



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Third Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, March 15, 2017

Day 8

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta
The 29th Legislature

Third Session

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

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Anderson, Hon. Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (ND)	MacIntyre, Donald, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (W)
Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)	Malkinson, Brian, Calgary-Currie (ND)
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Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)	McCuaig-Boyd, Hon. Margaret, Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley (ND)
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Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-Ste. Anne (ND), Deputy Government House Leader	McKitrick, Annie, Sherwood Park (ND)
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (ND)	McLean, Hon. Stephanie V., Calgary-Varsity (ND)
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Clark, Greg, Calgary-Elbow (AP)	Miller, Barb, Red Deer-South (ND)
Connolly, Michael R.D., Calgary-Hawkwood (ND)	Miranda, Hon. Ricardo, Calgary-Cross (ND)
Coolahan, Craig, Calgary-Klein (ND)	Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (ND)
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Cortes-Vargas, Estefania, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (ND), Government Whip	Notley, Hon. Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (ND), Premier
Cyr, Scott J., Bonnyville-Cold Lake (W)	Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (W)
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (ND)	Panda, Prasad, Calgary-Foothills (W)
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (ND)	Payne, Hon. Brandy, Calgary-Acadia (ND)
Drever, Deborah, Calgary-Bow (ND)	Phillips, Hon. Shannon, Lethbridge-West (ND)
Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (PC), Progressive Conservative Opposition Whip	Piquette, Colin, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater (ND)
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Feehan, Hon. Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (ND)	Rodney, Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC), Progressive Conservative Opposition House Leader
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Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)	Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (ND)
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (ND)	Schneider, David A., Little Bow (W)
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Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (ND)	Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (ND)
Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (PC)	Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (ND)
Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (ND)	Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (W)
Hanson, David B., Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (W), Official Opposition Deputy House Leader	Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC)
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Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (ND)	Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)
Horne, Trevor A.R., Spruce Grove-St. Albert (ND)	Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (ND)
Hunter, Grant R., Cardston-Taber-Warner (W)	Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)
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Jean, Brian Michael, QC, Fort McMurray-Conklin (W), Leader of the Official Opposition	Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)
Kazim, Anam, Calgary-Glenmore (ND)	van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)
Kleinstauber, Jamie, Calgary-Northern Hills (ND)	Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND), Deputy Government Whip
Larivee, Hon. Danielle, Lesser Slave Lake (ND)	Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)
Littlewood, Jessica, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (ND)	Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)
Loewen, Todd, Grande Prairie-Smoky (W)	
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (ND)	

Party standings:

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

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, March 15, 2017

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Good afternoon. Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure today to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a wonderful group of students and staff from Garneau elementary school. Garneau elementary is a school that believes education should be active and interactive. These fine young Albertans and their dedicated teachers have been able to tour this beautiful Legislature Building, a building that belongs to each and every one of them just as much as it belongs to those of us elected to be here. They got to see what it's like to be an MLA and learn first-hand how democracy works. They're seated in the gallery over there, and I invite all members of the Assembly to extend a warm welcome to these tremendously fabulous young students and teachers.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Hon. Premier, I'd acknowledge that I have some bias; I have two grandsons that graduated from that school.

The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, would like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly 30 students from Kensington school. It's a grade 5/6 class. They study social studies and local government, and they decided to come and see what actually is going on here. Jaelene McEwen is their teacher. I've worked with her for so long, and she does a wonderful job in teaching about democracy. As well, along with Jaelene there are chaperones Alba Lina Narvaez, Charlene Munro, and Tamara Bailey. If they could all stand, please, and receive the warm welcome of the Legislature.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Infrastructure and of Transportation.

Mr. Mason: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and to all members of this Assembly a group of brilliant and talented grade 6 students from Virginia Park school. They're led by their teacher, Mrs. Shelley Hardie, and parents Nykolet Graham, Amber Rodriguez, Deanna Chou, and Kerri Gibson Loranger. There's a good reason that Virginia Park school is so beautiful: because it's filled wall to wall with art that the children there have created over many years. It's a core arts school, and it teaches enhanced visual arts, dance, drama, and music. I would ask these talented budding artists to please stand up and receive the warm welcome of our Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Are there any other school groups?

The Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a constituent from the great constituency of Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, Marla Zapach. Now, Marla actually hails

from Nordegg, the jewel of the David Thompson highway. I know that members from all of the parties in the Assembly have enjoyed the area around Nordegg and know what a great place Marla comes from. She owns an ecotourism business in the area. She's also the president of the chamber of commerce in the area and works as an emergency responder with the volunteer fire department in the area. I'd like her to rise, if she could, and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The Deputy Premier and Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We are pleased to declare March as Children's Wish Month this year in Alberta. Today I have the pleasure of introducing to you and through you two great kids, eight-year-old Mable Tooke, who is the superhero that many have gotten to know as Spider-Mable. Welcome back. You probably recall that she faced cancer with courage and bravery, and the Children's Wish Foundation granted her the wish to be a superhero for a day. We also have Jaxon Garner, who has joined us as well in the members' gallery. He is six years old. He loves camping with his family. Jaxon and his family were given the wish of a trailer and spent a lot of their time last summer enjoying the outdoors. Also with us today we have Kyla Martin and her colleagues with the Children's Wish Foundation and Jim Kapeluck, who is with the foundation board.

This month is all about celebrating these kids and the power of wishes. I want to say thank you to the Children's Wish Foundation for granting nearly 25,000 wishes, for helping lift their spirits, and for making life a little bit easier for these great kids and their families. I'd ask that Jaxon, Mable, and their families as well as the representatives from the Children's Wish Foundation please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of our Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly an amazing organization, that has a branch in my riding of Edmonton-Rutherford. Family Futures is a growing community organization that empowers families and truly improves the lives of everyday people in the province. Since our government is all about making life easier for Albertans, I wanted to recognize the efforts that they put in every day to assist families, with locations in Edmonton-Rutherford, Edmonton-Mill Woods, Edmonton-Ellerslie, and soon, I understand, opening up a very large new shop in Summerside. They are seeing hundreds of mothers, fathers, and children through their doors every month.

I wanted to take a second to give these hard-working folks a moment of well-deserved recognition as they are truly enhancing the lives of Albertans. Thank you for all the work that you do. I would welcome you to please stand as I call out your names – Charles Burns, Barbara Burns, Sue Hopgood, Chris Gidyk, and Shari-Lynne Gidyk of Family Futures Edmonton – to receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Lieutenant Chris Power, CD. If I could ask him to rise, please. Lieutenant Power was born in Mount Pearl, Newfoundland, and joined the Canadian armed forces in 1996. Throughout his

career he has been posted in Nova Scotia, Ontario, and Alberta and has been deployed to Bosnia and Afghanistan. He is currently posted to the 3rd Canadian Division Support Group in Edmonton and now lives in Fort Saskatchewan, since November, with his wife, Jan, and their four children: Alex, Breagha, Cullen, and Rachel.

I'd like thank the lieutenant for his service to Canada and for the time that he spent with me touring the Legislature this afternoon. I know that he is going to be coming back with his children, and I look forward to him being able to visit the area where we recognize the women that trailblazed for his own daughters. If I could ask all members to please extend the warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Members' Statements

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

Carbon Levy Rebate Adjustment Notices

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are hearing outrageous stories from Albertans about their parents and grandparents having to refund the carbon tax rebates. Dreaded notices are coming from the Alberta climate leadership adjustment rebate demanding repayment after the death of a spouse.

The NDP government recently sent the carbon tax rebate to an 84-year-old grandmother, then sent a bill to her to pay half of it back. The amount was \$25. Another senior on a fixed income had to refund \$150. Why, Mr. Speaker? Their marital status had changed. It changed due to the unfortunate passing of their husbands. The government of Alberta demanded that these seniors, who are grieving the loss of their husbands, pay back some or all of the NDP carbon tax rebate because their spouses are no longer eligible.

This is appalling. The one bill for \$25 is not only an insult to the family and to the memory of this gentleman, but the cost of recovering that amount exceeds the refund requested. The idiocy of this is mind boggling. For the other senior the \$150 was not manageable on her fixed income, so her family had to pay the bill. On top of all of this, one funeral home added \$10.25 to the funeral bill to cover the cost of the carbon tax for cremation.

1:40

What is this government doing to Albertans? There are so many reasons to scrap the NDP's carbon tax – the 9 million in tax dollars spent advertising it, the dramatic spikes to power and heating bills, increased prices of all goods and services across Alberta – but, Mr. Speaker, this takes the cake. As the one daughter said: the NDP are not for Alberta. Let's hope that someone, somewhere shows a bit more common sense.

Thank you.

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

Edmonton-McClung Meet Your Neighbour Campaign

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The 150th anniversary of Canada's Confederation should be a joyous time, yet I can't remember when a greater level of fear and suspicion permeated our public discourse or when the headlines of the day cast a longer shadow on so many lives. Six men shot dead in a mosque in Quebec City. Bomb threats against Jewish community centres. We face a global refugee crisis greater than any in a generation, yet some Canadian voices today demand that we close our doors entirely. I talk to people in Edmonton-McClung who feel scared, scared to do things

they should be able to take for granted like registering their kids for daycare at the mosque or going to worship at the synagogue.

I grew up in an Alberta where you knew your neighbours, respected their differences, and opened your doors to them, sir. That is the Alberta I want my grandchildren to grow up to know. That sense of community and openness: it's one of the things that Albertans count on the most, one of the things that makes our lives better. Every MLA has a duty to protect that fundamental value of caring for one another. That means restoring connections between Albertans, between neighbours. I believe that starts right at home, right at the doorstep.

Here's how I will do that this spring and summer in Edmonton-McClung. In celebration of Canada's 150th anniversary I will invite each of our seven community leagues to join me in a meet your neighbour door-knocking campaign. Families, faith groups, youth groups, and more will meet at each community hall and then fan out to meet at least 150 new neighbours. Later in the summer we'll have a grand finale reception at my summer barbeque, where we'll join together to celebrate Canada's 150th anniversary.

I'm excited to think about the new connections between people that this campaign will generate. I hope this will encourage other hon. members to help counter the voices of division and fear surfacing in their own ridings, to help us all rediscover that welcoming sense of community that is found at the heart of Canada and our beloved province of Alberta.

Thank you, sir.

Progressive Conservative Budget Plan

Mr. Fraser: Yesterday our caucus delivered a plan for Alberta that would deliver a balanced budget in the 2019-20 fiscal year. This plan also made the commitment that we would not lay off any front-line workers. That means no nurses, no doctors, and no teachers would lose their jobs as we move towards balance.

Every member of this House ran for office because they wanted to do what was best for Albertans. While different members and different parties have different ideas on how to best serve the public interest, we should all acknowledge that in the end we are all working towards the goal of a better Alberta.

When we ask the government to show restraint on spending increases, when we ask them to rethink new taxes that they're introducing to an already hurting economy, we are not threatening cuts to thousands of front-line jobs. Despite government claims that we would target the livelihoods of nurses and teachers, our goal is actually to make sure that Albertans have the opportunity to succeed, whether they are male, whether they are female, gay, straight, religious, or atheist. That means protecting our health care and our education services, but it also means reducing the tax burden and debt for everyone.

That's why we released our balanced budget plan. We owe it to our constituents to show that there are more responsible, common-sense ways to manage tax dollars and that it doesn't mean we have to sacrifice essential services. The Progressive Conservative caucus is focused on solutions, on problems that Albertans face. While we may not all agree on how to get there, we hope all parties in this House will join us in that conversation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Resource Development in Peace River

Ms Jabbour: In October 2015 my constituency of Peace River was dealt an economic blow when Shell cancelled the Carmon Creek oil sands project. The opposition tried to blame our newly elected government for this even though Shell made it clear that the

decision was based on low oil prices and pipeline uncertainty. Shell, in fact, supported our environmental and regulatory policies.

