and I've asked potential investors what it would take to get our province back on track. They said that with the government we have in charge, we may as well hold up a sign that says: "Alberta is not for them. Alberta is out of business, and we are closed for business." U.S. oil supply is rising. Alberta is losing Shell, a carbon tax is now here, and a set of new regulations is being brought in by this government and is making us far less competitive. When will anyone in this government finally admit that it's time to change course?

The Speaker: Thank you.

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, we're proud to work alongside major employers in Alberta, including the president of Shell Canada, Michael Crothers, who said, "Shell has long called for effective carbon pricing frameworks. They create powerful economic incentives to reduce emissions and develop cleaner methods of production." We're working with industry. We're creating great opportunities as we move forward. They're standing with us. The only ones standing alone telling people to move their investment to other jurisdictions are the members opposite. I wish they'd stop cheering against Alberta.

Mr. Jean: Mr. Speaker, if you talk to real people, they'll tell you that times are tough in Alberta, and, no, they don't feel that it's getting any better whatsoever. They want common sense, and they want to know that common sense isn't spending a billion dollars to kill our coal industry when there are already 100,000 people unemployed. Common sense isn't increasing the cost of gas and heat when Albertans are facing record levels of consumer debt, and common sense isn't capping oil sands growth while we are desperately looking for investment. How can the NDP be so stubborn as to not just do what's best for this province? Use some common sense, and repeal these bad NDP policies.

Ms Hoffman: You know, I mentioned yesterday that I know math is difficult for the other side, so let's take the time to review another formula. We have two new pipeline approvals, Mr. Speaker. If you were to minus that thoughtful made-in-Alberta plan that got us to that point, what would that equal? Fourteen billion dollars less in investment, thousands more lost jobs, and a return to the same old dead-end approach that the member opposite tried for 10 years in Ottawa and failed on. The opposition: it's time to admit that you're wrong. Stop promising to repeal everything that's happened that's actually helping Alberta move forward, and get on board with our new pipelines.

Child Death Review System

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, yesterday I asked the minister whether her department is even investigating the death of little Serenity. Given that the Serenity case does not fall within the purview of the 73 reported deaths of children in care that the panel is currently discussing, we need to know what went wrong in the Serenity case specifically so similar tragic situations can be prevented in the future and, most importantly, to ensure justice for Serenity and her family. Given that the minister did not actually answer my question, I will ask again: is the Department of Children's Services internally investigating the death of Serenity? Yes or no?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Clearly, all Albertans, including the very passionate, committed staff within Children's Services, care deeply about the death of any child in the system. So, yes – yes – the staff are very passionate about figuring out what the opportunities are to do things differently. Ever since it's happened, they've been working on it. We need to change the death review process. That's what the panel is about. We need, going forward, to work on making the system better so there are not the same concerns that happened in this case because of the previously developed procedures.

Mr. Nixon: Another non answer, Mr. Speaker.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, this panel is not the first of its kind in recent years. In January 2014, experts participated in round-

tables to discuss improvements to the child welfare system as a result of deaths of children in care. The Child Intervention Implementation Oversight Committee was appointed to oversee the implementation of numerous recommendations that have come from different review bodies. Will the minister please explain to Albertans how her panel is better than the panels and round-tables of the past? What is the magic ingredient so that we will actually get meaningful change this time? Given her answers on Serenity I'm not holding my breath.

2:00

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would say that our government has been on the record from long before becoming government, as an opposition, as very passionate about ensuring that change happened in the system.

Mr. Speaker, there is the commitment that resulted in a separate Minister of Children's Services, once again, the commitment that developed a panel that will engage in true engagement with the people who are on the front lines and the people out in indigenous communities and beyond to ensure that we get to the right answers on this and actually take action to ensure that the system is finally improved.

Mr. Nixon: In 2015 it was strongly recommended to the minister to create a multidisciplinary child death review committee led by the office of the Chief Medical Examiner. I requested that all panel members receive briefing notes prepared by or for the relevant government departments regarding this recommendation. We did not receive this. We were told in December 2016, three months ago, that the department's executive director met with the Chief Medical Examiner to explore this possibility. Will the minister please tell us why it took so long to have this meeting and whether the government will be proceeding with implementing this recommendation? Why or why not?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The whole intention of having the child intervention panel and looking at the death review process was to make sure that we made the very best choice going forward to reconcile the fact that right now there are as many as half a dozen separate reviews. I don't want to pre-empt the work of the panel. There is important work to be done there by all people working together within this House. I anticipate that those recommendations will provide some guidance as to how to reconcile the past processes that haven't worked and build a new one going forward that's in the best interests of the children, their families, and the staff who take care of them.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The leader of the third party.

AIMCo Board of Directors

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last night at the heritage fund standing committee meeting the CEO of AIMCo said that the removal of sections 5 and 6 of the regulations came as a surprise, and he called it "not a welcome surprise." AIMCo's governance structure and independence are, he said, "sacred cornerstones" that require directors to have financial expertise. Minister, AIMCo oversees \$90 billion of public funds, including the heritage fund. Why did you not even consult with AIMCo about removing the

requirement for board members to be qualified? Are you just smarter than the best investment team in the business?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much for the question, Mr. Speaker. You know, I've got great confidence in the professionals over at AIMCo, and they make sound investment decisions for Alberta. They are the best in the business. I want you to know that Mr. Uebelein also said something else. He also said this at the committee last night. He stated that independence "has not been encumbered." This government will not encumber their independence. They are doing the things we want them to do. [interjections] They are not being instructed to invest anywhere else. They are not ... [interjections]

The Speaker: Hon. minister, you're going to keep talking to me, right?

Mr. McIver: Those professionals criticized you last night, Minister.

Let's look at your claim that section 5 is now redundant. We looked it up. It's not redundant. The repealed regulation said, "Individuals appointed to the board must have proven and demonstrable experience and expertise in investment management." The new ABC act vaguely mentions identifying skills, knowledge, and expertise in a generic framework, which is kind of vague. Will you commit right now, Minister, to not appointing any NDP hacks to AIMCo in order to push investments toward an NDP world view?

Mr. Ceci: You know, I'm not going to apologize for trying to make the appointment process more open and transparent across ABCs. I'm not going to apologize for getting people on boards for what they know as opposed to who they know on that side. I'm not going to apologize for opening up this process so it's online so that anybody can apply to ABCs, and they have to have qualifications. We got two excellent people recently as a result of our application process, Ken Kroner and Phyllis Clark. Both of them have stellar – stellar – credentials.

Mr. McIver: I guess the minister won't apologize for appointing Ray Martin to NAIT.

At last night's committee meeting opposition members asked for the minister to show up and defend his dangerous and politically motivated change to AIMCo. The committee has agreed to invite the minister to attend and address concerns about repealing sections 5 and 6. Minister, will you personally show up at the next meeting of the trust fund to answer for your reckless decision in cancelling sections 5 and 6? [interjections]

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier. [interjections] Order, please.
The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: The member opposite likes to throw mud and run away, Mr. Speaker, and I'm not going to let him do that. I'm going to be proud to stand up for the fact that somebody who has been a long-time public servant, somebody who has coached, somebody who has taught, somebody who's been a councillor, somebody who's served decades in the public, somebody who's on the Edmonton public school board making sure that kids in Alberta have an opportunity to have career pathways that stretch beyond the K to 12 system, well into postsecondary – in a letter NAIT actually said that Mr. Martin understands governance, having served on

several boards over the course of his career; it's clear that Mr. Martin cares deeply for our province and for its people.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister. [interjections] Order, please. The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Transportation Infrastructure in Fort Saskatchewan

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm so proud to represent the good people of Fort Saskatchewan in this Legislature. For forty years residents and industry have been frustrated by the lack of investment in critical infrastructure by previous governments, and the ongoing issues with highway 15 and the traffic congestion have only gotten worse with a booming population and steady growth in our oil and gas industry. What is the Minister of Transportation going to do to finally fix decades of neglect?

The Speaker: The Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to start by thanking that hon. member for her advocacy on this and many other issues that affect her constituency.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, the problems in Fort Saskatchewan relative to congestion . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Proceed, hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Thank you. If the hon. member is finished, Mr. Speaker, I'll resume.

The Speaker: Well, I want you to continue. Please keep going.

Mr. Mason: Thank you. I think it's critical that we recognize that there are many problems around this province that have been neglected by the previous government. This is one of them.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mrs. Littlewood: Mr. Speaker, I think it's unfortunate that members in this Assembly on the other side are making fun of the fact that people have died on that bridge and on those roads over the last number of years, and no one did anything about it. Given that the two-lane bridge creates a bottleneck and then major safety concerns that are not only frustration but accidents and loss of lives, what is this minister going to do to address these grave concerns?

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

The Speaker: Point of order noted. [interjection] Hon. member. The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Sad, Mr. Speaker, that after decades of neglect the Progressive Conservatives are still yapping about this.

Mr. Speaker, there are real, serious problems in Fort Saskatchewan with congestion and within the surrounding area. It's very unfortunate the previous government didn't deal with it. I can't really go any further than that at this time other than to say that there are many competing priorities in this province because the neglect of the previous government was so, so, so bad over so many years, but this government cares about Alberta families. We want to make life better for Alberta families.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mrs. Littlewood: Given how important this trade corridor is to the economic development of Alberta's Industrial Heartland and the

benefits that it brings to all of Alberta and given that this is the best time to move forward with investment in infrastructure, when can we expect improvement on this issue?

2:10

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This government is committed to making life better for Albertans, and that includes making sure that we improve the infrastructure and the transportation network of this province. We're committed to doing that. I can't give the hon. member any kind of specific answer at this time, but I want to tell her that this government cares about the people of Fort Saskatchewan and appreciates her strong advocacy.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

AIMCo Board of Directors (continued)

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently the Finance minister repealed sections 5 and 6 of the Alberta Investment Management Corporation regulations, which means that the qualifications required to become an AIMCo board member are nonexistent within the regulation. Removing these qualifications erodes public confidence in the NDP government and could be seen as a way for the minister to appoint less-qualified people of the NDP's friends. The minister needs to be cognizant that this is how cronyism starts. Why does the minister feel that it's necessary for him to meddle with the Alberta heritage trust fund?

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Mr. Ceci: Again, nothing could be further from the truth. What we're doing is we're opening up the appointment process, so anyone – anyone – can put their name forward. This is the kind of person you get when you do that. You get a Ken Kroner, who previously managed \$4 trillion in assets in a U.S. fund. You get a person like Phyllis Clark, who was a former vice-president of administration and CFO of the University of Alberta. You get stellar people.

It wasn't before it changed. You know, we changed the process on September 21, 2016. These people were appointed more than two months later.

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

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If it ain't broken, don't fix it.

Given, Mr. Speaker, that there seems to be a lot of skulduggery going on within this government and given that the financial state of the government . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Quiet, please.