A few months later I toured Shell's Peace River operations, including the Carmon Creek site. It was sad to see this massive industrial project as a virtual ghost town, the empty state-of-the-art camp facility, the partially constructed 690 megawatt cogeneration plant. Our community, however, remained hopeful, and we are now finally seeing positive signs of recovery. The climate leadership plan has led to two new pipeline approvals, and companies are embracing opportunities to invest in renewable energy technology.

In November Baytex increased investment in Peace River by purchasing \$65 million in heavy oil assets, with the goal of restarting shut-in production over the next few years. In February Kinetico purchased the Carmon Creek cogeneration plant, intending to repurpose the facility as a stand-alone power plant producing green energy and reducing emissions. A few days ago we learned that CNRL is acquiring Shell's assets in Peace River. As part of the agreement CNRL will continue to employ the 110 staff in Peace River and take over the Carmon Creek thermal oil sands assets and undeveloped leases.

These are positive opportunities for Peace River, a sign of investor confidence in economic recovery and growth in the north. However, instead of supporting things that will make life better for families in my constituency, the opposition has chosen to portray this as a negative statement against our government policies. Rather than offering encouragement and hope to Peace River families, the opposition is fearmongering and tearing down these signs of economic recovery.

In Peace River we are excited to see CNRL, Baytex, and Kinetico breathing new life into our economy. These Alberta-based companies will foster economic growth in our region, and with the help of our government's progressive and forward-looking policies, they will do this in a way that balances economic prosperity with environmental responsibility. This is good news.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

Rajab Islamic Month

Ms Kazim: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Rajab is the seventh month of the Islamic calendar and a prelude to the sacred months of Sha'ban and Ramadan. Thus, it is the key to the opening of the months of goodness and blessings.

The term "Rajab" is derived from the word "Rajaba," which means to respect. This year the month of Rajab is anticipated to begin on March 30, depending on the moon sighting. It is the month of the birth of Imam Ali, alaihi salaam, the first imam of Shia Muslims and fourth caliph of Sunni Muslims. Imam Ali, alaihi salaam, was first cousin and son-in-law of Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him. He was born on the 13th day of the month inside the house of Allah, the Kaaba in Mecca. To define the significance of this month, Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, said: "In Paradise there is a canal named Rajab. Its water is whiter than milk, cooler than ice and sweeter than honey. The one who observes even a single fast in Rajab, he/she will be entitled to drink its water."

Muslims celebrate this month grandly by hosting Koonday, the tablecloth dinner. The celebration is the time for Muslims to remember the blessings of Allah and Ahlul Bayt, the family of Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him. It is one of the very significant months for Muslims to strengthen ties among the community with love, compassion, and peace. The month of Rajab is known for its superabundant favours and benefits, reverence and

sanctity and is linked to almighty Allah. Therefore, it is a month when Muslims fast, seek forgiveness, and engage in charity acts.

I would like to wish Rajab Mubarak to everyone and to all Muslims. Thank you.

Energy Policies

Mr. MacIntyre: On Monday and Tuesday I, along with over 500 stakeholders in the electricity sector, attended the 23rd annual Independent Power Producers conference. There was a noticeable atmosphere of uneasiness amongst the participants. Why? Because this government has declared war on the technological neutrality of our free-market electricity system, a system that's mission was affordability and reliability, where the market was free to choose what is best based on very few constraints, and the fewer the constraints, the more affordable and efficient the system.

Why? Because the industrial component of the carbon tax is designed to decline steadily, and we won't have funds available to pay for a capacity market. Why? Because EDC estimates that this government's plan is going to cost Albertans between \$20 billion and \$30 billion.

Why? Because this government has no respect for the fact that Alberta built the only electricity system in North America where taxpayers are not saddled with utility debt. Why? Because the taxpayer and the ratepayer are still the same person, and the system only works when the government respects that.

Why? Because all this government learned from the architects of the Ontario plan, that are now on Alberta's payroll, is how to hide the cost of green energy policies, not their ineffectiveness at reducing greenhouse gas emissions nor the pain that high power prices and tax bills create for families whose care this government is charged with.

1:50

Why? Because this government is more concerned with the revenue they're collecting for their green slush fund than they are with incumbent renewables, renewables that for a decade have reduced greenhouse gas emissions without centrally planned dictates of a technologically illiterate and overzealous politburo.

Why? Because every time the NDP try to carelessly patch up the holes they put in this ship, they make two more.

Speaker's Ruling

Imputing Falsehoods against a Member

The Speaker: I'd like to use this opportunity to rule on a point of order that was raised yesterday by the Government House Leader concerning a remark that the Member for Calgary-Foothills made during Oral Question Period. During question period the Member for Calgary-Foothills referenced a comment that the Deputy Premier had made on Monday with respect to the Official Opposition. You can find the Member for Calgary-Foothills' remarks on page 252 of the *Alberta Hansard* for March 14, 2017, and the Deputy Premier's remark can be found at page 206 of *Hansard* for the 13th.

I deferred my ruling so that I could review *Alberta Hansard* and see the full context of what has been said over the past number of days. Hon. members, for the last number of sitting days certain statements and expressions have been added to questions and responses in question period and also made during debate. These comments have really had little to do with questions or responses or contributed to the debate. Instead, these remarks seem to be made mainly in an effort to elicit response from the other side. They seem

to be deliberately provocative, and they have, clearly, repeatedly caused disorder.

I have ruled previously in the Assembly on language which, although not unparliamentary per se, nevertheless caused and does cause disorder. In those many instances I've cautioned members to avoid using intemperate language that was deliberately provocative. Members may find my rulings on page 1385 of the June 1, 2016, *Alberta Hansard*; page 1455 of the June 2, 2016, *Hansard*; and on page 782 of the December 2, 2015, *Hansard*.

I'd like to remind members, first of all, that while it is the job of the Speaker to maintain order and decorum, it is also the responsibility of each member to show a high degree of respect for their colleagues during all Assembly proceedings. "Respect" is certainly the watchword for members for their interactions in this Assembly.

In the instance we have before us, we have a reference to comments that were originally made by the Deputy Premier, remarks that were certainly intemperate. Indeed, there was a subsequent acknowledgement, however, that the remarks were not appropriate when the Deputy Premier unreservedly apologized and withdrew her comments, which may be found on page 235 of yesterday's *Alberta Hansard*.

I would note that typically in this Assembly when an apology is made and a comment is withdrawn, the effect of an apology and the withdrawal is honoured, and the Assembly moves on. By the same token, when an hon. member indicates that they never said what was attributed to them, members should also respect that.

Hon. members, I'm quite concerned about the deteriorating tone. Accordingly, I would like to thank the House leaders for agreeing to meet with me to discuss this decorum as well as other related issues. While there may not have been per se a point of order here in the exchange of remarks, it does little to improve the freedom of speech. Hon. members, it is our collective responsibility to address this matter as we move forward so that we can return to conducting the business that all Albertans expect of us and that they elected us to do.

Oral Question Period

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

Carbon Levy Rebate Adjustment Notices

Mr. Jean: This government is out of control. Most Albertans are already angry enough over this carbon tax, but the NDP had another trick up their sleeve. There are some Albertans who received a relatively small rebate for the cost of the carbon tax earlier this year. Tragically, they passed away. Now the taxman is chasing them down trying to recoup that money from grieving loved ones, not to mention the offence of grieving families seeing a carbon tax line item in the funeral expenses of their loved ones. Did no one on the government benches realize that this was going to happen?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As the member opposite knows as a result of the Minister of Finance already responding to this issue, this is a matter that we believe should not have happened. We absolutely don't think that it was right; we don't think it was fair. It was a request that was made by the Canada Revenue Agency, who's administering the rebate. Our officials have already reached out to them, and we are in discussions with them to ask that it not happen anymore because we agree that it is not appropriate. It is not fair. We stand with Albertans. We want to

make life better for them, not more confusing, particularly in those awful times, and we're going to take action.

Mr. Jean: Marie Casey received the so-called rebate in January. She died weeks later, but now this government is trying to claw back that hundred dollars from her estate while family members like Darlene Piche continue to grieve. She also got a bill for the carbon tax from the crematorium. It was for \$10. You can try to downplay that cost, but you can't excuse the insult or insensitivity. The Finance minister and the Premier seem clueless that this could even happen in the first place. How did no one on the government benches provide direction to the CRA on this, and will someone be fired for the insensitivity and lack of judgment?

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, I would ask that the member opposite listen to the answers to the questions because sometimes they get them, as they just did.

Now, first of all, to sort of correct the record, this was not a letter that was sent by our government. It was sent by the CRA, the Canada Revenue Agency, and we have taken action to have the matter corrected. We also agree with the member opposite that it was not appropriate; it was not fair. It was absolutely not what that family needed to see at that time. That is why we are going to do everything we can to make sure that the Canada Revenue Agency stops this practice, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Jean: It's less than three months into the implementation of the carbon tax. How could you possibly not know this would happen? Clawing back carbon tax money from grieving loved ones is more than what you've described, Premier. It's disgusting, it's shameful, and someone needs to be held to account. We've heard stories of widows, who have lost their husbands, having the CRA ask for more rebate money back. Daughters, sons, sisters, and brothers: they're all being chased down by the NDP government. And all the Finance minister can muster up is, and I quote: we will urge the CRA to stop it. Will anyone be held accountable for this, and if not, why won't they be?

Ms Notley: Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, it really is difficult to have these conversations when the members opposite insist on moving forward with pieces of information that they know are not correct. The member opposite suggested that they're being chased down by the NDP government when they know full well that this is something that happened with the Canada Revenue Agency and that the NDP government is standing up for Albertans and speaking to the CRA to ask them to stop the practice. I would like the member opposite to acknowledge the information that he's just been given not once, not twice, but three times.

The Speaker: Second main question.

Mr. Jean: Did you hear that, Mr. Speaker? It sounds like a lot of excuses out there.

Provincial Fiscal Policies

Mr. Jean: It's the eve of the NDP government's budget, and most Albertans are bracing for the impact of what bad news will be delivered tomorrow. The so-called shock absorber approach by the Finance minister is making a bad situation much worse. The real shock to the NDP government should be the 58 per cent of Albertans dissatisfied with their economic approach. What's the NDP's response to this? It's to say that the broad themes in Budget 2017 will be the same as 2016. To the Premier: why aren't you listening to the concerns of Albertans?

Ms Notley: Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, it's really easy to throw stones when you don't offer up your own solutions. Thankfully, today the member opposite's caucus did walk forward with just a little bit of information when they said they would subject Albertans to, and I quote: a fiscal *Dragon's Den*. Think about that for a moment. The Wildrose want to turn Albertans' futures into a reality TV show. Who would run the gauntlet of their show? Children with special needs, long-term care patients, vulnerable children, parents, and students? Albertans deserve so much better.

2:00

Mr. Jean: For two years Albertans have buckled down to face the economic downturn as best as possible. They've made big sacrifices just so they can pay their bills and their mortgage. It's been a struggle. But for the NDP government it's: "Let the good times roll. Downturn? What downturn? Let's just rack up some more debt." The NDP ought to leave their offices every once in a while and talk to real Albertans. It would be important. They might actually hear some common sense for once. Why does the Premier think her government is above doing what all Albertans are doing around their kitchen table, finding savings?

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, what Albertans don't want is to risk their future so that the Wildrose can be reality TV stars. That is not good governance. Our government is committed to making life better for Albertans by making their life more affordable, by stimulating job growth, and by protecting the very services that protect and serve the families of Alberta. This is what we ran on, this is what we committed to, and this is the direction that we will continue to move forward with.

Mr. Jean: Albertans are not expecting a miracle overnight that'll get us out of the red, but they do expect effort to work towards reducing the debt and to tackle the debt. They know that spending today will fall on the hands of future generations to pay off. The Finance minister talks of bending the curve, but we've seen no plan at all to get back to balance. When Wildrose puts forward common-sense ideas to reduce the deficit without cuts to front-line services, we get insults, tired and condescending talking points, and no substance. Will the Premier tell me just one serious idea to reduce Alberta's deficit? Just one.

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, I would ask the member opposite: when it comes to coming up with ideas to cut public spending, why is he even stopping at *Dragons' Den*? How about *Survivor*? [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Ms Notley: Tune in next week to see who the Wildrose kicks off the island. Will it be seniors? Will it be students? Will it be people in hospital? Who are they going to throw off the island? We are going to have Albertans' backs. We will protect them, not the folks over there. [interjections]

The Speaker: Hon. members, when I call for order, please become quiet.

The third main question.

Mr. Jean: Easy answer, Mr. Speaker. Albertans are going to throw the NDP government off the island next election.

Government Policies

Mr. Jean: Part of the plan to balance will need to include finding efficiencies within government departments. A manager managing

a manager who reports to a director doesn't serve our system well. A bloated bureaucracy diverting funds away from front-line services, where they are needed most, doesn't help. When we spend \$1,100 more per capita than Ontario on health care to get longer wait times, something needs to change. To the Premier: what specific actions is she going to direct her government to take to find cost savings without impacting front-line services? Just one example.

Ms Notley: As we've said before, Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to bringing down the deficit in a careful and prudent manner. We are not going to throw people under the bus in order to get to a balanced budget in a way that hurts our communities. The members opposite are talking about taking \$2 billion out of operating. Do you know what that would do? That would eliminate all of AISH, and they wouldn't be done. They would then also have to cut all of our public security spending. That wouldn't even get them there. They have no ideas. They're throwing out numbers. It's magical thinking, and there is no solution as a result.

Mr. Jean: Mr. Speaker, this NDP government has a savings problem, a spending problem, and obviously a fearmongering problem. It's a boat with two large holes drilled in the side with only a thimble available to bail it out. It just won't work, and Albertans are looking desperately for their life vests. Albertans don't want tired talking points, blaming the world price of oil for the current situation we're in. They want action from this government. When will the Premier realize that she needs to listen to the majority of Albertans and get her government's finances in order?

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, what Albertans are looking for from this government is a government that will work on creating and stimulating job growth. They want a government that has their back, that wants to make their life more affordable through things like a cut in student fees, something that the members opposite apparently don't support. You know what else? They want a government that will preserve those important public services that families rely on so that they can invest in their future and plan for greater prosperity in years to come. That's what they're looking for. They're not looking for slashing and burning from those folks.

Mr. Jean: Like I said, get out from under the dome.

Many of the reasons the NDP government is taking on further debt are the result of self-inflicted wounds. Taking energy companies to court over PPAs and accelerating the shutdown of coal rests squarely on this NDP government's shoulders. Not only do these ill-advised schemes cost our province more; they send a signal to investors that is not helpful. It's simply saying: don't do business in Alberta. Will the Premier show that she isn't completely out of touch with Albertans and the business community and drop the PPA lawsuit today?

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, when it comes to investor certainty, one of the things that we heard from investors is that we needed to fix the broken electricity system. We needed to provide certainty to producers and to investors, both of which were waning because the system was broken. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Ms Notley: In addition, Mr. Speaker, we heard from consumers that they could not afford the wild price swings that the members opposite built into our electricity system. So, having Albertans' backs, we took action. We built a better system. It's going to attract investment, and it's going to be better for Albertans for decades to come.

The Speaker: The leader of the third party.

Cabinet Ministers' Participation in Debate

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker, the NDP government shows disdain for Albertans in many ways. It talks down to them. It acts first and then only pretends to consult later. I could cite many examples, including the job-killing carbon tax and the coal phase-out, that totally disregards the very communities being devastated. As if this was not enough, the NDP regularly schedules cabinet meetings in the middle of Monday afternoons during the Assembly sitting. To the Premier: will you show some respect for this House and schedule your cabinet meetings when we're not sitting so that your ministers may attend?

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, you know, there's a lot of work that goes on when one is governing, but let me say this. We actually have 55 members in our caucus, all of whom are brilliant members of this Legislature, all of whom are able to move forward with debate on behalf of each of their constituents and to represent Albertans and to work on our project of making life more affordable and better for all Alberta families.

Mr. McIver: Okay. Well, the cabinet doesn't have to show up. I get it.

Mr. Speaker, given that rural Albertans in the agricultural sector are vital parts of our economy and given that Alberta's rural leaders will gather for the AAMD and C convention in Edmonton next week and given that these leaders need access and dialogue with senior members of this government – no cabinet meetings, in other words – so that, unlike the Bill 6 fiasco, they can talk to them, to the Premier: will you make sure your ministers are available for the AAMD and C so that you don't get booted out of the room again this year?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member opposite for asking me scheduling questions. Our members, our MLAs, and also our cabinet ministers have regularly attended AAMD and C meetings, AUMA meetings, and a number of other stakeholder meetings, and they have engaged thoughtfully and respectfully with the representatives from those organizations and many others, and I'm pleased to be able to tell the Assembly that they will continue to do that.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. McIver: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, since this session started, for the first questions the Deputy Premier in particular has made a point of not even trying to answer the questions but, rather, run out a string of insults. The Premier has called Albertans embarrassing cousins, told them to take the bus, told them to make better decisions, and the Deputy Premier showed up with a rhyme that starts with: "We're focused on hard hats. They're spending . . ." Well, you know the end of the . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member.

Mr. McIver: You know the end of the poem, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon member, please be seated. I just finished a caution asking that you be respectful. I would ask that you consider that advice about caution.

Mr. McIver: That's why I was going to say: we know the end of the poem. Mr. Speaker, I wasn't going to say it based on your remarks.

Premier, do you condone this characterization of Albertans by you and your Deputy Premier, and can we expect better from both of you in the future?

Mr. Cooper: Point of order.

The Speaker: Noted.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, I reject the description that was offered by the member opposite in pretty much every way. But what I will say is that our government is committed to building a more inclusive, a more welcoming, a more diverse Alberta.

2:10

We are doing that in a number of ways. We're doing that by increasing the opportunities for women across our province, within our caucus, and within our cabinet. We are doing that by reaching out to members of all different religions and all different multicultural groups because they, too, need to be included. We are doing that by continuing to move forward by protecting minorities, who sometimes feel abused and put upon.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

The Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Provincial Budget Document Formats

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Transparency is the cornerstone of democracy. On January 3 of this year I sent a letter to the Minister of Finance requesting that he release all of the numbers from the upcoming budget in an open-data format so that all Albertans can more effectively engage in the democratic process. Now, given that the minister hasn't yet responded to my letter, I thought I might ask the question here now, today. To the Minister of Finance: will you release all of the data from the upcoming budget in an open electronic format and make it accessible to members of this Assembly, to the media and stakeholder groups, and to the public?

Mr. Ceci: You know, I know that the member opposite asked me that question right here, right in front of my desk, previously, a couple of weeks ago, and I explained to him that there will be some tables that will be released in an open-format basis but not all tables. Some of those tables can be manipulated, and it would be a bad thing to characterize the government's work in a manipulated form to Albertans. We don't want to share it that way. We'll share those that we're able to, for sure, but not everything.

Mr. Clark: Well, Mr. Speaker, that seems like a strange objection. It's like saying that we shouldn't have highways because some people might speed.

Again to the minister. I would like to know if you have any real, actual evidence that this information could be misused, or are you just worried that we'll use that information to prove to Albertans that there is a middle way that promotes Alberta innovation, actually balances the budget, and does so without front-line service cuts? It is possible, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much. I'll just repeat that some information will be shared in an open-format basis, not all of the information. Certainly, there will be hard copies. There will be

electronic stick copies of all of the budget. Albertans, if they want, can access that. It'll be on websites immediately after I start my speech as well, Mr. Speaker. Albertans will get the information they're looking for. We just don't want some to be potentially manipulated. I'm not saying by you, but I'm saying by others.

Mr. Clark: Well, it's funny that you mention the cost and the fact that you're going to release this in a printed version because today there was a report that said that each copy of the federal budget costs \$102 to print. I'm curious. To the Minister of Finance again: what does it cost to print each copy of the provincial budget, and will you commit to saving money and trees by distributing open electronic versions of the budget?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much. This might be a better question to the Minister of Environment and Parks. I didn't say how much those printed versions would cost. I don't know. I'll find out. But, you know, Albertans can go online immediately after I start my speech, and they can see the entire budget – in full it's thousands of pages – and read it then.

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

Highway 813 Bridge

Mr. Piquette: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The famous author and playwright George Ryga, the pride of Richmond Park, once wrote about travelling across the Athabasca River on the new highway 813 bridge, one the community had long been asking for. Of course, that was in 1955. A lot of things have changed since the 1950s, and so has that bridge but not for the better. This bridge has seen better days. To the Minister of Transportation: when will my constituents finally see this bridge replaced?

Mr. Mason: Well, thank you very much to the hon. member for the question and for the work that he's done to bring this issue to my concern. You know, in the last year, Mr. Speaker, we've done quite a bit of patching on the south side of highway 813, but I agree that projects like replacing the aging bridge on highway 813 over the Athabasca River are important. It plays an important role in supporting the economy, in the agriculture and logging industries in northern Alberta. We've taken these concerns into account, hon. member, and we'll do our best to help.

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

Mr. Piquette: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that a new bridge would not only remove what has been a real impediment to economic development in our region and given that for decades now citizens have been demanding a bridge that is wider and not under constant repair, what has the government done to move this project forward?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. We're aware that the municipality considers the project to be a very high priority. I've met with the local officials on the council on this matter, and we are committed to improving infrastructure because our government wants to make life better for Albertans, and part and parcel of that is making sure that we have the infrastructure that they need to support education, health care, and particularly to support economic development. We want to

keep people safe; we want to make their lives better. That's what the government is committed to.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Piquette: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that our region's businesses, especially in the tourism, energy, forestry, and agriculture sectors, are very eager to see shovels in the ground for this project, can the minister provide a timeline for when we will see this bridge replaced?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker, for that question. While I can't provide a specific timeline for the hon. member, I can assure him that he will have to wait less time than under the previous government, which, I guess, was probably 60, 70 years. I'm sure the time until we can fix this problem will be significantly less than the amount of time taken by the previous government.

Provincial Fiscal Policies

(continued)

Mr. Fildebrandt: Mr. Speaker . . . [applause] Thank you. I'll try to be nice today.

Alberta has not had a balanced budget since 2007. A decade ago George Bush was President, Maroon 5 topped the charts, and popped collars were an acceptable fashion choice for grown men. Since then the net financial assets of our province have collapsed by \$50 billion. Successive Finance ministers and Premiers have all talked a game about balancing the budget but have never had a serious plan to get there. Will this Finance minister and Premier be any different when they table their budget tomorrow?

Mr. Ceci: I want to first say congratulations to the member opposite on the birth of his new daughter.

You know, Mr. Speaker, this government will continue to do the things we said we'll do all along. This government will act as a shock absorber. The Leader of the Official Opposition doesn't know what that means, I think. The shock absorber is all about protecting Albertans through this recession so they don't have to wear fewer services and send their children to larger classrooms and get into waiting rooms in hospitals that are horrendous for their needs. That's what we're going to continue to do.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Hon. member, I am appreciating a much more quiet, mellow person for the next little while.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Don't get used to it, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much, Minister, for the kind remarks.

On a completely unrelated topic, a hypothetical child born on March 11 at 10:04 p.m. would owe exactly \$6,929.29 of provincial debt the moment they were born. Based on current borrowing projections, by the time they're old enough to vote that child will owe almost \$50,000 of provincial debt. My question is simple. Does the minister believe this is fair to future generations?