Mr. Cyr: . . . and their reckless, irresponsible spending and debt accumulation habits are a deep concern for Albertans and given that AIMCo was established as an independent body responsible for the Alberta heritage trust fund, pensions, and other major funds, to the minister: why are you trying to erode the independence of this body?

Mr. Ceci: You know, that's again further from the truth than I can even imagine. The opposition seems to think that because we've allowed AIMCo to invest more money in Alberta, we're somehow interfering with AIMCo. [interjections]

The Speaker: Quiet, please.

Mr. Ceci: We are helping Albertans. We are helping companies in Alberta get through this downturn by a portion of the heritage trust fund going into good investments in this province. That's open. That's transparent. That's not interfering. Mr. Uebelein was quoted saying the same thing, that independence "has not been encumbered." That's what Uebelein said.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. He wouldn't have spoken at all had you actually not put his independence at risk.

Given that last night the Deputy Minister of Finance stated that there were no changes in quality to the heritage trust fund management board nominee process and given that the management board CEO stated, "These recent changes to the AIMCo regulation actually did come as a surprise to us and, frankly, not a welcome surprise," Minister, who was right? The CEO or the deputy minister? Why did you fail to consult with this important body within Alberta?

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Mr. Ceci: Again it's not accurate. There were consultations back and forth.

You know, the process, because it's more open and transparent . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Quiet.

Mr. Ceci: . . . is a problem for these people. You know, they don't want openness and transparency. They want to put their friends on different boards. We're not doing that. We've cut CEOs' salaries and the perks that these people put in place. Those club memberships were there. We cut them. We're not ever going to apologize for improving governance in this province. [interjections]

The Speaker: Hon. members, I really don't want to go out into the cold air, but the heat in this place encourages me to do so. Please keep it down and respectful.

The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

Public Service Compensation

Dr. Starke: Thank you Mr. Speaker. The public service is comprised of dedicated and hard-working Albertans, and I appreciate their efforts in serving us. These workers recognize the financial difficulties facing our province. They see their friends and neighbours facing layoffs, reductions in hours worked, and wage rollbacks. Yet earlier this week a contract with over 13,000 AUPE members was ratified, giving wage increases of 1.2 and 0.8 per cent retroactively to April 1, 2015. Now, these are modest increases, but to the Labour minister: at a time when most Albertans are happy to just have a job, does she feel that the wage increases set an appropriate example?

The Speaker: The Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much. You know, the member of the opposition started out correctly. He said that these were arbitrated settlements that go back to 2015 and '16. These will clean off the amount of organized settlements that need to be taken care of, and when we go forward to '17 and '18-19, we'll be taking care of those ourselves. The arbitration was not our decision.

Dr. Starke: Well, Mr. Speaker, let's talk about the future. Given that the data on page 10 of the Bargaining Update 2017 document from the Labour ministry, which I will table, shows that 2017 wage settlements in Alberta for unionized public-sector workers average a 2.94 per cent increase and given that wages make up nearly 50 per cent of the government's budget, can the Minister of Finance explain how he will hold the line on government spending when public-sector union settlements are increasing by nearly 3 per cent?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you. You know, the opposition seems to think it's in the interests of Albertans to throw contracts and other things out the window or to negotiate here in the Legislature. We're not going to do that. We're going to negotiate at the table. We respect the hard work of individuals who work for public services. We're involved in many public-sector negotiations right now. That is going to occur at the table, and we'll show that the proof will be in the pudding when we bring those contracts in.

Dr. Starke: Well, Mr. Speaker, I must say that it's a bit rich for this government to talk about tearing up contracts.

When the current government was over here in opposition, it was fond of accusing the previous government of what they called looking after our friends, but given that in 2016 Alberta's average weekly earnings decreased by 2.4 per cent while public-sector wage settlements increased by 2.2 per cent, to the Labour minister: does she feel it appropriate to look after her unionized friends while non-unionized Albertans face wage cuts and job losses?

Mr. Ceci: You know, Mr. Speaker, I just want to talk about some of the thoughtful and prudent actions we're taking to reduce staffing costs because that side doesn't seem to think we're doing anything. We've instituted a hiring restraint across the civil service. We've frozen the salaries of management and other non-union staff. We've frozen wages for all of the people in this Legislature: cabinet ministers, MLAs, political staff. We've frozen managers' and other people's wages for two years, and we've gotten rid of high-priced salaries that you put in place over there and golf memberships as well.

Provincial Fiscal Policies

Mr. Fildebrandt: Yesterday, on International Women's Day, I looked to one of the strongest female leaders the world has ever known, Margaret Thatcher. The Iron Lady stands as an example to the world to follow of fiscal discipline, economic prosperity, and national revival. I see none of that in this government. The NDP promised to balance the budget by 2017, then by 2018 and '19, but since then they've abandoned even a theoretical return to balanced budgets altogether. When the minister tables his budget next week, will it include a specific and credible date for a return to balance?

Mr. Ceci: Well, Mr. Speaker, let me start off by saying that we're not going to invade Argentina, all right?

You know, what we're seeing in this province is a return to some growth. We're seeing the recession start to recede, and we're seeing a little more sunshine peeking through every day. Drilling activity is up, we're seeing capital investments up, and we're seeing jobs return. Those things will help us get back to balance a lot sooner than that side, who does nothing to help us get back to balance.

2:20

Mr. Fildebrandt: But they have declared war on taxpayers.

Given, Mr. Speaker, that the NDP have ignored repeated warnings from the opposition that their reckless fiscal policy would lead to a downgrade in Alberta's credit rating, in October 2015 the NDP repealed Alberta's fiscal accountability act and imposed a meaningless debt ceiling of 15 per cent of GDP. It was so meaningless that just six months later they repealed the legislated debt cap when it became clear that they would bust it. This led to an almost immediate downgrade in our hard-earned credit rating. Does the minister plan on breaking any more of our fiscal accountability laws or . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, our focus on this side of the House is on making life better for everyday Albertans. We're not going to take the collapse in oil prices as a way to mess up Albertans and make it more expensive for them. We're going to work with the stuff we've got, and the stuff we've got is goods, programs, and services. We've got great fundamentals in this province. We're going to invest in infrastructure, and we're going to take down the cost of government slowly but surely and get back to balance.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Mr. Speaker, in the government's fiscal update they announced that even though revenues were up, spending would be up even more. The biggest reason for this was a \$1.3 billion payout of the government's bungled early shutdown of the coal industry. This money was not authorized by the Legislature and according to the Auditor General was a direct violation of the NDP's own Fiscal Planning and Transparency Act. Yesterday the minister admitted that he did in fact break his own law. Will anyone be held accountable for breaking their own laws?

Mr. Ceci: Thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, you know, the hon. member across the way forgot to mention one really important expense line that we had in Q3. That expense line was over \$700 million for the people of Wood Buffalo so they wouldn't be put out of their homes any longer than was necessary. So the fire was fought. We did things that made life better for the people of Wood Buffalo, and we'll make things better for the people of Alberta going forward, too.

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

Support for Business

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government is picking winners and losers among our businesses. One example of this is through the summer temporary employment program. To qualify for STEP funding, employers must be registered under an act of the Legislature, but the verification process requires a corporate number. I talked to a constituent of mine who has run a registered business for decades. She was denied this opportunity due to lack of a corporate number. We tried to work with the ministry before the deadline passed, but no solution was reached. Will the minister please explain this discrimination against sole proprietorships?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Labour.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Our government is very proud to have restored the summer temporary employment program, which has provided employment for nearly 3,000 young people. The PC government called it a crutch when they cancelled

the program, that had been in place since the Peter Lougheed days in 1972. Now, our government also did something historic. We made it available to small business for the first time, something the previous government had never considered. Small business is now being served by this program, and every year we review the program and make sure it's serving the best possible for Albertans.

Mr. van Dijken: Sole proprietorships still are not eligible.

Another example of picking winners and losers by this government. Given that 21 and a half million dollars from the residential no-charge energy savings program should have been welcome news for Alberta businesses already providing these products and services and given that Alberta entrepreneurs are being left on the sidelines as the NDP takes care of their big friend Ecofitt, will the minister please justify her decision not to engage the services of Alberta businesses that were already established throughout the province?

The Speaker: The Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, this was a contract that was awarded leveraging the expertise of the private sector and ensuring that we have the lowest cost delivery mechanism possible. These programs will save Alberta homeowners \$6.3 million in electricity savings. Already 60,000 Albertans have signed up for the program. You know, we are not about to erect a number of interprovincial trade barriers, slam the door on external investment, as the Wildrose would do. We didn't have an energy efficiency program because the previous government failed . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. van Dijken: Mr. Speaker, given that this government is seizing carbon tax dollars from everyday Albertans to pay for this Ecofitt program and given that the government has recently announced the residential and commercial solar program, also funded by carbon tax dollars, and given that Albertans want to be reassured that they will be supporting small businesses within Alberta's solar sector, will the minister please explain how Albertans can be confident that this government won't be sending more profits and tax dollars to companies from other jurisdictions?

Ms Phillips: Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, it is only the Wildrose who wants to slam the door on the millions and, in fact, billions in investments in renewables, in efficiency, on all of the private-sector interest there is in Alberta right now. They do that because they are more interested in ideology than they are in moving our province forward. Our government, on this side, is worried about hard hats. On that side they're busy spreading, you know, conspiracy theories from the sewers of the Internet. They're more interested in tinfoil hats.

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

Agricultural Trade

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Agriculture and Forestry recently returned from a trade mission to the United Arab Emirates and India. As I've said before, Alberta producers need the ability to expand to new markets and explore growth opportunities overseas, so I support him on these missions. The minister met with government officials from Dubai, United Arab Emirates, and India on this trade mission. To the minister: did you sign any new agreements with these countries to help expand export markets for Alberta's agricultural producers?

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

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I very much appreciate the question from the member. Yes, indeed, I was on a recent trade mission to the United Arab Emirates and India. Interesting to note that I was actually the first minister of agriculture from Alberta ever to visit India. It's a growing market. It's on the cusp of being the third-largest economy in the world and is very close to being the most populous country in the world, too. It's very important we're there. It's very important that government is there to open those doors for our business to continue to thrive in that burgeoning economy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that my colleague the Member for Calgary-Greenway asked the minister over a year ago to give an update on the status of the agricultural working group that was formed with Alberta's trade agreement with the state of Punjab in India and given that we still have not received an update from the minister to date, to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade: can you update the House on the status of this agricultural working group with India?

The Speaker: The Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. I actually had an opportunity to meet with officials from the various states in India. They were still very much interested in signing agreements with us. They are the world's largest democracy, and many of the states are in the midst of a political election right now. Even though they were very interested, they couldn't at this time make a commitment, but I absolutely understand what the member is saying.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that you have been on two trade missions to Asia in the last six months and given that Alberta's ag exports in the last year have decreased by over \$3 million and given that in 2016 the number of agriculture jobs in Alberta has gone down by more than 6,000, to the minister: how many new agricultural jobs and markets for Albertans have your trade missions produced?

The Speaker: The minister of agriculture.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. You know, in 2015 we had a dry year. Last year we had some other challenges in agriculture. We always do. The fact is that our cash receipts in our farming communities are still going up. These markets are continuing to be extremely important. In India, for example, canola, wheat, and pulses continue to be our strong commodities. We have opportunity in swine genetics and in other commodities as well. Those are important. As we diversify the economy, the jobs will be there as we expand these markets.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

2:30

Educational Curriculum Review

Ms Luff: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a teacher and parent I know how important it is that we have curriculum that is relevant. I've

had the chance to take part in curriculum sessions and have heard first-hand from participants – these are teachers and university professors – that they are very concerned about their privacy. To the Minister of Education: what reassurances can you provide to these hard-working volunteers and Albertans that they will not fall victim to attacks?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It should be noted that there are more than 300 individuals that are working on the curriculum, and they are all volunteers. They are undertaking these responsibilities in addition to their regular jobs. These are teachers and education professionals, not politicians and public figures, leading the work. Attacks on volunteers are irresponsible and reckless, and I will not tolerate them.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms Luff: Thank you. Given that my constituents are very keen to be involved in this process and that I've fielded many questions from the public on when they will be able to have more input into this process, to the same minister: when will further consultation take place?

The Speaker: The Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's important that Albertans know that they will be a part of this process every step of the way. The very first interaction: we had more than 32,000 responses with our survey. We have the curriculum working groups now working with that information, and then they will loop back, and again have public consultation. This will continue on over the next six years. This is the largest and most transparent process that Alberta Education has ever endeavoured to take on. During the course of this work there will be a variety of opportunities for Albertans to interact with the curriculum.

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

Ms Luff: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that I hear from teachers every day and given that curriculum changes often increase workload for teachers, to the same minister: what supports will be put in place to ensure that teachers can implement this new curriculum?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you. This is an important point, Mr. Speaker, because, of course, we can develop curriculum, but if it's not interfaced, if you don't have the training and the acceptance of teaching professionals and families and so forth, then it's not going to be successful. So we are working with the curriculum development and management application to interact with the curriculum in ways that have never been possible before. It's an entirely digital, bilingual platform that allows for comment and interaction and sharing information every step of the way. The curriculum then can also be updated as it's needed. It won't have to sit fallow like it did for between eight and 30 years.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Caribou Management

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Everyone knows that this

government has a horrendous track record on consultation. Given that it appears this government has no plan to debate their caribou plan in the House before the federally mandated due date for provincial plans is reached, has the government initiated a socioeconomic impact assessment on the impacted regions and province as a whole, and why are local municipalities' expertise and concerns not being proactively addressed?

The Speaker: The Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we do have a number of deadlines looming from the federal government to file our range plans, which is why in some of the more difficult areas we put a draft range plan out for consultation. I myself have visited those communities and a number of the forestry facilities there as well. We've also had really good conversations with Saskatchewan and B.C., taking what I would argue is a common position to the federal government in terms of help and flexibility in ensuring that we recover these species, yes, but that we don't adversely impact our forestry and oil and gas sectors. I'll have more to say about that in supplementals.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you. I guess no assessment plan is in the works. The communities definitely don't feel like they're being consulted.

Given that last summer we had a first look at the caribou draft plan and that since then there have been multiple studies and opinions on that plan and given that the federal government deadline is looming, to the minister: what parts of this draft plan are already being enacted?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, it is simply not true that there haven't been a number of consultations, both from my office but also the minister of forestry, the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. Also, the federal government has committed to come and meet with the communities that are affected by these range plans. It was a commitment that Saskatchewan, British Columbia, and Alberta worked towards securing at the federal-provincial-territorial meeting a couple of weeks ago, and the federal government will be ensuring that the socioeconomic effects of responding to the recovery of this species are adequately reflected in their response to our range plans.

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

Mr. Loewen: Okay. I asked what parts of this draft plan are already being enacted, and I guess I got no answer to that.

Given that this government constantly uses the federal government mandate for species at risk as justification for these plans, has the minister met with her federal counterpart or colleagues from B.C. and Saskatchewan to discuss species at risk? If so, when, and what was discussed?

Ms Phillips: Well, Mr. Speaker, I guess that's the problem when you pre-script your questions, that they're already answered. We, of course, have met with B.C. and Saskatchewan. We, of course, have met with the federal government, both the minister and the parliamentary secretary. We had a federal-provincial-territorial meeting that was in large part focused on caribou recovery plans. The fact of the matter is that we must recover this species. The fact of the matter is also that we have a number of different pressures on

that landscape, including a thriving forestry industry. We have made the commitment to jobs and making life more affordable in this province, and that's exactly what we're going to do.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The Member for Calgary-Greenway.

Opiod Use

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Monday every opposition caucus urged the government to call a public health emergency due to Alberta's opiod crisis, but government won't do so. Perhaps that's because it doesn't know its full extent. Minister, the Q4 opiod meds misuse report does not include final 2016 numbers for nonfentanyl-related opiod deaths. Why are those numbers missing, and doesn't that misrepresent to Albertans the magnitude of this crisis?

The Speaker: The Associate Minister of Health.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With respect to the fourth-quarter report that was recently tabled, we were able to get quite a number of metrics included in it; however, because of the process that we follow here in Alberta for the toxicology reports, some of the information has not yet been available. We are working diligently with our ministry and with Justice to have those numbers available as soon as possible, and we will be updating accordingly.

Mr. Gill: I have the numbers for that, Minister. I've done my work.

Given that the Q3 report listed 330 total opiod deaths, but those figures were not updated in the Q4, and given that if those deaths remain on track, the number would be 422, and given that we are in fact seeing far more than one death a day due to opiods, to the Premier: now that you understand that your government is facing a more frightening reality, will you finally declare an emergency?

The Speaker: The Associate Minister of Health.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we've said repeatedly, we are continuing to evaluate the tools that we have available to us now as well as any that would become available should a public health emergency be declared. At this moment it is our assessment that all of the tools that we need to address this crisis are currently available. We are working diligently moving forward on addressing this crisis by addressing harm reduction, treatment, surveillance, and enforcement.

Mr. Gill: I guess two deaths a day aren't enough.

Given that the former government invested millions into the medical examiner's office to expand and modernize it and given that the newly renovated office includes a world-class toxicology lab and given that providing police and EMS with rapid information on opiod deaths will help them target resources where they need them the most, to the same minister: now that you know the full extent of the crisis, will you direct the ME's office to provide stats on opiod deaths faster than every three months?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We recognize that this is a major crisis in our province. That's why we've taken such rapid action on a number of fronts, including with the OCME. We have massively changed the way we take and code data. I'm incredibly proud to say that Alberta had the first-known test to detect carfentanil in blood. We've added two new medical examiners as well as a research officer so that they can help get

these statistics out the door. Albertans want action, and that's what this government is doing.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

Transportation Infrastructure in Cochrane

Mr. Westhead: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The charming and historic town of Cochrane was the second-fastest growing small municipality in Canada according to the recent census. That's no surprise considering that Cochrane is a great place to live and raise a family. But the former Conservative government failed to support Cochrane's growth when they broke their promise and removed the critical infrastructure for the highway 1A and 22 intersection from the capital plan. [interjection] To the Minister of Transportation: when can the residents of Cochrane and all of those who use this important intersection . . . [interjection]

The Speaker: Hon. member.

Mr. Westhead: . . . expect to see shovels in the ground?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

2:40

Mr. Mason: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for the question, hon. member. You know, I want to thank him for his advocacy on this important issue. We know that Cochrane is a rapidly growing city. We know that there is serious congestion at the intersection of highways 22 and 1A and that this causes delays and safety concerns. All I can say is that the member will have to wait. There are many competing pressures on the capital plan, but we're going to try and make sure that we keep Albertans safe because we stand up for Albertans.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Westhead: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that highway 1A acts as a backup when there's an accident on the Trans-Canada and given that I've seen highway 1A jammed all the way to Seebe on these occasions, will the minister commit to upgrading the highway 1A and 22 intersection to ensure that it can handle these emergency situations?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Obviously, emergency problems are a great concern. Safety is our top priority. This government is interested in making sure that the transportation network serves the needs to make life better for Albertans and Alberta families. We're committed to doing that. Other than that, I think the member knows that I can't make any commitments at the present time. There are many competing priorities for the capital plan, but I want him to know that we have the best interests of Cochrane at heart.

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

Mr. Westhead: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud that our government is committed to build the infrastructure that our communities need despite the opposition's calls for us to cut this funding. Again to the Minister of Infrastructure: will you at least ensure that the residents of Cochrane receive a fair share of this funding to support the growth of this vibrant community?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I do have the Wildrose five-year fiscal plan here, and it does indicate that they would reduce capital spending in the province of Alberta, compared to what we're doing, by \$9 billion. That's a lot of roads that don't get built, a lot of hospitals and schools that don't. The opposition is interested in cutting. The government of Alberta is interested in making sure that we stand up for Alberta families.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Members' Statements

(continued)

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

Opioid Use

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This week in a rare display of nonpartisan co-operation we held an important debate on the opioid crisis, and I thank my colleagues across both sides for that.

We also heard from two courageous advocates for better education and more action on the devastating effects of opioid abuse and addiction. Petra Schulz, who lost her son Danny, works with Moms Stop the Harm, a network of Canadian mothers and families whose loved ones have died from substance misuse. Rosalind Davis, who lost her partner Nathan, started the Changing the Face of Addiction organization, a not-for-profit seeking political change and reduced stigma on drug and addictions issues. They say that the government's refusal to recognize a state of emergency is unacceptable. It perpetuates stigma about opioid-related deaths.

To its credit, the government has taken a number of positive steps, but its approach has mainly been reactive, not integrated across government and nongovernment organizations. Opioid-related overdoses and deaths are reaching unprecedented levels and have now become a national crisis. We don't have the whole picture yet because the data is simply not available, but what we do know is deeply troubling. In 2016 there were 343 deaths just from fentanyl and many more from other opioids yet to be classified. This 33 per cent increase in one year shows that the crisis is growing at an alarming rate.

If we were getting ahead of it, then I might agree with the NDP, but we're five years into this, and the government, by its own admission, is still developing the strategy. We require focused leadership and a crossdepartment strategy that would provide co-ordination between all government ministries and nongovernment sectors of society.

Finally, we need to recognize this for what it is, an emergency, and use every means at our disposal to save Albertans' lives.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Refugees

Mr. Dang: A family sells everything they own so that a young boy and his brother can board a boat that's headed to a Malaysian refugee camp. At the same time, a young girl is eagerly reading a letter from her older sister who has landed as a refugee in Canada. Her sister is in school studying, trying to get a job to help bring her family over as economic immigrants. One of the boats in that convoy is raided by pirates, and many of their family and friends are killed.