Mr. Ceci: You know, this hypothetical child that we're talking about, Mr. Speaker: how did the hospital treat mom and child when they were there? Did they support them? We are doing that by supporting hospitals. This future child, when she goes to school, will she be in a classroom with 20 kids or 40 kids, like might happen over there? Families know we have their backs.

An Hon. Member: We missed you.

The Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Fildebrandt: I missed you, too, Minister.

Actually, the hospital was absolutely excellent.

Today Wildrose released our plan to balance the operating budget by 2019 and the total consolidated budget deficit by 2020. We proposed common-sense cost-cutting measures like a government-wide salary freeze to save \$210 million, reducing the number of bureaucrats through attrition to save \$312 million, and scrapping the carbon tax slush fund to save a very good \$1.2 billion. Is this government willing to be reasonable, sit down with the Opposition, and consider adopting some of these measures to get us to a balanced budget?

2:20

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, he talks cuts over there, but let me see. Conservative cuts are at odds with their spending requests. One request from that side was for a new hospital in Airdrie. Another request was for \$250 million from the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View for five new intersections. One day they talk cuts. We also hear that they talk spend, spend, spend.

Mr. Fraser: Yesterday the PC caucus released our balanced budget. It's a plan that listens to the priorities of Albertans. It controls government spending without cutting any essential programs and protects every front-line job. When these common-sense alternatives were given to the Finance minister, though, he laughed it off and said: I won't be using any of those ideas. Minister, can you confirm your comments? Did you mean your budget won't consider modest spending and that you won't include a plan to pay back your out-of-control debt, or will it be a true NDP budget and none of the above?

Mr. Ceci: You know, I'll start out by saying: stay tuned. Be in this Legislature tomorrow at 3:15, and you'll hear the entire budget speech right from this very part.

The bigger question, I think, is: where is our economy going? Are we coming back? Do we see green shoots happening in our economy? I think the answer is starting to say yes to all of that. In the Grande Prairie *Daily Herald-Tribune* yesterday: "Future of Oil, Gas in Peace Country Positive." In the *Globe and Mail* on the weekend: "Oil-field Service Firms Seeing New Signs of Life." The actions of this government and the people of Alberta are . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

First supplemental.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Albertans have been loud and clear that they don't support the NDP carbon tax and given that our balanced budget includes the fact that we'll repeal that carbon tax, Minister, we can't fix your carbon tax today, so will you do the right thing now and at least put some of the revenue generated from this carbon tax towards paying off the skyrocketing debt that you're accumulating?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you. I think we've been clear all along that the carbon levy, as a result of the climate leadership plan, has achieved two pipelines in this province. Approval for two pipelines is a direct result that the carbon levy is going back in terms of rebates. It's going back in terms of innovations. It's going back in terms of

diversifying our economy. Things like that are happening. The petrochemical diversification program is also happening. That all is taking place because of our work on the climate leadership plan.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that our caucus doesn't support the federally imposed carbon tax and given that the federal government will still hit Albertans with a \$50 per tonne carbon tax in the near future, to the same minister: will you listen to Albertans when it comes to dealing with this heavy tax burden that they're about to face, and will you make the federal carbon tax revenue neutral and cut their personal taxes?

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much for the important question. You know, the member doesn't talk about the important work we've already done with small businesses in terms of cutting their taxes from 3 per cent to 2 per cent. We're making life affordable not only for small businesses but for Albertans. We're reducing by 25 per cent the school fees. We haven't brought in a health care premium like you guys would have brought in over there. We're also making sure that taxes are fair and equitable for Albertans and putting them at the midpoint for all of Canada.

Carbon Policies

Mr. Barnes: With the implementation of the NDP carbon tax, innovators in our junior oil and gas sector are worried, worried about their financial future and the jobs they create. On Monday I asked the minister if the government planned to give large subsidies to energy companies that lobbied for a carbon tax, so large that these companies won't actually be paying any carbon tax, leaving junior oil and gas companies to foot the entire bill. She provided no answer, evading the question. To the minister: did you mean to say yes but evaded the question just because you're too embarrassed to admit it?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're pleased to support energy companies in Alberta, all sizes. We are pleased, for example, that this week there was an announcement by an Alberta company investing in Alberta, doubling down not just as Albertans but doubling down on their investments in Alberta. It's disappointing that constantly on that side we're hearing about not support for Alberta companies but support for others. I have to say that on this side we are supporting Alberta business.

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, protecting the 15 per cent of oil and gas companies that exchanged political cover with the NDP government for not having a carbon tax that would only be applied to their competitors does not build prosperity and fairness. Given that the climate leadership plan penalizes 85 per cent of the job creators in Alberta's largest industry with a crippling carbon tax and given that those carbon tax revenues are earmarked to be cycled back to subsidize their competitors, again to the Minister of Energy: when will this NDP government stop picking winners and losers?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We work with all our companies on the carbon price, and we're working with them on innovation. Our companies are amazing innovators, and the carbon levy is going to help support that innovation. Again disappointed that the opposition doesn't believe in the innovation of Alberta industry and our Alberta energy people.

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, we have industry fleeing for other jurisdictions, moving billions of dollars in investment capital and thousands of jobs, and an Energy minister that cannot tell Albertans when they can expect the results of a now long-overdue OSAG panel. Given the OSAG panel's obvious ties to investor confidence, again to the Minister of Energy: when can our oil sands industry and their investors expect the findings of the OSAG panel, and will the results be fair and equitable to all players in the industry?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, we're working with the companies on carbon pricing. We're working on lowering our emissions. Our companies are amazing innovators, and they continue to innovate. They're driving down costs. When I was in Houston last week, that's what we heard from Cenovus and from other companies, about how they have lowered their emissions while lowering their prices, and they're remaining competitive in Alberta.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Adult Guardianship and Trusteeship

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week I spoke with a constituent who has had to navigate the overly complicated guardian/trustee process. This process is meant to help Albertans looking to take on guardianship roles for vulnerable loved ones. Families often have to pay for lawyers to navigate this process, and more and more people are requesting legal assistance. To the Minister of Justice: what will you do to fix this process and make it user friendly?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, of course, it's a fundamental commitment of this government to make sure that we're standing up for vulnerable Albertans and for all Albertans to make their lives a little bit easier. We're constantly reviewing all of our processes. As I understand, the process in question is subject to some recommendations from the Auditor General, so we're looking very closely at those and working very closely with them, and we will work with all Albertans to make sure that these processes meet their needs.

Mrs. Pitt: Mr. Speaker, given that guardians are forced to jump through many hoops – attend appointments, assessments, and verifications from professionals, professional associations, and law enforcement agencies – and given that the forms themselves are onerous, with two bundles, the first having up to 12 forms and the second bundle having up to five separate forms, how will this government work with families of vulnerable Albertans to navigate this process?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, of course, at the end of the day, what we have to understand is that the office of the public guardian and trustee is in place to make sure that vulnerable Albertans are taken care of. Sometimes that requires that those doing the caring submit to some screening checks to make sure that we're able to provide for those vulnerable individuals' care by people who are upstanding, good members of society who will take proper care of them, and sometimes we do need to have that oversight.

Mrs. Pitt: Mr. Speaker, given that the guardianship manual for the people to educate themselves is 63 pages with complicated language like the two-page section on the 54 acronyms the guardian is expected to know and given that guardians shouldn't have to use the two-page decoder just to read the government information package, will the minister commit to reviewing the information package for guardians seeking to help their loved ones?

2:30

Ms Ganley: Well, as we've said, Mr. Speaker, the office of the public guardian and trustee is fairly new to my ministry. Certainly, we are working with them on all sorts of processes as we speak. We will absolutely look at those forms to make sure that they are as legible as possible. As someone who once provided legal services to vulnerable Albertans, we know how important it is that they're able to access and understand that information.

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Greenway.

NAIT Board of Governors Chair Appointment

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Thursday the Minister of Finance said in this House, "I'm not going to apologize for getting people on boards for what they know as opposed to who they know." Two days before that this government appointed Mr. Ray Martin, a former NDP MLA and former NDP leader, as the chair of the board of NAIT. This is the height of hypocrisy. To the Finance minister: can you tell Albertans, without smiling, that you're not embarrassed by this appointment? [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Schmidt: Mr. Speaker, Mr. Ray Martin is a great Albertan who has served this province very well for decades. I'm ashamed to hear the member opposite drag his name through the mud and suggest that Mr. Martin isn't appropriate. Mr. Martin has a solid track record of serving the community, and he will continue to do so as the chair of the board of NAIT.

Mr. Gill: Hypocrisy it is.

Given that on December 7 the minister said in this House about the ministry's new process for appointing members to ABCs, "We are working so that this is not just an insiders', old boys' club" and given that according to the new guidebook, the minister or an office rep of the Premier's office must sit in on the interview, and cabinet approves this appointment, to the Advanced Education minister now: was Mr. Martin appointed because of what he knew or because he's an insider with an NDP world view?

Mr. Schmidt: Well, Mr. Speaker, of course, as I said in my previous answer, Mr. Martin has a successful track record of serving this province very well. He's experienced in the field of education. He worked as a teacher. He's been a member of the Edmonton public school board for many years. He will continue to serve the people, with a mandate for improving education in this province, as the chair of the board of NAIT, and I'm very proud to have been part of making that appointment.

Mr. Gill: World view it is.

Given that on November 3 the Finance minister said, "We are resetting the appointment process for the [ABCs] so [they] will look more like Albertans and less like that side" and given that the NDP tried to turn Alberta into Cuba, with Ms Berman calling the shots on the oil sands and appointing a good party comrade to the head of the NAIT board, Minister, when you told Albertans that ABCs

would look “less like that side,” did you mean that they would look more like your side?

Mr. Schmidt: Well, Mr. Speaker, in fact, our boards do look more like this side, in that we have appointed an equal number of women to many boards. In fact, the hon. member might be pleased to know that there are more women on the board of NAIT than there are on that entire side of the House, and we will continue to make those appointments to make sure that our boards look like Albertans and not like that side of the House.

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

Reynolds-Alberta Museum

Mr. Hinkley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My constituency of Wetaskiwin-Camrose is home to the award-winning Reynolds-Alberta Museum, a paradise of vintage automobiles, bicycles, agricultural implements, aircraft, and industrial equipment. However, this heritage is at stake due to a shortage of storage facilities. Given that my constituents advocated for Reynolds with the previous government with no success, to the Minister of Culture and Tourism: what is this government doing to protect Alberta’s transportation and industrial heritage?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Culture.

Miranda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for that question. I want to also thank the member for his advocacy on this file. We know tourism makes life better for Albertans by attracting visitors and creating jobs. The Reynolds Museum is an important tourist attraction where all can learn about Alberta’s transportation and industrial heritage. We are working on finding solutions to protect the existing artifacts, add to the collections, and of course celebrate Alberta’s heritage. As you know, we are going to be releasing a new capital plan tomorrow, March 16, and more details will be made available.

Thank you.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Hinkley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Reynolds-Alberta Museum is not just a museum but also an internationally acclaimed restoration and conservation shop and one of only three fly-in museums in Canada, what is the Minister of Culture and Tourism doing to protect the Reynolds Museum?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Miranda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Reynolds Museum is indeed a great cultural attraction, bringing visitors from around the world. I’ve had the pleasure, of course, of attending the air show and the opening of the new Stan Reynolds permanent display last year. We are making decisions in the best interests of Albertans. We are making life better for Albertans. Those decisions will be made public tomorrow, when we release the budget and the capital plan.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Hinkley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Reynolds is also an economic driver in my riding, what will the government do to help grow rural tourism in areas such as Wetaskiwin-Camrose?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Miranda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With almost 39,000 visitors in 2016 the Reynolds Museum is a world-class destination. This is not only an economic driver for the community, but it’s also helped to grow communities across the province. Last month I had the opportunity to attend the Growing Rural Tourism conference in the hon. member’s constituency. We are always looking for ways of increasing visitation to the museums. We know that rural tourism is a key contributor to diversifying our economy, creating good jobs, and making Albertans’ lives better.