Fortunately, those boys eventually make it here to Edmonton and Canada. They'll work minimum wage jobs. They'll try hard to make ends meet. Eventually one of those boys will go to NAIT, and

he'll complete an IT certificate program. He'll meet that young girl, who's now immigrated to Canada. They'll fall in love and get married on Canada Day. They'll have one daughter, Mr. Speaker, named Tiffany. She'll go on to attend the University of Toronto and Harvard University for her master's in landscape architecture. Now, they'll have one boy, as well. He's fairly average. He's a little bit of a nerd, but on May 5, 2015, he will become the youngest elected official ever in this province.

Mr. Speaker, this is the story of one refugee family. It's one story. My parents, Cindy and Daniel, were given the opportunity to earn everything while starting with nothing. I'm proud of my family's past. We worked hard for what we have.

But when the opposition attends rallies with so-called media organizations that suggest my family and families like it should not even have been allowed into this country, it shows just how far out of touch the opposition is from everyday Albertans. Refugees contribute to the rich history and culture of this province. They contribute to the economy, the diversity, and our society. Albertans know this, Mr. Speaker. They take pride in the welcoming and inclusive society we have built. Our government knows this and hears this, and I'm proud to be part of a government that stands up for compassion, tolerance, and opportunity.

The opposition has shown time and time again that they refuse to stand up for these values. Shame on them, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

Rural School Councils

Cortes-Vargas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past weekend I had the pleasure of attending the Rural Education Symposium, which is an annual forum for rural communities and schools to engage in a discussion about the role of education in the ever-resilient rural communities. Today I have invited to the Legislature a few hard-working representatives that contribute to my community and rural communities. In the constituency of Strathcona-Sherwood Park, Pauline and Liz are part of the Ministik school council, and Laura and Elyse are here on behalf of the Uncas school council.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize the work and commitment of these women and all parent councils for their contribution to the school community. School council members work together to support student learning, whether it's fundraising for playgrounds, organizing special theme days, or school recreational activities. These parent councils are vital in providing their unique perspectives and ideas that contribute to school community and school district success. Participation in school councils not only allows parents the chance to demonstrate their support for their children, but it's also an opportunity to share their knowledge and skills and have a direct impact on their child's education. As representatives of other parents and school communities they are often called upon to be advocates, a voice for the collective as they consult with other stakeholders.

Recently I have seen this during the Ministik school closure consultation, and as a former educational assistant working in schools and as their MLA, I have experienced first-hand the value that they bring to the table. For their contributions I would like to thank them and parents throughout the province, for all of their hard work, for being a partner in education.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be part of a government that is making the lives of parents throughout the province better. Whether it's by reducing school fees or by working and engaging with rural educators and parents, this government recognizes the importance of equitable access to education, regardless of location.

Thank you.

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

Government Policies

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Say what you will about his politics, but the late Premier Ralph Klein truly was a man of the people. With a larger-than-life personality, he gave Albertans a host of witty one-liners and analogies. One of his favourites was a condition, common to politicians who spend too much time in the Legislature, known as dome disease. According to Klein you're fully consumed with that disease when you start to think that unless it's happening under the dome, it is not happening at all.

2:50

Mr. Speaker, there's a growing disconnect between government and the vast majority of Albertans. Life under the dome is pretty cushy for friends of this government. There haven't been layoffs or even pay freezes for many of them. The government has gone out of its way to stack Alberta's senior political ranks and advisory panels with a tidal wave of activists. Outside the Legislature, everyday Albertans face a much harsher reality. Layoffs and business closures have devastated well over a hundred thousand Albertans. Calgary's unemployment rate has ballooned above 10 per cent. The city's downtown office space has 30 per cent availability.

Albertans know that it's a hand up, a business-friendly environment, not a government handout that's needed to restore investor confidence and bring back jobs. This government has increased taxes in almost every other possible way. This year the carbon tax will see government take \$3 billion from our struggling families to fund ideological projects, a tax that less than 35 per cent of Albertans support. At a time when so many folks are struggling just to get by, Albertans expect government to present policies that will get them back to work and not add burdensome taxes that are clearly out of touch with the present reality. That is what Premier Klein would call a telltale symptom. Mr. Speaker, this is what the doctor would diagnose as a chronic case of dome disease.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Speaker's Ruling Tabling of Public Documents Statements during Tablings

The Speaker: Hon. members, I think this might be an appropriate time for me to make a ruling on the point of order that was raised yesterday by the Government House Leader concerning a purported tabling by the Member for Strathmore-Brooks. The Member for Strathmore-Brooks attempted to table an excerpt from *Alberta Hansard* pertaining to a past statement made by the Government House Leader in the Assembly. It should be noted that this document was not recorded in the March 8, 2017, edition of the Votes and Proceedings, pending my ruling on the point of order. The point of order was raised by the Government House Leader and is found on page 129 of yesterday's *Hansard* and has to do with the appropriateness of tabling *Alberta Hansard* excerpts.

I deferred my ruling to check rulings on the subject of tablings and the tabling of *Alberta Hansard* in particular. I found that there have indeed been rulings on this point by former presiding officers of this Assembly. On August 20, 1996, Deputy Speaker Tannas ruled that "excerpts from *Hansard* are not appropriate tablings, as the words contained are in fact on the record and tabling, therefore, is really a redundant action." This ruling can be found on page 2248 of *Alberta Hansard* for that day. Similarly, Speaker Kowalski stated, "Public documents such as excerpts from *Hansard* or

statutes of Alberta should not be tabled” in his ruling from November 25, 1998, on the tabling of documents. This ruling can be found on 2089 of *Alberta Hansard* for that day. Hon. members, after checking, I have concluded that it is not appropriate for members to table excerpts from *Hansard* even though there have been rare exceptions to this rule.

In addition to the prohibition against the tabling of *Alberta Hansard*, I want to take this opportunity to clarify some of the rules respecting tablings for the benefit of all hon. members. Comments about the tabling must be brief and should only describe the document itself and not elaborate on its contents. As some of you may have heard yesterday, I made a comment to one of the members about editorializing: it's not permitted. Tabling Returns and Reports should not be used as an opportunity to make a member's statement. Lastly, tablings are just that. They should not be used as props or exhibits.

Hon. members, I have learned that Alberta has some of the most permissive rules concerning tablings of anywhere in Canada. These few restrictions allow for wide latitude in tablings. Please do not move the boundaries any further.

Tabling Returns and Reports

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

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I respect your ruling. I wish to table on day 2 of my 14 days of tabling a letter from myself to the Government House Leader titled Dear Brian, You Said – and then I quote some *Hansard* – signed by myself. These are letters to the Government House Leader citing *Hansard*. I wish to table the five requisite copies concerning the Public Affairs Bureau.

The Speaker: I do hope that the boundaries have not moved, as I alluded to in the ruling.

Mr. Fildebrandt: They are letters.

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

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings. One is a copy of the Alberta Investment Management Corporation regulations, sections 5 and 6, indicating the high level of financial knowledge to be on the board, and also the public agencies governance framework, which indicates the much lower level of financial knowledge to be on the AIMCo board.

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

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will refrain from editorializing as I table five copies of an iPolitics article from yesterday, where opposition party mentor Preston Manning praises the carbon tax and tells conservatives to stop attacking it.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

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

Ms Jansen: Sorry, Mr. Speaker. I just have two more if I can beg your indulgence.

The Speaker: Two more.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have here five copies of a Facebook page where the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka, who attended the antifeminist Wildrose on Campus kickoff, says, “Wildrose spirit is alive and well in Calgary.”

The Speaker: Thank you. Keep going. Number 3.

Ms Jansen: Number 3, Mr. Speaker: another Facebook page where the Wildrose on Campus announces that they are featured on the Wildrose Party website.

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

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have five copies of a letter and a photocopy of a coin from Mr. and Mrs. Cluney of Willingdon. They have decided to return their entire Alberta seniors' benefit increase for this year, 2017. They are throwing in an extra penny to bring it up to a solid quarter. That's right. They each got an increase from the Alberta seniors' benefit of 1 cent per month.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

Dr. Starke: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the requisite number of copies of a document that I referenced during my question in question period today, entitled *Bargaining Update*, dated February 2017.

The Speaker: Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table a press release done by the Alberta government, Alberta Modernizing Renewal Reminders. It speaks of \$3 million a year that the government will save from sending out mail, if you will, in Service Alberta. I would like to remind the minister that there are still several questions that are unanswered as to why she needs \$900,000 added to her budget for postage.

Tablings to the Clerk

The Clerk: I wish to advise the Assembly that the following document was deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of the hon. Mr. Bilous, Minister of Economic Development and Trade, response to Written Question 18, asked for by Mr. Cooper on October 31, 2016: what are the deliverables from the Premier's trip from April 27 to 29, 2016, to Washington, DC?

3:00

The Speaker: Hon. members, I believe we had at least one point of order today. Is that correct? The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

Point of Order Intemperate Language

Mr. Rodney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As you know, I've been here for a little while. There's one member who's been on the job just slightly longer. I think others also know full well that the volume can increase in this Chamber on Thursdays, but that's no excuse for something that happened at approximately 2:09 today. I was actually, on this occasion, sitting back and watching the fireworks, minding my own business, when the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville looked straight at me and said out loud words – I'll phrase it this way – that rhyme with “what up.”

Mrs. Littlewood: That's not true.

The Speaker: Quiet.

Mr. Rodney: They rhyme with “what up.” I'm pretty sure she wasn't just saying hello to me.

It's clearly unparliamentary. There are many citations, including 23(j). There are many precedents. But out of respect for the

proceedings of this House and the time to debate very important topics, I would like to suggest that perhaps the member could stand and apologize, and we could all get on with our day.

Thank you.

Ms Ganley: Mr. Speaker, I haven't been in this Chamber for as long as some, but I think I have been here long enough to say that this is fairly frivolous. The member opposite knows very well what was said, and what he quoted was not it.

I'm disappointed to see that members opposite were heckling the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville while she asked a very important question involving lives lost by members of her constituency, and I'm equally disappointed that they would raise a point of order on this.

Oral Question Period is a time when members, including government members, are permitted to ask questions of a minister of the Crown about projects and initiatives that are important to them. It was absolutely in order for the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville to ask this question, and it's really quite ridiculous that, you know, when the members opposite were yelling heckles and trying to shout her down while she stood up for her constituents that when she turned and said, "Shame, shame" to them, they're now taking up these ridiculous antics. Unfortunately, it's unlikely that this was captured by the Blues, but I am assured that those were the words that were used.

Mr. Speaker, this is just an absurd use of the House's time.

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

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Just in recognition of the decorum in the House and what we try to maintain as respect for one another, I know that the heckling does get a little bit out of hand sometimes. At the same time, you know, we've experienced flipping the birds and mouthings of... [interjection] Yeah, from the government side. This is a third example. The member wasn't the only one that saw it. There were other people that saw it.

So the proper thing to do would be to stand up, apologize, and withdraw.

The Speaker: Any other members that would like to speak to the point of order? The Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to say that as the seatmate of the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, I was able to hear precisely what she said. It was not what is being alleged by the Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

Thank you. [interjections]

The Speaker: Hon. members, please. Please.

Hon. members, there have been other points of order on this kind of subject matter before. While it's not always popular, I sense, to say so, I did not hear or see the particular comment that was raised in the point of order. You have heard in the past that I've ruled because of that.

Nonetheless, hon. members, there were some words that were used that just recently we discussed in this House and that I made a ruling on with respect to comments made to the other parties. I just want both sides of the House to be, again, more conscious when they say things, whether I see it or not, that you are speaking to one of your fellow colleagues in this Legislature. When you show respect for the other members, you're showing respect for the people that they represent here. I would hope that you remember that each time any comment is made.

I leave that, simply. In this particular instance I did not have the privilege of hearing it, but I rule that there was no point of order. However, there were some other comments made that I thought were getting awfully close to the line.

Orders of the Day Committee of Supply

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

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

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

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, before we commence this afternoon's consideration of supplementary supply, I would like to remind you where the committee left off in the rotation. When the Committee of Supply reported progress this morning during the Official Opposition's allotment, the minister had four minutes remaining in her speaking time. The committee has 44 minutes of consideration remaining.

As provided for in Standing Order 59.02, the rotation in Standing Order 59.01(6) is deemed to apply, which means the rotation will then proceed as follows. For the next 10 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. For the next 10 minutes the members of any other party represented in the Assembly or any independent member and the minister or the member of the Executive Council acting on the minister's behalf may speak. For the next 10 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. The rotation will then repeat for any time remaining.

Speaking times are now limited to five minutes; however, provided the chair has been notified, a minister and a private member may combine their speaking time, with both taking and yielding the floor during the combined period.

Finally, at the conclusion of six hours of consideration, or earlier if no members are wishing to speak, the Committee of Supply shall vote on the supplementary supply estimates.

The Committee of Supply has under consideration the 2016-2017 supplementary supply estimates, No. 2. The minister has four minutes left.

Seeing no minister wishing to speak, I will recognize the Official Opposition. The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Deputy Chair: Sorry. The third party. You guys were done.

Is there anybody from the third party that would like to speak? Any members? No.

Any government members?

Seeing none, I'll go back to the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to thank the minister for being willing to...

The Deputy Chair: Did you want to share your time back and forth?

Mr. Smith: Yeah. We'll share back and forth. That's fine.

The Deputy Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Minister, for being willing to be here for me while I ask a couple of questions today. We're looking at page 71 in the supplementary supply. I'll be looking at line items 4.2 and 2.3 and 2.6, okay? Let's start with 4.2, the assistance to Alberta Social Housing Corporation. I see there that you're making a transfer to the Alberta Social Housing Corporation of \$500,000. This is for doing energy audits or facility audits, from my understanding, facility energy audits. So just a couple of questions. Who will be doing the audits, and how were these contracts tendered?

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.
The hon. Minister of Seniors and Housing.

3:10

Ms Sigurdson: Well, thank you very much, Madam Chair, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. Yes. My ministry received \$500,000 from the climate leadership plan infrastructure initiative for facility audits, so housing management bodies in Alberta will have their facilities assessed so that they can see what would be the priorities, what would be the best use of dollars to have maintenance, to improve perhaps windows, or for energy-efficient furnaces. Sometimes it has to do with roofs.

We are very pleased to have these dollars to support housing management bodies to make sure that they have the most energy-efficient operating facilities possible. It's just such a significant improvement and support for housing management bodies that they can have this type of funding so that they can go ahead and make these improvements, you know, obviously being respectful and responsible for the energy that they're using in their facilities.

Certainly, the government's regular process of procurement will be used.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Smith: Madam Minister, could you please explain to us how these contracts were tendered? Was it sole-sourced or not? And do you have any idea who those contracts are going to be handed out to?

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. minister.

Ms Sigurdson: Yeah. Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Certainly, you know, housing management bodies – there are over a hundred in this province. They are the public delivery of our housing management system in our province. We work very closely with them, and they themselves work on what they need in their facilities. The people who do the energy audits will be very much supporting them to make choices that make sense for their facility, the best use of dollars in that regard. Certainly, we work with housing management bodies, but housing management bodies each operate in their own communities. They make decisions regarding what's best for their community, and that process will continue to go ahead.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Madam Chair. Am I to understand, then, that this is different than the company that's been hired to retrofit the light bulbs and to put in new light bulbs? Is this going to be a

decision that each of the housing managements are going to be making individually and there's no one individual company, that this could be many different local companies that will be doing the energy audits, that this is a local decision and not one that is coming through the wider body of your ministry?

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. minister.

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you, Madam Chair. Certainly, I mean, what's most important to us as a government is that we are using the principles of the Natural Resources Canada EnerGuide rating system. Those doing the audits will be using this standardized system to help guide them. Those are the guidelines that are being used. As I said, there are very diverse housing management bodies across the province, and they'll be working with this system to make decisions about, you know, what are the key things that they need to improve in their housing management body facilities to make sure that they are the most energy efficient.

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

Mr. Smith: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'm still not understanding something here. My question wasn't about what the guideline was that you were going to be using. My question was: who will be doing the audits, and how were those contracts tendered, and who's making the decision about that? This is the third or fourth time I've asked this question now, and I'm still not getting an answer from the minister. Could she please explain to me who will be making the decision about who will be doing the audits? Is it her ministry, or is it a local housing oversight? How were these contracts tendered? Please.

Thank you.

Ms Sigurdson: Well, thank you very much, Madam Chair. Certainly, we're working with housing management bodies to make those decisions. As I said, the local housing management bodies are diverse. They're all across this province. The guideline that we're using is the Natural Resources Canada EnerGuide rating system. We work with housing bodies to determine, you know, who they're working with, but these are some standard things that we want. We want them to create a baseline so that we know what needs to be improved in their particular facilities, and we'll work very closely with housing management bodies to make those decisions.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Smith: Okay. I guess I'm not going to get my answer.

Why is it costing half a million dollars extra to do the audits? Could the minister please explain to us how much they've spent on the audits to this point and why they need this additional half a million dollars if that's indeed the case? Or is this the only amount of money that they're spending on energy audits?

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. minister.

Ms Sigurdson: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. Certainly, this \$500,000 is transferred to us, to our ministry, from Environment and Parks' climate leadership plan green infrastructure initiative. It's earmarked specifically for us to do energy audits in our housing management bodies across this province to ensure that housing management bodies are supported to know what are sort of the key things that will make a real difference for them to be energy efficient. We're very pleased to receive this funding.

That doesn't mean that there aren't other investments. This year we put \$57 million into maintenance and repairs, and many housing management bodies are using that for improving energy efficiency through furnaces, windows, roofs, a whole myriad of things. There's ongoing investment from the ministry, and these dollars will be an additional support to housing management bodies to ensure that citizens of this province have well-maintained, energy efficient facilities. Certainly, this will help the housing management bodies be able to have more energy efficient facilities, so they'll save money on the costs of energy, and this is all good for our province.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Madam Chair. In answering my question, you suggested that there is \$57 million spent on providing better efficiency for our seniors, which is a good idea. I guess the question I've got is this, again back to my question: when these facilities make these decisions about putting in higher efficiency furnaces, et cetera, do they all have energy audits, and if so, how much have you spent on providing the energy audits that would lead you to believe that you need to do the upgrades that cost \$57 million to this province? How much money have you spent on energy audits, and how much more have you spent above and beyond the requested \$500,000?

The Deputy Chair: The minister.

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to make sure that the member understands that it's \$57 million in investment for maintenance across the province.

Each year the housing management bodies submit their business plans to our ministry, and in that they have their top asks. They have the things that they know are outstanding and that they're concerned about, so we know each year. We look at that information they send us, and through that, we do allocate those funds. I just want you to know that that's a significant investment we've made and that certainly the housing management bodies are very pleased.

We inherited a billion dollars in repairs needing to be done when we became government. Housing management bodies have been waiting for some time, and they know a lot of the things that they need. They do need new windows. They do need energy efficient furnaces. They do need new roofs. They do need repairs regarding, you know, the sealing of doors. They need all sorts of things, so they are having this funding from us as a government.

This additional funding from Environment and Parks, specifically from the green infrastructure initiative, is further assisting housing management bodies, who, I must say, do an extraordinary job of supporting the vulnerable.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, Minister.

Are there any other members from the third party wishing to speak? No?

Are there any other members from the independent group wishing to speak?

Are there any other members from the government side wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung. We have to go through everybody's rotation first, please.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise today wishing to speak a bit more about the SHARP program, which I had the opportunity to cosponsor when the legislation passed through the House. Interest was very high in the program according to the minister as

she spoke yesterday about the matter. I know that during debate on this legislation the concern was expressed that it was unknown how many people may be interested in taking the government up on its proposal to allow them to borrow against the equity in their house to improve their home and adapt it so that they could live in it longer given that they may have disabilities that prevent them from staying in it without the adaptations. Given our interest in cross-collaboration with other ministries, I'm wondering if the minister is going to be tabulating how many jobs may be created as a result of the work that's being done on people's homes as they take advantage of the home equity loan program called SHARP.

3:20

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

Ms Sigurdson: Yes. Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and thank you to the member for the question. Certainly, the seniors home adaptation and repair program is really a program that we were asked about many times in the community.

[Ms Goehring in the chair]

People want to stay in their own homes, in their own communities, close to family and friends, but unfortunately sometimes as we age, we have some challenges with mobility. Therefore, the homes that we have lived in for many years are just not properly suited, and there could be safety concerns. For example, you know, regular tubs are very difficult sometimes for folks to get in and out of, so changing that to, like, a walk-in tub or putting on some bars for people to hold onto. This program is absolutely essential to supporting people to be able to stay in their own homes as long as they choose to. It gives people a great opportunity to do that.

As the member suggested, this also is investing in our economy because people can receive up to \$40,000 in repairs, and that means that they're employing folks in the community and, you know, having different repairs done that they need. It doesn't only have to be about mobility things. It can also be about getting your roof replaced or an energy efficient furnace or windows, rugs. It's a whole myriad of things. Seniors have really been very excited about this program. It's highly subscribed to, and we're very pleased. That shows us the success of the program.

As the member said, we are absolutely getting people working. It's difficult to estimate exactly how many people will be employed by this, but it's absolutely an infusion of dollars into the economy and looking at some significant investments in jobs. We're very pleased to be able to both support seniors to stay in their homes and their communities and to get people working in this province.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Acting Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

Any other speakers? The Official Opposition has indicated that they are done. Anybody from the third party wishing to speak? Any other members from government wishing to speak?