Thank you.

Agricultural Concerns

Mr. Schneider: Mr. Speaker, last year was another tough one on Alberta farmers. Besides the uncertainty of the unpopular Bill 6 legislation, some had very wet conditions to deal with. Some areas of Alberta had declared agricultural disasters. Alberta has 1 million unharvested acres still laying in the field. Although insured through AFSC, many farms were concerned about paying bills as insurance payouts will not happen until spring. Why are farmers getting notices from AFSC that they’ll be penalized for late payments on premiums when they still haven’t been paid out from the same company for unharvested crops?

The Speaker: The Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Without a doubt last season was a little bit of a roller coaster. We started out dry, became wet. In some counties it never stopped raining, without a doubt. But I am happy to report that 90 per cent of unharvested acres have been inspected, and currently there are only two farmers that are waiting to be inspected for their payouts. I’m very happy with the work that our public servants are doing at AFSC. They’re doing a bang-up job. They’ll continue to do so.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Schneider: I can’t comment.

Given that the farmers have limited options to deal with these crops: double disking, harrowing, perhaps burning, and given that Alberta crop business and development has advised clients to burn the cereal crops because of mycotoxins in the cereals and also because combining that crop could spread Fusarium through the entire field, minister: in light of the fire ban in Lamont county, has your department developed a plan with municipalities to deal with the destruction of these crops given the small timeline that farmers have before they have to start thinking about seeding?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. We have been in conversation with Lamont county and other counties as well to ensure that counties have the tools they need to be able to help their farmers to get the crops off so they’re able to sow this spring. I’m hoping as well for a dry spring because otherwise we’re going to be in a very similar situation. So we’re absolutely talking to the counties, looking for those options to ensure that our farmers can again be successful.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Schneider: Given that a controlled burn of these crops may be the best option for farmers to reduce the chance of disease, pestilence, and to control vermin and given that these farmers understand that the fires could have impact on the environment – I hope you’re beginning to see where I’m headed here – to the minister: what

assurances can you give to farmers that there will be no repercussions from your government should using controlled burns run afoul of your environmental vision?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

2:40

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Member, for the most peculiar question. Interesting in some aspects, I suspect, but you know a crop – you know, many options. It could be a very viable option to be able to burn those crops to get their things in. No way does that fit into the climate leadership plan. I'd encourage the member to read the climate leadership plan, and I'd encourage him to point out where it actually talks about burning the crops. I don't believe that it does.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Oil Sands Investments

Mr. Gottfried: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Social licence can be an important consideration for industry, including energy producers and pipeliners, but as we are finding out, it is not the only consideration. As Shell stood with the Premier to accept carbon taxes, they also began their pullout from the oil sands, redirecting scarce capital to more business-friendly jurisdictions. I call that a hug and a shove. To the Minister of Energy: even with your CLAP and carbon tax Shell still chose to divest itself of oil sands assets. What are you doing specifically today to stem the flight of international capital?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I previously said, we were very pleased this week when I was in Houston to find out that a good Alberta company doubled down not just on Albertans but doubled down on their investments in Alberta also. When I spoke to the president, he also assured me that he was going to look for opportunities to upgrade in Alberta and invest more in Alberta. The opposition continues to mislead this House and indeed Albertans for their own political gain. That side of the House is fearmongering. This side of the House is supporting Alberta energy.

Mr. Gottfried: Mr. Speaker, given that Shell, Statoil, Total, and Marathon have recently divested themselves of billions in oil sands assets and given that we are thankful that CNRL, Athabasca, and others were able to acquire them at significant discounts and are happy to see Canadian companies increase their holdings – we still have grave concerns with four multinationals pulling out of the oil sands – again to the minister: has your government driven investor confidence down so far that the oil sands are now only to be considered as a regional investment opportunity?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On that side of the House earlier people cheered against us succeeding in getting a pipeline. We got not one, but we got two. You've criticized major companies before about investing in Alberta. We have Alberta companies investing in Alberta, and you criticize. We're focused on this side on making life better for Albertans. We're focused on helping our companies. We're proud for any company, Albertan or not, to invest in Alberta.

Mr. Cooper: Point of order.

The Speaker: Point of order noted.

Mr. Gottfried: Who needs an enemy when you have the NDP?

Mr. Speaker, given that the government continues to employ Tzeporah Berman against the wishes of the vast majority of Albertans and given that Ms Berman recently called upon Queen's University to divest of their oil sands assets, akin to what some schools have done with tobacco, and given, I'm sure you would agree, that this comparison is absurd, again to the minister: with your government driving out the multinationals and your friends trying to drive out equity investment of Canadians, who will be left to invest in Alberta when you are done?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In fact, Albertans are investing in Albertans. The company this last week doubled down on their investment in Alberta, and they have confidence in Albertans. We, again, are growing tired of hearing the comments about bad deals and, frankly, not cheering for Albertans. That's not something we're doing. We are not going to stop till we get more investment in Alberta. With the pipelines we see shovels in the ground, something they continue to cheer against. Not on this side of the House.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

Affordable and Seniors' Housing

Ms Kazim: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When I speak with housing advocates in my constituency, a significant issue that they raise is the state of Glenmore Manor. Given that the previous government failed to maintain this seniors' facility as needed and given that this government has announced approximately \$18 million for capital maintenance, to the Minister of Seniors and Housing: what is the government doing to address these concerns?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Seniors and Housing.

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Seniors built this province, and they deserve to age in community, close to family and friends, where they want to be. While the previous government neglected affordable housing, leaving seniors and facilities with over a billion dollars worth of repairs to be done, we are making life better for seniors by investing in affordable housing so seniors can retire in dignity. I can confirm that as part of the announcement in December 2016, Glenmore Manor is receiving more than \$76,000 for a roof replacement.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms Kazim: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. Given that Alberta currently needs about \$1 billion in repairs for seniors' affordable housing, to the same minister: how did this backlog happen, and what strategies is this government planning to alleviate these pressures?

Ms Sigurdson: It's true that the previous government made life harder for Albertans by not prioritizing affordable housing. As part of the previous budget I'm proud that our government is investing \$1.2 billion during the next five years into building more homes. And let me say this. There are some in this Chamber who called for drastic cuts, in the billions of dollars. These cuts will only hurt seniors and Albertans who live in these facilities. It's clear that the

opposition wants to cut investments in seniors and affordable housing, and our government is investing in housing to make life better for Albertans.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Ms Kazim: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that seniors deserve to have a safe place to live and given the need to address affordable housing in Calgary, to the same minister: when will my constituents see movement on these matters?

Ms Sigurdson: I'm proud to say that this year more than \$343,000 has been allocated for repairs in the Calgary-Glenmore riding. This will go towards fixing sidewalks and replacing roofs for affordable housing. Cedarbrae and Oakridge are examples of projects receiving funds.

Earlier today we announced \$5.7 million for the planning of 14 affordable housing projects across this province. This includes Elbow Valley seniors' community, George C. King Tower replacement, and Southview 3 community housing. Again, Mr. Speaker, on this important issue our government is investing; the opposition wants to cut.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I just want to compliment you. You not only had a baby shower today, but you got to 15 questions.

Tabling Returns and Reports

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

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just two quick tablings today. First, a Facebook post from Wildrose on Campus featuring their role model, the leader of the Wildrose opposition.

One other quick one is from the social media page the Rebel media heralding their invitation to the Wildrose on Campus event along with opposition Wildrose members. One big happy family.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today and only today I have five tablings on behalf of the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance. First, I rise to table the appropriate number of copies of the Automobile Insurance Rate Board's 2016 annual report for the year ended December 31, 2016. The 2016 annual report was prepared under the board's direction in accordance with section 601(1) of the Insurance Act and must be tabled in accordance with section 601(2) of the act.

Next, Mr. Speaker, I rise to table the requisite number of copies of the response to Motion for a Return 36 for the Member for Strathmore-Brooks regarding documents prepared for the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance in preparation for a meeting with rating agencies in Toronto on April 25, 2016.

Next, Mr. Speaker, I rise to table a response to Written Question 17: "What are the deliverables from the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance's trip from April 25 to 29, 2016, to Toronto and New York?" The international mission report for that trip is posted on the government of Alberta website, but I am pleased to table copies in this Chamber, which I think was included in that package there.

2:50

Fourthly, Mr. Speaker, I rise to table a response to the MLA for Calgary-Elbow's Written Question 15:

What has been the impact on Alberta's projected debt-servicing costs since the downgrade in the credit rating by Standard &

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

Finally, I rise to table the response to the MLA for Calgary-Elbow's Written Question 16:

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

Mr. Speaker, that concludes today's presentation on behalf of the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

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

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today. One is a report on the Alberta Teachers' Association website that states that membership in the Alberta New Democratic Party automatically gets you a New Democratic Party of Canada membership.

And because the Member for Calgary-North West is so fond of guilt by association, I've got five copies of the Leap Manifesto, that she is now part of.

The Speaker: Member for Calgary-Hays, do you have something to table?

Mr. McIver: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased and proud to table five copies of the Progressive Conservative balanced budget plan, a model for this government.

The Speaker: Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I briefly have two tablings. The first is the letter I wrote to the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board on January 3 of this year requesting that all budget documents be provided in an open-data format and noting that it would be a big help to get the budget data in Excel format or similar. I sure hope that's possible for this budget.

My second tabling is a news article from CBC today, which shows that it will cost over \$100 to print each copy of the federal budget, and I'm curious if our provincial budget will be the same.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have for tablings today the requisite number of copies of the outstanding Alberta Health motions for returns and written questions from the 29th Legislature, and in preparing these, I want to say thank you to the hard-working public servants who gathered this information so it could be put on the record.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Calgary-West.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, sir. I have two tablings if you will allow me. First, is a tabling, five copies, of the originating application for a judicial review dated March 2, 2017. This matter is between the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays and the office of the Ethics Commissioner.

The second tabling is five copies of the consent order. This is the Court of Queen's Bench order by Justice Jeffrey on the matter between the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays and the office of the Ethics Commissioner, set for a special hearing on January 12, 2018.

Thank you, sir.

The Speaker: Battle River-Wainwright.

Mr. Taylor: Yeah. Mr. Speaker, I'm tabling a copy of the Stats Canada report that refers to the crime severity index, that I referred to in my speech on Monday, and the alarming rate that it's gone up. The people in my riding of Battle River-Wainwright are very concerned about it. Here are your five copies.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks, did you have something?

Mr. Fildebrandt: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today on day 3 of 14 days of tablings about the Public Affairs Bureau. I rise with five requisite copies of a letter I wrote to the Government House Leader on March 9 quoting words of the Premier calling the Public Affairs Bureau political.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I think there were two points of order that were raised today. The Opposition House Leader.

Point of Clarification

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today on a point of order. In the Standing Orders it can be found in chapter 2, role of the Speaker, privilege, order and decorum. The Standing Order is 13(2): "The Speaker shall explain the reasons for any decision on the request of a Member."

Mr. Speaker, prior to question period you cautioned members of the Assembly about language that may create disorder. However, you ruled there was no point of order. And then during question period you interrupted the leader of the third party, which I'm more than happy to acknowledge is within your right. However, I am also just curious to know, under 13(2), some of the background behind your decision to do that in explaining your ruling.

One of the big concerns that I have, Mr. Speaker, is that if things that have been apologized for inside the Chamber are unable to be spoken about, then it would be my hope that the same requirement would be made of the government. For example, I apologized for something in this Chamber on March 7. It can be found in *Alberta Hansard* on page 68, where I apologized for statements that were made outside of this Chamber, that weren't made by me but, certainly, have been attributed to me and members of the opposition at length by many members of the government.

We have seen this in other circumstances where the government has chosen to use words like "climate change denier" and other inflammatory language towards the opposition. That, in fact, has been apologized for by the House.