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

The Acting Chair: We've reached the six hours of consideration in Committee of Supply and shall vote on the supplementary supply estimates at this time. We'll start with amendment A1 from the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

Agreed to:

Advanced Education	
Financial Transactions	\$121,000,000
Transfer from Environment and Parks to	
Capital Investment	\$760,000

The Deputy Chair: Shall the vote be reported? Agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

Agriculture and Forestry	
Expense	\$332,493,000
Transfer from Environment and Parks to	
Expense	\$150,000
Transfer from Environment and Parks to	
Capital Investment	\$104,000

The Deputy Chair: Shall the vote be reported? Agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

Children's Services	
Expense	\$28,000,000

The Deputy Chair: Shall the vote be reported? Agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

Community and Social Services	
Expense	\$173,200,000

The Deputy Chair: Shall the vote be reported? Agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

Culture and Tourism	
Transfer from Environment and Parks to	
Expense	\$9,000

The Deputy Chair: Shall the vote be reported? Agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

Economic Development and Trade	
Transfer from Environment and Parks to	
Expense	\$562,000

The Deputy Chair: Shall the vote be reported? Agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

Education

Transfer from Capital Investment to	
Expense	\$106,733,000

The Deputy Chair: Shall the vote be reported? Agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

Environment and Parks	
Expense	\$77,144,000
Transfer from Capital Investment to	
Expense	\$12,445,000
Transfer from Expense to	
Capital Investment	\$150,000

The Deputy Chair: Shall the vote be reported? Agreed?

3:30

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

Health

Expense	\$202,060,000
Transfer from Environment and Parks to	
Capital Investment	\$1,500,000

The Deputy Chair: Shall the vote be reported? Agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

Indigenous Relations

Expense	\$1,127,000
Transfer from Environment and Parks and	
Labour to Expense	\$9,045,000

The Deputy Chair: Shall the vote be reported? Agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

Infrastructure

Transfer from Environment and Parks to	
Capital Investment	\$135,000

The Deputy Chair: Shall it be reported? Agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

Justice and Solicitor General

Expense	\$35,344,000
Transfer from Capital Investment to	
Expense	\$5,500,000

The Deputy Chair: Shall the vote be reported? Agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

Municipal Affairs

Expense	\$720,435,000
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The Deputy Chair: Shall the vote be reported? Agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

Seniors and Housing

Financial Transactions	\$2,700,000
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Transfer from Environment and Parks to Expense	\$500,000
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The Deputy Chair: Shall the vote be reported? Agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

Service Alberta

Financial Transactions	\$900,000
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The Deputy Chair: Shall the vote be reported? Agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

Transportation

Expense	\$25,706,000
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Transfer from Environment and Parks to Expense	\$200,000
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Transfer from Environment and Parks to Capital Investment	\$1,000,000
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The Deputy Chair: Shall it be reported? Agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? So ordered.

Agreed to:

Treasury Board and Finance

Transfer from Environment and Parks to Expense	\$1,053,000
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Transfer from Environment and Parks to Capital Investment	\$800,000
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The Deputy Chair: Shall it be reported? Agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? Carried.

The Committee of Supply shall now rise and report.

[Ms Goehring in the chair]

The Acting Speaker: I'd like to call on the Member for Edmonton-McClung.

3:40

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions, reports as follows, and requests leave to sit again. The following resolutions relating to the 2016-17 supplementary supply estimates, No. 2, for the general revenue fund for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2017, have been approved.

Advanced Education: financial transactions, \$121,000,000.

Agriculture and Forestry: expense, \$332,493,000.

Children's Services: expense, \$28,000,000.

Community and Social Services: expense, \$173,200,000.

Environment and Parks: expense, \$77,144,000.

Health: expense, \$202,060,000.

Indigenous Relations: expense, \$1,127,000.

Justice and Solicitor General: expense, \$35,344,000.

Municipal Affairs: expense, \$720,435,000.

Seniors and Housing: financial transactions, \$2,700,000.

Service Alberta: financial transactions, \$900,000.

Transportation: expense, \$25,706,000.

Amounts to be transferred under section 3 of the Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2017:

Transfer from the capital investment vote of Education to the expense vote of Education, \$106,733,000.

Transfer from the capital investment vote of Environment and Parks to the expense vote of Environment and Parks, \$12,445,000.

Transfer from the expense vote of Environment and Parks to the capital investment vote of Environment and Parks, \$150,000.

Transfers from the expense vote of Environment and Parks to the expense vote of Agriculture and Forestry, \$150,000; to the expense vote of Culture and Tourism, \$9,000; to the expense vote of Economic Development and Trade, \$562,000; to the expense vote of Indigenous Relations, \$5,200,000; to the expense vote of Seniors and Housing, \$500,000; to the expense vote of Transportation, \$200,000; to the expense vote of Treasury Board and Finance, \$1,053,000.

Transfers from the expense vote of Environment and Parks to the capital investment vote of Advanced Education, \$760,000; to the capital investment vote of Agriculture and Forestry, \$104,000; to the capital investment vote of Health, \$1,500,000; to the capital investment vote of Infrastructure, \$135,000; to the capital investment vote of Transportation, \$1,000,000; to the capital investment vote of Treasury Board and Finance, \$800,000.

Transfer from the capital investment vote of Justice and Solicitor General to the expense vote of Justice and Solicitor General, \$5,500,000.

Transfer from the expense vote of Labour to the expense vote of Indigenous Relations, \$3,845,000.

That concludes my report.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Does the Assembly concur with the report?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

I would like to alert hon. members that Standing Order 61(3) provides that upon the Assembly concurring with the report by Committee of Supply, the Assembly immediately reverts to the Introduction of Bills for introduction of the appropriation bill.

Introduction of Bills

The Acting Speaker: The hon. President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance.

**Bill 4
Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2017**

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 4, the Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2017. This being a money bill, Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of this bill, recommends the same to this Assembly.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 4 read a first time]

**Consideration of Her Honour
the Lieutenant Governor's Speech**

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

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

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

[Adjourned debate March 8: Mr. Nielsen]

The Acting Speaker: Go ahead, hon. member.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It is always an honour to respond to the Speech from the Throne. I'm a centrist, and I am very proud of that fact. It is the opposite of not believing in anything. In fact, it's about believing in balance. That balance is not only possible but desirable. It's what we should be striving for in this Assembly. It is about thinking long term. It's about people. It's about quality of life. It's about planning. It's about good fiscal management, and it's about vision.

Unfortunately, this government has chosen only one side of the ledger. They've doubled down to target whomever they think their voters are. They've completely ignored the fact that doing so costs money and that money has to come from somewhere and that in tough times that somewhere means borrowed money and that borrowed money eventually needs to be paid back. Sadly, their plan seems to be the same as all governments before them: cross your fingers, and hope to goodness that the price of oil goes up.

On the other side of the equation we have an opposition party focused only on finance. They refuse to share any concrete or plausible plans to ensure that front-line services remain intact as they focus only on the deficit. We know the only logical outcomes of their plans are reduced access to public services, more children in every classroom, longer wait times for health care, and worse outcomes for vulnerable Albertans. If the opposition disagrees, please, by all means, prove me wrong. Show me your work. Show me how you would address Alberta's fiscal challenges without devastating front-line public services. Until then I'm going to continue to call you out on the devastating impact that your ideology would have on our province.

There is a bigger and even more fundamental question. What is the point of government? Is it simply to get re-elected every four years, or should there be something more? Nothing – and I mean nothing – in this Speech from the Throne tells me that this government has a plan beyond 2019. What is missing is a vision. Sadly, based on the tone of the House these past few days, it's clear that the election campaign has already begun. The government seems hell bent on flowing money targeted at their voting coalition

with absolutely no regard for the long-term consequences or even the medium-term consequences. If this works and the government somehow gets re-elected, I guess they'll deal with that problem when they get there, but if it doesn't, the next government will have to deal with the fiscal mess they've created. Significant cuts to front-line public services seem to be the strategy. Then at that point, when the government finds themselves in opposition, perhaps they play a strategy for the next election beyond that, and we whipsaw back and forth between two extremes.

That's not who we are as Albertans, and sadly it is not necessary. It doesn't need to be as bad as this government has made it. There are choices. There are options. Not only is it possible to find balance, but if we're going to succeed together as a province, it is absolutely necessary that we do so.

Instead of just complaining, here's my solution. I want to create sustained and shared prosperity in this province. To do that, it means we need to create a business environment that attracts investment and stimulates economic growth, and that investment needs to come from both domestic and international sources. We need to reframe and rethink our tax system to minimize tax leakage to other provinces and encourage entrepreneurship. We need to focus on shovel-ready capital projects that get Albertans back to work today. We need to monitor and take advantage of global market opportunities and trends. We need to not be afraid of what's going on in the rest of the world. We need to embrace that change, take advantage of it, and put Albertans back to work.

3:50

It also requires good fiscal management. We need a government that has a realistic plan to balance the budget. We need a government that has a plausible plan to actually start paying back debt. We need a government that commits to building up the heritage savings trust fund to become a renewable, viable, and valuable fiscal resource for this province.

We need to focus on poverty and harm reduction. We need to fund supports for the most vulnerable Albertans, think differently about prevention, and optimize service delivery. We need to transition from an acute-care to a long-term preventative model. We need to address systemic and root-cause issues behind addiction, homelessness, and poverty and implement stable, long-term mental health supports.

We need to create and maintain a high quality of life in this province, which means promoting and encouraging a vibrant Alberta arts and culture scene, supporting Alberta's diverse cultural heritage. We need to ensure that our communities are safe and that we support multiculturalism, respect the LGBTQ community, and work every day towards reconciliation with indigenous peoples. We need to ensure advanced education remains high quality, affordable, and accessible. We need to provide housing and career supports as people transition to new careers.

We must pursue environmental sustainability. The Alberta Party caucus and the Alberta Party as a whole: our members believe in human-caused climate change. We believe in the science of climate change. We don't see that as a threat to our province; we see that as the single greatest market opportunity of our lifetime. There's no benefit to Alberta in pretending climate change doesn't exist, in pretending it isn't a problem that needs to be addressed. Alberta has innovative big thinkers who can help solve the problems of tomorrow, help create entrepreneurial, innovative companies, and help create products that will help diversify our economy while addressing climate change and do so in a way that supports and celebrates Alberta's responsible energy industry.

I am a fiercely proud Albertan, and I am fiercely proud of our energy industry. We do not need to choose between the

environment and the economy. We do not need to choose between environmental sustainability and success with Alberta's energy industry. Those are the same thing.

We need to focus our academic institutions and industry on developing innovative technologies that reduce Alberta's carbon footprint and create technologies we can sell to the rest of the world. We need a reasonable rebate program that only helps those who actually need help instead of only supporting NDP re-election efforts. We need to deal with a growing abandoned well problem through innovative ideas like geothermal greenhouse projects and put Albertans back to work by reclaiming abandoned and orphaned wells.