So I'm hoping you can provide some clarity with respect to your ruling on how both sides of the House will be treated equally with respect to language that may or may not be used in the Chamber.

The Speaker: Are there any other individuals who'd like to speak to this point of order? The Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Under 13(2) "The Speaker shall explain the reasons for any decision on the request of a Member." You know, I guess I just wanted to make one point with respect to what the Official Opposition House Leader had said because an apology made on behalf of people who are not members of the Assembly and are not present is not in any way covered. When we talk about apologies, it's by members for statements they have made in the House. In those cases, then, I certainly am of the view that the ruling was very much correct.

With respect to statements made by people outside the House, an apology does not have the same force and effect. It does not erase what was said. It is still a matter of public debate. So I would just draw that distinction to your attention.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The House leader for the third party.

Mr. Rodney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, sometimes clichés don't make people happy when they hear them, but the fact of the matter is that they've stood the test of time. What's good for the goose is good for the gander is what I'm referring to.

The fact of the matter is that, Mr. Speaker, all we're looking for, I think every one of us in this Chamber, is a level playing field, that the same rules apply to all corners of this room. I mean, we could use the example of how an apology has been made by the party to my right about something that happened in a different city, that was with a group that wasn't even necessarily attributed to them, yet we still get tablings even today on that.

I think all we're asking for is consistency, Mr. Speaker. I know that you're supportive of that, and I guess we just need some clarity going forward on exactly what that's going to look like. Is it the same on this side as it is on that side?

3:00

The Speaker: Well, hon. members, as I said at the outset in my comments when I ruled on the point of order from yesterday, that responsibility not only rests with the chair; it also rests with each of you. You may recall in the particular session today that I, in fact, ruled against the point of order that was raised by the Government House Leader, which was very difficult. It's one of those decisions that needs to be made.

The point that I want to raise is that when the rules were applied, I just had finished a caution to the House about the particular matter that has caused considerable eruption in the House in the last couple of days. So when I heard the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays raising what I thought was anticipating the area, I interjected and cautioned, and I believe that's entirely within the role of the Speaker to maintain decorum. You will continue to see the application of the principle of equity and fairness. There are many, many times I have the sense that I'm doing a reasonable job here on your collective behalf when I receive notes from each side of the House sometimes criticizing a decision I've made.

That's my reason, to the hon. Opposition House Leader, and you will continue to see my best efforts directed at fairness in application.

The next point of order is also by the Opposition House Leader.

Point of Order Parliamentary Language

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At approximately 1:45 during question period today the Minister of Energy used language that was: the opposition is misleading the House. There is a long, long, long line of precedent that would indicate that this language is unparliamentary. We're talking about Standing Order 23(h), (i), (j) for a citation: making allegations against another member. Under Speaker Carter on December 7, 1990: "is absolutely misleading" the House was ruled unparliamentary.

Let me just give you some more examples so you can be certain that that sort of language is likely to create disorder, that making allegations that the opposition is misleading the House is wildly inappropriate, and that the minister should know better.

On April 18, 2002, "misleading" was considered by Speaker Kowalski unparliamentary. "Misleading the House" was considered

unparliamentary November 3, 2010, by Deputy Speaker Cao; April 23, 2009, by Speaker Kowalski; April 12, 2007, by Speaker Kowalski; June 21, 1990, by Deputy Speaker Schumacher; May 18, 1988, by Chair Gogo; April 1, 1987 – it wasn't an April Fool's joke that day, either – by Speaker Carter. Then continuing on with just "misled": February 12, 1998, by Speaker Kowalski.

I think you get the picture, Mr. Speaker, that making an allegation that the opposition is misleading the House is wildly inappropriate, should be withdrawn and apologized for, and we can all move on with what is a very, very nice day.

Mr. Mason: Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't have the Blues, and I am not sure what exactly the language was. If the language was "misleading the House," then I would agree with my hon. colleague. If the language is "misleading the public," that's a different matter and not, in my view, covered by the rulings that have been cited.

I await your wisdom on this matter, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Do you have another point?

Mr. Cooper: Just to add, if I might, that a long list under "misleading Albertans and the public" is also included in unparliamentary language.

The Speaker: I, too, do not have the benefit of the Blues or the *Hansard* in this regard. If, in fact, the statement was as the member said, I want to suggest that the House leader talk to the member concerned and encourage them to reconsider if that is, in fact, correct. There may not be, actually, a point of order in this instance, but it seems to me that if it's true, given the precedents that the Opposition House Leader has identified, then there may well be, in fact, a need for the member to apologize.

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 4

Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2017

The Speaker: The Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the hon. Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board it's my pleasure to move second reading of Bill 4, the Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2017.

The supplementary amounts provided by this bill reflect the fiscal picture outlined in the third fiscal quarter update, released on February 23. These amounts are necessary for the government to conduct business and to fulfill its commitments for the current fiscal year.

To remind members, these estimates include roughly \$1.6 billion in voted expense funding, roughly \$125 million in voted capital expense transactions. These estimates provide additional authorization for the following departments, Mr. Speaker: Advanced Education, Agriculture and Forestry, Children's Services, Community and Social Services, Culture and Tourism, Economic Development and Trade, Education, Environment and Parks, Health, Indigenous Relations, Infrastructure, Justice and Solicitor General, Labour, Municipal Affairs, Seniors and Housing, Service Alberta, Transportation, and Treasury Board and Finance.

Mr. Speaker, as we discussed during Committee of Supply, the largest element of the supplementary supply is for the costs associated with the Wood Buffalo wildfire. This includes roughly \$499 million for the wildfire response and roughly \$240 million for

the wildfire recovery. Once again I would like to emphasize my enduring respect for the courage demonstrated by first responders who battled this fire this past year. I would emphasize once again that this government and all Albertans have the backs of our fellow citizens who were affected by the wildfire.

On that note, Mr. Speaker, I respectfully urge my colleagues in this House to support this bill. Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak on Bill 4, the Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2017. Here we have a case of the government running out of money and having to spend, spend, spend and needing more money. Actions like that will usually get an automatic no from the Wildrose. But we also have some very interesting jiggery-pokery going on in this bill, too. It seems like the government needs to move some money around from department to department and convert expenses to capital dollars and financial transactions.

Normally I wouldn't have a problem with transfers and conversions, but bear with me here. My shadow ministry, the Department of Environment and Parks, is transferring \$135,000 from expenses to capital investment in the Department of Infrastructure. What could this mean? I'd say that it looks like green infrastructure. The Committee of Supply documents say that it is for a climate leadership plan deeper greening project. Perhaps the minister could elaborate more about the deeper greening project. Frankly, Mr. Speaker, I went online and tried to look on the government site to see what deeper greening was and on other sites, googling it, and nothing came up. I'm not quite sure what that one is, so I would appreciate some elaboration on that.

When I look at section 3(5) of Bill 4, there are more departments. There's money going from Environment's expense vote into capital investment in Advanced Education, \$760,000; into Agriculture and Forestry, \$104,000; \$1.5 million to Health; \$1 million to Transportation; \$800,000 to Treasury Board and Finance. Seriously, Treasury Board and Finance? It needs green capital investment? Well, I guess that apparently they need perhaps a little bit more technology to administer the carbon tax consumer rebates because they have to take money back and forth.

3:10

Transportation needs \$1 million in capital for the climate leadership plan light-emitting diode, or LED, highway lighting project. The word "project" gives me a sense that this might be a one-time pilot project as opposed to a permanent move to energy savings. The city of Edmonton has LED street lighting on Walterdale Hill, so go check them out sometime. I wonder if the city of Edmonton or the city of Calgary has already done a study and has the data that could be shared and help the government to save some money.

Health does not give too many details about their \$1.5 million in green infrastructure from the climate leadership plan. If we could get some more details from the minister about this, I would really appreciate that, and that would be helpful.

Agriculture is using \$104,000 for the energy efficient carbon neutral greenhouse infrastructure modelling project, and the Farm Stewardship Centre showcases a solar photovoltaic project.

Then Advanced Education is getting an additional \$760,000 from the green slush fund for a power plant upgrade and connection at Mount Royal University. I hope the minister can please tell me when that ribbon-cutting will happen. My colleague the shadow minister of Advanced Education will have more to say on this project, and he'll have questions, I'm sure, too.

It all adds up to \$4,299,000 in expense turning into capital, leaving Environment and going elsewhere. On one hand, it looks like a giant green slush fund that all other departments of government get to pilfer for their pet projects.

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

The Speaker: Yes. Your point of order.

Point of Order Parliamentary Language

Mr. Mason: Well, Standing Order 23(h), (i), and (j), I think all three, Mr. Speaker. He just said that this is a slush fund, which is fine – I'm sure they've got lots of quotes of me calling things slush funds when I was in opposition – but he talked about pilfering. Pilfering, whether the member realizes it or not, means theft, and if he's accusing government members of stealing, then he darn well better have some evidence, or he should apologize and withdraw the comment.

The Speaker: Hon. member, any comment?

Mr. Taylor: Yes. I apologize for using that word and withdraw it.

Debate Continued

Mr. Taylor: On the other hand, it looks like bureaucratic empire building. Yes, Environment and Parks is casting its tentacles into all the other government departments like a giant octopus. It is more like one giant expense in one department becoming capital in another. There is \$7,674,000 at section 3(4) that is going to expense in departments. The tentacles grow deeper: \$150,000 to Agriculture and Forestry, \$9,000 to the Department of Culture and Tourism, \$562,000 to the Department of Economic Development and Trade, \$5,200,000 to the Department of Indigenous Relations, \$500,000 to the Department of Seniors and Housing, \$200,000 to the Department of Transportation, \$1,053,000 to the Department of Treasury Board and Finance.

We are told in Committee of Supply that it's for more greening. For Agriculture it is for the Alberta energy efficient carbon neutral greenhouse infrastructure modelling project. For Culture and Tourism it is for the greenest building study. Excuse me? Why is Culture and Tourism doing something that Alberta Infrastructure might ask BOMA, the Building Owners and Managers Association, to undertake.

Economic Development and Trade is getting money to support the coal advisory panel. There are three members on the coal advisory panel that have already begun travelling to impacted communities, so part of the dollars are for them to engage in 10 facilitated discussions with stakeholders in the communities most affected by the retirement of coal-fired generation. I have to ask myself: why are we doing consultation now? Why didn't we have the consultation beforehand?

Mr. Rodney: Don't ask yourself; ask him.

Mr. Taylor: Okay. I'll ask the minister: why are we having the consultation now as opposed to before you announced that you were going to shut down these towns with their coal-fired generation?

Indigenous Relations helped themselves to the green money, too, so they could fund the climate leadership plan indigenous community support engagement study, the Alberta indigenous community energy program, the Alberta indigenous solar program, and the Lubicon Lake band green infrastructure assessment.

Seniors and Housing is getting money for the climate leadership plan green infrastructure initiative related to the facility of energy audit. When it comes to lowering operational expenses of publicly owned facilities, if you do an energy audit and find the wind drafts where the windows are leaking, the chimneys and the furnaces and all that and then incorporate the repairs into your regular maintenance program, eventually the government will save on operating costs. We're all about saving on operating costs. Believe me, I don't like any higher prices than you do, so we're all on board that way.

Now, Transportation is apparently going to use the climate leadership plan dollars from Environment to conduct an electric vehicle impact study and truck stop electrification technical and commercial feasibility study. Now, with Tesla and other automobile manufacturers putting electric cars on the road, electric recharging is critical. The Alberta Motor Association has a very good road map of all the charging stations in Alberta. What I don't understand is why we need to be hiring consultants for studies on things that private industry is already taking care of for us. Tesla has installed numerous charging stations all over Alberta for their vehicles, so why do we need a technical commercial feasibility study? Why not call up Tesla, sign an information-sharing agreement, call it a day, and save some taxpayer money?