Most of all, though, we need to end this false polarization where one side says that only they can look out for people and the environment and another side says that only they can help and look out for money. I'm an Albertan. I care about both of those things. I care about good fiscal management, I care about my neighbours, and I care about the environment. That's what Albertans believe in.

I stand here before you today optimistic about the future of our province because I'm optimistic about the capability of Albertans and what Albertans believe. I am proud to represent a party that believes that Alberta is the greatest place to live anywhere in the world because Albertans are the greatest people anywhere in the world. The Alberta Party is a party of Albertans by Albertans for Alberta.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to question or comment under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, the hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance.

Transmittal of Estimates

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I have received a message from Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, which I now transmit to you.

The Sergeant-at-Arms: Order!

The Acting Speaker: The Lieutenant Governor transmits interim supply estimates of certain sums for the service of the province and of certain sums required from the lottery fund for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2018, and recommends the same to the Legislative Assembly.

Please be seated.

The hon. President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I now wish to table the 2017-18 interim supply estimates. These interim supply estimates will provide spending authority to the Legislative Assembly and the government for the period of April 1, 2017, to May 31, 2017, inclusive. This interim funding authority will ensure continuity in the business of the province while the Legislature takes the time necessary to discuss, debate, and enact the full funding requirement for the government business for the 2017-18 fiscal year.

When passed, these interim supply estimates will authorize approximate spending of \$30 million for the Legislative Assembly, \$7.8 billion in expense funding, \$936 million in capital investment

funding, \$149 million in financial transactions funding for the government, and \$241 million for the transfer from the lottery fund to the general revenue fund.

Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 2

An Act to Remove Barriers for Survivors of Sexual and Domestic Violence

[Adjourned debate March 8: Mr. Westhead]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I move that we adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 1

An Act to Reduce School Fees

[Adjourned debate March 8: Mr. Dang]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Very often when I'm here in this House, I think I have a lot of déjà vu moments because for nine years I was a school trustee where the issue of school fees was something that we discussed on a weekly basis. So I was delighted when the Minister of Education introduced Bill 1, An Act to Reduce School Fees.

Since we haven't debated this for a couple of days, I thought it might be good to speak again about the purpose of this bill. Bill 1 is a bill to reduce school fees. Through this bill a series of amendments and the creation of a new school fees regulation will effectively eliminate school boards' ability to charge two specific types of school fees, instructional fees and material fees and busing fees for eligible students travelling to their designated school. This legislation will also provide the government with increased authority over all school fees.

We all know that for a lot of parents every September the school fees are an incredible burden. School fees have impacted families, teachers, and school administrators. I really appreciated the Member for Calgary-East, who spoke so eloquently about her experience as a teacher and the impact of school fees. I think we have to remember that school fees are not just a burden on parents, but they also have created a lot of stress and burden on teachers and administrators.

4:00

As the House knows, because I discussed it in one of my speeches, I worked for many years in Asia, and for those of you who like me have lived in countries where there's a very poor education system and where parents have to pay incredible fees to access any kind of education system, you would, like me, really want to support a fully accessible public school system with no barriers to any family or child. That's why I stood up to be a school trustee in the public school system for nine years, because I knew that a quality, accessible, free education was what every child needed to achieve their potential.

I also have appreciated the experience of the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, who spoke about the challenges school

fees presented for her family and how her family had to make choices about school fees and food or other necessities. I think every single member in this House has met families who also have struggled every single September to pay the school fees.

My own personal experience was that I had to go and beg the principal to have school fees waived for my children, and this was a very embarrassing moment. I know that I'm not the only member who may have had this experience and that you have heard from your constituents.

The other aspect of school fees that I feel is really fitting for us to discuss, even though it's one day past International Women's Day, is that school fees impact the low-income families, who are usually led by women, and I think this is something that we really have to know, that it's the women who really very often have had to find the money to pay for school fees and have wondered how they were going to manage their budgets: school fees, food, all the necessities in the home.

Today I also wanted us to be reminded that currently it's women who make up the bulk of school councils and parents' fundraising efforts. My colleague from Strathcona-Sherwood Park demonstrated that by the fact that she invited members of some of her rural school councils, and it was four women. The women who are involved in school councils and parents' fundraising committees have done an incredible job in raising funds for playgrounds, for school supplies, for nutrition, and also to help parents who cannot pay school fees.

Last year the government decided to increase funding to school boards, and this funding was to ensure that every child was funded for, so we funded for enrolment.

One of the things as a former school trustee that I appreciate the most from this bill is that, as the Minister of Education said the other day in the House, decisions on school fees in the regulations will be made in consultation with school boards. I think this is really, really important because it is school boards who presently have decided on the school fees. It is very important that school boards be involved in any decisions around school fees in terms of the regulation, so I wanted to thank the minister for his words on the involvement of school boards. I really appreciate that the regulations will be drafted only after consultations with school boards and other stakeholders in education.

I personally look forward to listening to the school boards in my own riding about what they think about Bill 1 and the kind of regulations that there will be, and I would like to urge all members to do the same thing, to talk to their school boards and to understand some of the constraints that school boards have every year in meeting budgets and to support the government and especially the minister in his consultation process in terms of drafting the regulations.

This bill will ease the burden on families. It will also ease the burden on teachers. I'm sure if the Member for Calgary-East was here, she would talk about the list that she has to make, the money that has to be collected. While I have never been a teacher in the school system, as a school trustee I definitely heard a lot from teachers how this is something that is really challenging for them and takes away from their instructional time.

I would like to urge all members in the House to support Bill 1 and to look to September, when the burden of school fees will be eased from their constituents. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak to 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway. Go ahead.

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 1, An Act to Reduce School Fees. As a parent of young children I know the importance of school fees. I know the annual cost to send my children to school. You know, the fees include the bus fees, the school fees, the field trips, and lunch supervision fees, just to name a few. Also, I heard from my own constituents to lower the school fees. So I think it's a step in the right direction, and that's why our Progressive Conservative caucus is in support of lowering the cost that Alberta families pay in school fees. When it comes to the lives of Albertans and their families, we'll always support lowering the costs they have to pay, especially in these troubling times.

However, what this caucus does not support is the sleight of hand that this NDP government is attempting to pull on Alberta families. Out of one pocket the NDP are taking more and more from Alberta families every day. From driving up the costs of our electricity by tampering with the Balancing Pool and their aggressive coal phase-out to the carbon tax, that will raise costs for daily goods, the NDP are costing families more. So for the Deputy Premier to stand before this House and say that they have the backs of Albertans and are working to make life affordable: sorry, Deputy Premier; we aren't buying it, and neither is any other Albertan because Albertans can see through the smoke and mirrors. While you put \$5 in reduced school fees into one pocket, you have taken \$20 from the other one, and the Deputy Premier expects a thank you.

However, you know, reducing school fees is a step in the right direction and a step, I believe, our caucus will support and can support. But if the NDP government wants the support of Albertans, they can start with cutting school fees and move on to cutting the carbon tax. I think that would be a real help for Albertans.

Madam Speaker, we all know that there is only one taxpayer. If the NDP says that the difference in the school fees will be covered by the Education department, a department funded by the taxpayer, at the end of the day, Albertans still pay. It's the same person, same family. It's all of our people who are still paying the tax. If you're truly committed to making life affordable for Albertans like you say you are, show your commitment to lower taxes, that you have driven up since taking office. Albertans have continuously told you that they don't support your policies that drive up the cost of living. You're saying that you're listening, but I don't see changes. You say that you have the backs of Albertans, yet how can they trust and believe anything you say when all they have seen is you driving up the cost for living with each of your policies?

Another concerning piece to this bill is the fact that the Education minister has committed to finding millions in department efficiencies to cover the cost of lowering the school fees. Since the NDP formed government, they have attempted to suggest that any form of government cost saving would be done by cutting front-line staff. Time and time again we heard the NDP justify their out-of-control spending by saying that the opposition party – their favourite words are cut, slash, burn – you know, will slash teachers and teaching assistants. I know, I know; the minister of economic development finds it very amusing because we hear it every day a few times in QP. Well, I would like to remind the NDP that they were the only ones talking about the cuts to the front-line workers.

4:10

But after nearly two years of the NDP saying the only way to rein in spending is to lay off teachers and nurses, we suddenly have found millions of dollars in the Education budget. As my colleague from Calgary-Hays asked, how many teachers were laid off to pay this bill? We didn't get an answer, and I don't think we're going to get any answer.

Madam Speaker, we know finding efficiencies are possible, like the efficiencies that were magically found in the Education ministry. Now that the government also knows it's possible, I look forward to seeing what other efficiencies they will be able to find soon in other departments.

I look forward to continued debate on this bill, Madam Speaker. Lowering school fees is the right thing to do. Making life affordable for Albertans and Alberta families is the right thing to do, and we'll continue to push this government to make life affordable for Albertans in all aspects, not just the sleight of hand they're attempting with the school fee legislation.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member from St. Albert.

Ms Renaud: Thank you. Just a question for the Member for Calgary-Greenway. First of all – I don't know – I don't mind being called a taxpayer occasionally, but, you know, you guys really go there a lot. I think people like to be called moms and dads and parents and families. You know, just a thought. I was just wondering why you always use that label.

What you said, if I heard you correctly, is that the only way to put money into the pockets of Alberta families, or taxpayers, as you said, was to cut taxes. But you said earlier that you did support what we would do to actually put dollars into the pockets of families in September, when traditionally they would have to find hundreds of dollars that were really difficult to find to pay fees. I don't really understand because you sort of went both ways with that, so I'm wondering if you could clear that up for me.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway.

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the Member for St. Albert. She is right, actually. You know, in September, like, the government will be putting money into taxpayers, Albertans, and moms and dads alike, all of us, the majority of us – sorry; I must apologize – who have children. However, by putting money in one month and then taking 11 months out of their pockets, I think it's hypocrisy. That's what I meant. That's why I went both ways.

Yes, government is doing a great thing. This is a great initiative, lowering school fees, which we all support. Most of us in this House will support it. However, you're taking money away from the Alberta families and moms and dads that the hon. Member for St. Albert mentioned. That's why I said it in that way. I hope I've made myself clear.

Ms Renaud: No, not really.

Mr. Gill: Not really? Okay, I can continue. I can continue.

Lowering the school fees by 25 per cent: that's great. But putting on, like, a carbon tax and adding in 4.5 cents a litre to gasoline and approximately five and a half cents to diesel? Ask the farmers how they're feeling, how much money you're taking away from their pockets. Ask the farmers how much fertilizers have gone up and how much transportation costs have gone up.

I don't think this government has consulted, and I don't think we expect them to consult because they've never done it so far in the last two years. That's why I'm saying, Madam Speaker, that, yes, the government is doing a great thing by lowering the school fees on one hand; however, on the other hand, they're just, like, taking money away. It's like highway robbery almost.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Any other members wishing to speak to 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

Cortes-Vargas: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to see you in the chair. You're doing a wonderful job.