Then we get into Treasury Board and Finance, where we finally find out that the cost to administer all those consumer rebate cheques is going to be \$1,053,000 plus that \$800,000 in capital for technology, almost \$2 million, to help administer the carbon tax.

To summarize, there is over \$7.6 million leaving Environment and Parks to other departments in expense to the green slush fund that you have for projects. There's another almost \$4.3 million in expense leaving Environment and turning into capital in other departments. That's a total of \$11.9 million in carbon tax related spending not in Environment and Parks. Mr. Speaker, the tentacles are spreading, and I look forward to seeing how entrenched they get with this Thursday's budget being finally finalized and figured out.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Are there any other members who wish to speak to Bill 4? I think Airdrie.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise today to speak to Bill 4, supplementary supply. Now, let me tell you that sometimes I wish I could run my household the way that this government runs. I do. Let me be more specific. I wish I had the same opportunity that this government is taking, the ability to spend all my money and then go back for more, the ability to be carefree about the obscene amounts of debt and still have an appetite for spending left unquenched.

3:20

But, see, I've learned that that's not the way things are in real life, Mr. Speaker. In real life, in real, everyday Alberta life, when you run out of money, you run out of money, unless I've been wrong. I've been in the wrong line of work my whole life. Maybe people don't go to their boss and ask for a raise to tide them over for an additional two months before the next contract comes in. Maybe I'm in the wrong line of work.

Now, as the Member for Calgary-Foothills said just yesterday afternoon: this government is not the first government to be unable to pass a budget that doesn't require additional funds later. This isn't the first time government has come back to this House asking, even demanding, more money. This isn't the first time it's happened, but that doesn't make it right, Mr. Speaker. Something I tell my kids and I'm sure that members opposite tell their children,

too: just because somebody else does it doesn't make it right; just because someone else thinks it's okay doesn't mean it's okay.

Now, you know, Mr. Speaker, Albertans have become very aware that this government has a huge spending problem. It's a problem. Unfortunately, it coincides with their addiction to taxes. It's an addiction.

Mr. Speaker, you've heard it before. That's because it's true. Albertans are struggling. They have a hard time making ends meet. Tens of thousands of people are out of work, and they're taking on debt that they don't know how they're going to repay, similar to this government.

A BNN article from December 14, only three months ago, said that the Canadian household debt-to-income ratio has risen to 166.9 per cent. That's crazy. One hundred and sixty-seven per cent, 66.9. Mr. Speaker, that's a record high, but it's certainly not a record to be proud of. A CBC article from last May said that the average debt of an Albertan is over \$27,000. The *Edmonton Sun* reported just over a month ago that serious financial problems arose again last fall. That's a quote, Mr. Speaker. Consumer insolvencies increased over 26 per cent as of this past November, and bankruptcies were up even higher, with an increase of 28 and a half per cent.

Mr. Speaker, that's only consumer debt. It's only household debt. That hasn't even taken into account the debt that this government has plunged them into. That's another record that we are not proud of.

Now, I'm curious, you know, Mr. Speaker, to hear what the government has to say about their budget tomorrow afternoon. I'm curious, but I'm also nervous. I'm curious, but I'm also skeptical. I'm curious, but I'm also, quite frankly, scared. So are Albertans. The big question is: what's the new big red number? Will they budget for a full year without needing to come back to ask for more? I don't believe it. Will I be here again next year, prebudget, once again looking at a significant list of new spending items? Likely so.

Now, I know that I'll be here railing against unnecessary and extra spending. I mean, how can I not, when this government in its third-quarter update announced that their revenues were up? Revenues are up, yet we're still here. By how much? One point five billion dollars in revenue. Billion. That's a lot of money, Mr. Speaker. Yet we're here. This government has a spending problem. I think that's very crystal clear.

Now, they may have found \$1.5 billion, but they spent an extra \$2.6 billion. An extra \$2.6 billion, Mr. Speaker. That's obscene. And it turns out that wasn't even enough because we're still here; \$2.6 billion in extra spending, \$1.5 billion in extra revenues, and we're still here. We're still here asking for more money just before the budget.

Now, confession, Mr. Speaker: I'm a fan of Gail Vaz-Oxlade, the no-holds-barred guru of financial management. I can distribute a copy. You know what she says all the time? You can't spend more than you make. That's it. Very simple. If you don't have the money, you can't spend the money. Well, guess what? We don't have the money. We don't have the money, yet this government continues to spend as if they've got a money tree in the back of the Legislature. I think this government thinks that there's a money tree behind this Legislature.

Mrs. Aheer: By the stairs.

Mrs. Pitt: Yep.

When I was six, I thought my parents had a money tree, but then I grew up and realized that money trees are not real. They're not real.

Now, there comes a point, Mr. Speaker, believe it or not, when you have to say: I'm sorry; I can't afford it. I'm sure many people

in this Legislature who have children say that to them all the time. Albertans say it all the time. Much more often these days than they used to, they say: I don't have the money. Our charities are feeling that all the time. Their donors say: I'm sorry. To the thousands of Albertans that need the food bank: I'm sorry; I just can't afford it. That's the reality. Sometimes you have to say no. Sometimes you just don't have the money.

But if you're NDP, you just say: "Well, heck, we'll tax you more. No problem. You can't pay, we can't pay, but we're going to make it just that much harder for you to balance your budget. But, here, have a free light bulb." What an insult to Albertans. Oh, by the way, that light bulb cost you at least twice as much as if you would have gone to the store and got it yourself. The self-reliant Albertans that I know have no problem doing that. In fact, most of them already have. But this government doesn't even want you to screw it in yourself. They don't trust you to screw in your own light bulb, Mr. Speaker. They don't trust you to do it, so they've hired someone from outside of this province to come to your home and screw in your light bulbs. And they make you pay for it.

If you're NDP, you promise jobs, but you shut down coal and you chase out investment. If you're NDP, you promise a balanced budget, but that promise constantly gets pushed back and delayed for several years: we'll do it later. Procrastination doesn't get you much. If you're NDP, you promise lower personal taxes, but then you add a new tax on top of everything. If you're NDP, you use old information to hand out rebate cheques but announce that you'll take it back if that old information is wrong. Oops. If you're NDP, you rebate money to attempt to cover the increase in expenses, and then you pull it back when people are hurting and grieving. Shame on you. Shame on the NDP, Mr. Speaker, because that is not okay. It is not okay. People are hurting and this government . . .

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

3:30

The Speaker: Hon. member, there's a point of order being raised. Is that right?

Point of Order **Factual Accuracy**

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, I don't want to see disorder in this place. If the hon. member persists in saying that it is the NDP that is seeking the return of money from the rebates in the event of someone passing away or a change in marital circumstances, there will be because it's just not true. The Premier pointed out very clearly that this is a Canada Revenue Agency issue that we are striving to correct because we don't agree with the actions that the Canada Revenue Agency is taking. They were insensitive. This is not something that the government is doing, and if the hon. members opposite keep saying so, then not only does it cast aspersions, but it's completely unfounded, incorrect information, and it's bound to create disorder.

The Speaker: The Opposition House Leader. Please proceed.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to a point of order. I'm not entirely sure of the citation that the minister is making. I guess we can make the assumption that it's 23, maybe "makes allegations against another Member."

First of all, I guess it would be advantageous for the Government House Leader to be able to be in the Chamber while perhaps the Member for Banff-Cochrane is making wild allegations against the opposition, which we've seen a lot in the last few days. A lot of the allegations he was making are as factual as the allegation that the

Government House Leader is making about the comments that my hon. colleague from Airdrie is making.

Clearly, Mr. Speaker, what we have here is a matter of debate. If there's one thing that we can be certain of, it's that the province of Alberta directed the CRA to execute a program. At the end of the day the government of Alberta and in this case the NDP are responsible. The buck stops at the NDP. To say that they're not responsible for the actions is like to say they're not responsible for policing in the province because that's the RCMP's jurisdiction. Well, the contract is held by the government. The government sets out the framework. The NDP sets out the framework. The NDP sets out the parameters of programs. This is what a policy-making organization does. It's their policy. While they can accept that it's not right, it's still them that are at the end of the day responsible for that.

What we clearly have is a matter of debate. While I agree that the Government House Leader thinks it's unfortunate that this has happened – it is unfortunate. It's horrible. But it is the government's fault. They are the ones that are responsible for it. My hon. colleague is merely pointing out that that is what has happened. I think it's unfortunate that the Government House Leader would call a point of order on this.

The Speaker: I've been advised that in early experiences that have been pointed out to me, no more than one opposition party is to speak to a point of order. I don't know if that's correct. I'm going to in this instance say that unless there's something new, I think the Opposition House Leader has approved it.

Yet again there seems to be language and words being used in this place that address the point that I've said so many times and as recently as this afternoon. I can hear on the government side and at other times the phrase has been: Wildrose has said certain things. In this instance the tables are reversed. I don't have a *Beauchesne*, at least not with enough time here to check this in detail, but could I ask that the member please be cautious about the words that she's using. There has been a representation, but as has been pointed out by the Opposition House Leader, there have been other instances. I will in fact read this tonight in *Beauchesne*, but please exercise caution, as I've said so many times in here, and get moving on with the issue.

Please proceed.

Debate Continued

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was actually about to applaud the government in the next step before they got so offended by the truth in my speech, but I do apologize for causing something that might offend somebody. You know, that happens a lot these days.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it's no surprise that I will not be supporting Bill 4, nor will my colleagues, and that's not because there aren't some good things in here. I will applaud you for the additional funds for Crown prosecutors. I think that's a great use of taxpayer money. Certainly, I think taxpayers are asking for that use of funds. But, you know, generally when you look at the whole picture in Bill 4 and the significant amount of money being spent and given that there has been a surprise increase in revenues, quite a significant number, there is no scenario within what has been given in which I can support Bill 4. I implore all members in this House to also not support this bill.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Any questions under 29(2)(a) to the Member for Airdrie?

The Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 4, the 2016-17 supplementary supply. You know, sometimes I have heard these bills called the lack of planning bills. Sometimes I've heard them called the overspending bills . . .

Mr. Mason: Does keeping the lights on come to mind?

Mr. Cooper: Keeping the lights on bills I think could refer to the interim supply bills.

But, you know, someday, hopefully, in the future, when I have the opportunity to sit in the Government House Leader's seat, I guess, if I've done a good job here and the outstanding people of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills return me to this Chamber – I had the opportunity to spend a lot of time with the folks in Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills yesterday, and we were chatting about some of the comments that have been made in the Chamber and how they were feeling about those. I know that there are a lot of folks that are disappointed with the direction this government is going in. We saw that in the Mainstreet poll that was released yesterday, with close to 60 per cent of Albertans disappointed with the direction of the government and them managing the economy.

You know, tomorrow we're going to see quite likely the largest deficit in Alberta's history, of course since the last NDP budget. But you get the point, Mr. Speaker, that they're running up significant amounts of debt year over year over year.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

While I was with the outstanding people of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, as I said, you know, they expressed some concern around the language the government uses, whether it's calling them Chicken Little or other things. There is real concern about the economic realities that face Alberta. There's real concern about the amount of spending that this government is doing.

3:40

Thankfully, we've seen a modest increase in the oil price. Now, we've lost a lot of that over the last 10 days or so, but we've seen a very modest increase in the price of oil and, as such, a significant amount of new revenue. Some of that revenue certainly wasn't planned for by the government, and we saw that in the third-quarter update, this increase in revenue.

What we've also seen is the government's unquenchable thirst for spending. That's exactly what we see here in the supplementary supply bill, this government's refusal to do what they say they're going to do, which is – you know, I don't know how many times I've heard the Minister of Finance speak about bending the cost curve. Well, if he wanted to do that, he had the opportunity by sticking to the budget that they initially introduced last year, and we wouldn't need this supplementary supply. The government can't help themselves, Madam Speaker. We see time and time again this desire to spend beyond their means and make significant departures from the original budget that require us to be here today.