You know, I've heard the last few comments of: "Where did you get all this money? You said only efficiencies were found. That caused cutting teachers and educational assistants, front-line workers." The truth is, Madam Speaker, that initiatives like this take a responsibility for the government to make sure they find the efficiencies prior to making the cuts. I think that's the difference between the approach of the opposition of many years, just blindly cutting 2 per cent from budgets and having the results be felt in the front lines, and this government, who stabilizes the funding and then looks at making sure that they get an inventory of what's happening, making sure that they know how the cuts will affect the public services that the families depend on and then finds those efficiencies to make sure that there is a gain for the public services and the level of the public services.

Those members in the third party, Madam Speaker, had 44 years to find the efficiencies. It's rich. It's rich to say that, you know: we support it, but you said you couldn't find it. Well, no. It takes time. It takes time that you didn't take because you didn't prioritize it. You prioritized tax cuts. Please explain to me how those tax cuts helped the families that were sending their kids to school, the single mothers that didn't have the ability to pay those school fees. Those are the kinds of folks that these kinds of initiatives support. [interjections] I think for all of the initiatives that we have taken into account . . .

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

Cortes-Vargas: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's an honour to stand and talk in favour of Bill 1. I know that other members are in favour of the bill, and I really appreciate that they're recognizing the importance of it. I think that they've raised points throughout their speeches that we're going to look at in Committee of the Whole.

But they say that it's going to be complicated and, you know: how are we going to address all of these other concerns? What I would say to them is that just because it's complicated doesn't mean it's not worth the time to investigate and find solutions. Some of those solutions are best to come through Committee of the Whole, through discussions and consultations, and in making sure that you include the school boards in assessing the overall school fees, how much that costs.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

The fact is, Madam Speaker, that the opposition continuously backs away from hard decisions. You see that in their position on climate change, whether it's denial or just general ambivalence. The fact is that the members on the opposite side see something difficult and run away. At the end of the day, this government will continue to fight for public services that families depend on and will have the backs of women with children who go to school and who have the issue of school fees.

Let me tell you a story. I was an educational assistant since I was 18, Madam Speaker. I started that because of my mother's inspiration. She was a speech pathologist and taught me about behavioural strategies. She taught me to bring in strategies to help adapt the learning for students with special needs. Those are all very

difficult things to do in school. I started early on as an educational assistant to pay my way through school as well. In that position I can tell you numerous heartbreaking stories of the number of times that one of my roles for the day was to make sure that I put a letter in the backpack of a child that I knew did not have money because we had to provide the snacks for that child. That child could not sit still and could not take in the educational practices of that day or whatever curriculum we were doing because they had not had food in the morning, and that led to those behaviours. The fact is that we still had to provide a letter at the end of the day, knowing that it was going to come back unmet.

The fact is that, yes, we need to find a solution. It is important, and it helps level out who has access to public education and reduces the barriers, that shouldn't be there in the first place. Everyone deserves access to education regardless of their socioeconomic status, and that is something that I will always stand for.

4:20

The fact is that the opposition lists a whole bunch of issues and says: oh, we haven't looked at that. No. Well, you know what? What it takes is to build a foundation in order to look at those issues. What has the minister done prior to bringing the reduction of school fees act? He did an inventory list of what school fees are being charged across the province. You know what that is, Madam Speaker? That is a thoughtful approach to making sure that you don't just go and hammer something through. We don't want to negatively affect the public services. Can we not make it more clear to you by the fact that we've stabilized the funding? In fact, we will work to that . . . [interjections]

The Acting Speaker: Members.

Cortes-Vargas: Thank you for the reminder to speak through you. I get very passionate about education. It is something that I have dedicated my life to and that I will continue to dedicate my life to. I know that at the end of day, one place to start was by stabilizing the funding. And we know that educational centres are also the places that we want to make sure the climate leadership plan is being seen. The fact is that those children – and you know what? The decisions that are being made now I'm going to live with my entire life and . . . [interjections]

The Acting Speaker: Members.

Cortes-Vargas: You know, I'm the youngest female MLA ever elected to this Legislature. Trust me on this, Madam Speaker: I will live for years to see the effects of what is done here. And I am proud of absolutely every single initiative we have brought forward because they are thoughtful, they are looking to the future, and they are making sure that the jobs that my age group will see are sustainable jobs that they will have for a long period of time, that we won't have to continuously clean up by the negligence of the opposition.

We need to see a different approach, and that is what Albertans voted for. This government and the folks that sit next to me will all listen to their constituents, we'll continuously reach out, and we will look for solutions. They need to come from everyone. One thing that has been made clear over and over is that people want education prioritized. They did not want to see the kinds of cuts that we would have seen under them. The fact is, Madam Speaker, that even with the climate leadership plan – and they argue the way it's going to affect this. The fact is that we will work with the school boards to make sure that they can implement a way to build

sustainable buildings, to address the overall costs. We will find a way to do that, and it's important.

I'll give you an example. At Strathcona Christian Academy they're currently doing a project on aquaponics. That kind of innovation and doing projects that look at future technologies involves students and starts creating solutions at a young age. That's the kind of entrepreneurship that Albertans are known for. We need to continue developing that kind of innovation. In fact, the strength of our energy industry is our education base and the fact that we have been able to develop technologies that we haven't seen elsewhere. So, yes, we're bringing it to schools, and, yes, we need to make sure that they are properly funded for it, and, yes, we will do that. We have demonstrated that our commitment will not waver.

Then, Madam Speaker, I just want to keep talking about the reduction of and the meaning of the reduction of school fees and why it's a more important approach than just taking a tax cut or a blind cut, that the PCs were very well known for. People knew that that was coming. Announcing a 2 per cent tax cut without proper planning was likely to result in the firing of teachers and educational assistants. I was going to be one of them. The fact is that those kinds of effects – it was also going to cut ELL funding. It was also going to cut funding . . . [interjections]

The Acting Speaker: Members. Enough, please.

Go ahead, Member.

Cortes-Vargas: It was going to cut a lot of things that actually impact the marginalized communities the most. You know, if we want to make sure that we integrate immigrant communities into our communities, we want to make sure that language acquisition is one of the first priorities. Yet that was one of the things that they were going to do during an economic downturn to further create a discrepancy of what they're able to contribute. The fact is that we have a responsibility to make sure that education is accessible to everyone regardless of their background. The kind of approach that is taken that prioritizes it just as, "If you have the money, then that's okay," continues to promote the cycle of poverty that we see, the continuous cycle of that.

You know, there are a lot of platitudes that happen in this House, Madam Speaker. I hear the opposition continue to say that they're in support of the LGBTQ community, that they're in support of the truth and reconciliation. I hear them say that. The trouble I have with it is that they don't follow the things that they say with action. Their proposals continuously disproportionately affect marginalized people. They continuously propose things that would affect women.

You want to talk about the great Klein years? You want to look at how we did in the United Nations in our ability to address the issues of women? You can see that in those years women were the most affected by those kinds of policy proposals. So for them to say that they stand for women and for the things that they do for our communities is absolutely ridiculous. It is not backed up by policy, by action. If you wanted to have nice words, fine, have nice words, but this government will make sure that we follow our platitudes with action, and that's what we're delivering when we do things like that.

The Alberta tax benefit, Madam Speaker. All of that is directed at making sure that we have the backs of all Albertans – and those are inclusive words, "all Albertans" – regardless of where you're from, what age you are, if you're an immigrant.

I'm going to tell you a little bit about the Alberta Legislature's history. I am the youngest female Alberta MLA, I'm the first Latin American Alberta MLA, and I'm the youngest government whip in Alberta's history. The fact that I'm the very first one means that you have not done enough to make this world inclusive. You have failed

people like me. The reason I was so motivated to run against folks that have your sort of policies is because I understand that my voice is not being felt in this Legislature.

I am proud to stand for families that want to look at thoughtful approaches. I talk to my constituents all the time about their educational needs. I had parent councils come this morning. I've been talking to them for the entire summer about some of the issues facing their schools. They moved to Strathcona county because they wanted to prioritize their families. I know that in Strathcona county, growing up there, every single thing we do is about making sure that families are protected. You know what's an integral part of that? Education. The fact that we supported education was a very important fact for them.

The fact that the opposition fails to realize that the policies they were putting forward would negatively affect just those things actually tells me that they're the ones that are not talking to Albertans. They're the ones that haven't heard their priorities. The fact that they are unable to stand next to a shadow budget, that indicates what their policies would do, tells me that they are too afraid to stand next to their policies for Albertans because maybe they have heard them and maybe they just say: if we don't have to commit to the things that we are proposing by putting it in a shadow budget, people might not know what we would do. The chaos that

we would be experiencing under the opposition because ...
[interjections]

The Acting Speaker: Members. Enough, please.

Cortes-Vargas: As I said, I'm one of the first Latin American members, and in my culture sometimes we get a little passionate. It's not out of anger; it's just actually sometimes a way of conversing.

I really appreciate their engagement on this, and I literally hope that they can take it back and reflect about, you know, whether they're actually going to stand next to their policies and talk about the overall impacts that we would see under the policies that they would bring forward. I want to work with them on making sure that Bill 1, An Act to Reduce School Fees, properly addresses the concerns throughout the province. I want to work with them the same way that I work with my parent councils, the same way that I've worked and continue – I hear you, Madam Speaker.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Pursuant to Standing Order 4(2) the Assembly stands adjourned until Monday afternoon at 1:30.

[The Assembly adjourned at 4:30 p.m.]

Bill Status Report for the 29th Legislature - 3rd Session (2017)

Activity to Thursday, March 9, 2017

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

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

The date a Bill comes into force is indicated in square brackets after the date of Royal Assent. If a Bill comes into force "on proclamation," "with exceptions," or "on various dates," please contact Legislative Counsel, Alberta Justice, for details at 780.427.2217. The chapter number assigned to the Bill is entered immediately following the date the Bill comes into force. SA indicates Statutes of Alberta; this is followed by the year in which it is included in the statutes, and its chapter number. Please note, Private Bills are not assigned chapter number until the conclusion of the Fallittings.

Bill 1 — An Act to Reduce School Fees (Eggen)

First Reading — 6 (*Mar. 2, 2017 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 82-89 (*Mar. 7, 2017 aft.*), 105-10 (*Mar. 8, 2017 morn.*), 192-96 (*Mar. 9, 2017 aft., adjourned*)

Bill 2 — An Act to Remove Barriers for Survivors of Sexual and Domestic Violence (Ganley)

First Reading — 67-68 (*Mar. 7, 2017 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 110-11 (*Mar. 8, 2017 morn.*), 192 (*Mar. 9, 2017 aft., adjourned*)

Bill 4 — Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2017 (\$)

First Reading — 191 (*Mar. 9, 2017 aft., passed*)

Bill 201 — Justice System Accountability Act (Jean)

First Reading — 127 (*Mar. 8, 2017 aft., passed*)

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