But, you know, one thing that grows tiresome is the government's accusation that spending in the Official Opposition's ridings – I heard the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud ask the Member for Airdrie: well, how do you like 24-hour care in your constituency? Madam Speaker, governing comes down to choices. The government would like you to think that spending in an opposition riding is more or less important than in a government riding and that the opposition also advocating, like I assume members of the government caucus do, for priority infrastructure projects across our province is somehow less reasonable than when they do it.

My point is not that it happens, that we advocate for infrastructure projects right across the province and, I might add, not just in our

constituencies but in other areas. A perfect example of that is in central Alberta. It's unfortunate that the members for Red Deer have not been as vocal as some others, but the amount of spending on health in central Alberta is disproportionately less than the amount of population that is in that area. When members of this side or perhaps the members from Red Deer are advocating on their behalf, it is about choices that have to be made. Where the opposition continually is frustrated by this government is that they have no desire to acknowledge that just because the government spends a dollar doesn't mean it's a good dollar spent. There are literally millions and millions and hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars that are spent by this government that could be better spent.

It is about priorities that this government has or should have when it comes to spending in one area or another. The only solution that this government speaks about is spending more. They make the assumption that every single dollar spent is well spent. Madam Speaker, it doesn't take a rocket scientist to know that that's not true, that the government wastes incredible amounts of money. I mean, just today the Member for Strathmore-Brooks highlighted significant areas of potential savings. The government says, "We're bending the cost curve," yet they come back to the House for billions of dollars of supplementary supply.

Madam Speaker, Albertans expect a level of responsibility when it comes to government spending. While the government continually makes choices to not listen to the overwhelming majority of Albertans when they say that they're getting it wrong on the economy, when they say that they're getting it wrong on debt and borrowing – I know that the people of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, the overwhelming majority of them, want me to come to the Chamber and advocate on their behalf because they understand the long-term ramifications of out-of-control spending. They understand that by the end of the NDP's reign we will be spending multiple billions of dollars a year on interest alone. Every time the government doesn't follow their own budget and they come back to this Assembly to add on to that pile of debt, there are consequences. The consequences aren't likely today, but they certainly will happen. It's unfortunate that the government is choosing to not acknowledge those but to only say: we're bending the curve.

The government has this habit of only pointing to spending like health care: well, the opposition must not want health care in their constituency. Or roads, as the House leader mentioned. Madam Speaker, when they make a statement like that, they imply that every dollar in health care is spent wisely, and I know that my colleague from Cypress-Medicine Hat, who spent a significant amount of time as a shadow minister for Health, identified millions of dollars of waste inside the health care system, yet the government refuses to acknowledge it. They say that the only thing the opposition wants is to eliminate all health care spending, to eliminate all front-line workers, to cut \$9 billion out of the budget. Even today my colleague from Strathmore-Brooks highlighted how that isn't the case but how there are real, common-sense solutions to getting our province's spending back on track. In order to do that, it's very clear that we're going to need a Wildrose government to ensure that that spending is back on track, where we can ensure the future of our province is at the top of mind to government and not just the problems of today.

You know, when I think of the future of the province, Madam Speaker, I think of my children. I think of the children that attend our Assembly each day and come and observe what happens here. While I agree that having a well-funded education system is significantly important to the future of our province, putting the future of our education system at risk because of billions and billions and billions and billions of dollars that will be spent on interest will

ultimately result in fewer dollars for the classroom, and that is a concern.

3:50

Madam Speaker, it's bills like supplementary supply, like interim supply, like the absolute train wreck of a budget that we're going to see tomorrow that will put our province on a track to a fiscal cliff that is not going to result in the long-term success of our province. As such, while there are some areas of spending inside this particular piece of legislation, the Finance minister himself acknowledged during the third-quarter update that some of the spending is not lawful because of the way that they had to end around some legislation that has been passed.

There should be no member of this Chamber that would like to support a piece of legislation like that, and that's exactly why I'll stand with many of my colleagues to vote against supplementary supply.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?
I'll recognize the hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: I actually introduced this bill.

The Deputy Speaker: So you can't speak to it again.

Cortes-Vargas: Madam Speaker, I'd like to move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 5

Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2017

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thanks very much, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure on behalf of the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board to move second reading of Bill 5, the Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2017.

The Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2017, will provide funding authority to the offices of the Legislative Assembly and the government for the period of April 1, 2017, to May 31, 2017, inclusive. The approval of this act will provide funds needed to continue the business of the province while the Assembly takes the time necessary to prepare, present, review, and debate the government's 2017-18 budget plans.

Madam Speaker, this funding is important. It keeps things like our schools and our hospitals open. These are the key services that Albertans rely on, and I want to remind all members of the Assembly that the details of the government's plan will be made clear tomorrow when the budget is unveiled. Once the budget is released, I'm sure we will have a fulsome debate in estimates and in this Chamber on the government's fiscal and capital plan. In the intervening period I respectfully urge my colleagues in this House to support the bill and to provide the necessary interim supply for the benefit of all Albertans.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Do we have a speaker wishing to speak to this bill? The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's difficult to have substantive discussion on a bill that has so little information, really. When no commentary is provided, it's very hard to know what's going on. Here we are expected to vote on this money bill, interim supply, a bill that comes before us primarily because we are not

prepared with a full budget in time to get the budget passed before the new fiscal year begins, a very large money bill that is about two months' worth of operations for the government, it looks like. It would be nice to get a little bit more detail.

I respect the Government House Leader's comments with regard to that more detail will be coming tomorrow when the budget is introduced, and we'll be able to have some fulsome debate about that. But I think that over time people in government, and that includes all members of this House, become numb to some of the dollar figures that we're talking about here. When the government spends \$50 billion each year, the attitude becomes: "What's a few million dollars here? What's a few million dollars there?" Yet I quite often like to take it down to the level of the average Albertan or average Albertan families. When you think about Alberta families earning, say, \$60,000 annually and they see their hard-earned money deducted as taxes on their pay stubs, then they pay GST, then they pay property taxes, and then they pay carbon taxes, with what's left over – it's a reminder that we really have to be careful how we spend their money. The government needs to remember who it's serving and how it's benefiting Albertans with each and every line item on the financial statements.

Yesterday I had some questions for the Labour minister with regard to a labour review that has been introduced on Monday, and \$32.6 million in this interim supply estimates is for the Labour minister's department. Is some of this to pay for the government's labour review launch this week? We've been seeing a frightening volume of job losses in this province, Madam Speaker, and you would think that given the high unemployment rate and the rise in the number of families that are struggling to make ends meet, the NDP would be introducing policies that are enhancing investor confidence and encouraging people to start businesses and hire people. Instead, this government is coming out and saying that anything is on the table in their labour review in terms of our employment standards and our rules around unionization and collective bargaining. This government needs to get its priorities straight. At a time when we have limited resources at our disposal here and at a time when hundreds and thousands and even tens of thousands of people are unemployed, we need to be sure that we are spending this money in a way that will allow them to get back to work.

I also want to talk about the fact that this government isn't even trying to balance the budget until 2024. We get hints of green shoots and hints of bending the curve from the Finance minister but very little with respect to plans on how to reduce the bloated spending that is occurring at this time. And 2024: it's an arbitrary year in the future that is being tossed around so that right now the NDP can just spend, spend, and spend some more. It is as if this government realizes that they won't be re-elected and they won't be the government in power in 2024 so: "Who cares? Let's throw caution to the wind."

Over the last 10 years the Alberta government's spending has grown faster than inflation and population growth. Even a comment with regard to the throne speech, where it was pointed out that the previous government had up to 11 per cent increase in one fiscal year. In our third-quarter updates for this past fiscal year it looks like this government, at a time when we would think that we were looking for restraint in spending, is on a path to increase spending by just under 10 per cent, Madam Speaker.

Right now the economy is not its strongest, but it is not prudent to assume the situation won't get worse but in fact will get better so as to allow for the budget to be balanced in the years 2023 or 2024. I have yet to meet a person who can confidently and accurately predict the future. People can speculate, but they don't know what will happen, and it's very risky to gamble that we can take on billions of dollars in debt for several years and then expect the

situation to change and make way for balanced budgets, especially without a change in an approach to our spending.

Budgets do not balance themselves. Madam Speaker, as a farmer I've been able over the years to be challenged with the reality of commodity price ups and downs and the reality that there are two lines on our cash flow. We have to recognize that we have income and we have expense, and in order to manage a business successfully, both of those line items have to be taken into consideration. The attitude that we're just going to continue to borrow, borrow, borrow and not be concerned about our bloated spending in this province will lead us, I believe, into a very difficult situation.

4:00

Budgets don't balance themselves, Madam Speaker, especially with this government's policies. I wouldn't be confident that the economic situation will soon be changing for the better enough to allow the budget to balance in 2023. For one thing, the government is not proudly supporting and defending this province's oil industry, which has been so beneficial to this province and contributed to its prosperity. It is about the ability to manage the fluctuation in the commodity price. It's critical for any entity to be able to recognize that income is not going to be continually going up, up, up but that there is a possibility that we're going to see fluctuations in commodity prices, and we need to be able to manage through that by controlling our spending and controlling our efficiencies, looking for effective ways of delivery of programs and efficient ways to deliver these programs, that all Albertans are counting on us to be able to deliver for the long term.

This government likes to point out the previous government's failure to balance a budget at \$100 a barrel. I've heard that several times in the last couple weeks, where the government members will point to the third party and say: well, you couldn't balance the budget at \$100 a barrel. But the fact is, Madam Speaker, that this government, this NDP government's budget would fail to balance at even \$120 a barrel. So to be throwing stones at the previous government for not being able to balance at \$100, then this government has to also take a look in the mirror and see that their budget would fail to balance at \$120 a barrel.

The bloated public spending would require the personal income tax of every Albertan to almost double in order to come into balance. I do not believe that Albertans would see kindly to their personal income tax doubling in order to balance the books. The reality is that we have a \$10.8 billion deficit, and in this province we take in a little over \$11 billion of personal income tax to pay these operating costs, to keep the lights on and keep the operations going. I think Albertans are looking for government to find a way to do it more efficiently, more effectively and not be coming to them for more money.

It's about more than balanced budgets, Madam Speaker. Once you have a lot of debt, you need to do more than just match your revenue and your expenses. You need to have a plan to actually pay down that debt. This government's spending is not sustainable. The NDP love the word "sustainable," so they should practise what they preach when it comes to their budgeting.

Now that I've said all of this, allow me to ask a few questions just with regard to some of the details within interim supply that I would be seeking to have some clarification on. What percentage of the upcoming budget does the \$32.6 million on page 2 represent? Is it essentially one-sixth of the upcoming budget? How much is the government's labour review going to cost? When we're taking money at this time to do a labour review, is it the wisest thing to do that at this time? Is it necessary spending? How much of this spending will actually go to projects that create jobs for Albertans, where we can see that money being spent here is actually going towards

creating new jobs for Albertans? It's fine to do a labour review, but at this time is there going to be a significant increase in investor confidence to bring on these new jobs by doing the labour review?

Will the Labour ministry be focused on handing out taxpayer dollars to pay directly for jobs, or does this government agree that the goal should be an environment conducive to organic job creation? I believe that is the healthiest job creation that we can attain, and I believe that's a direction we should all be striving to accomplish.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: I'll recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Well, I do feel that I should stand and speak as an opposition member who recognizes the importance of some of the new policy that's been brought forward and the recognition, too, that in these challenging times it's been important to look at new ways of sustaining some of the services that people need more significantly than they have in the past.

I've repeatedly raised questions with the government, both privately and publicly, that there needs to be a rigorous independent review of some of what we're doing in our public services. I think there are significant savings that can be made and efficiencies that can be gained. But apart from that, we recognize that we're in a significant deficit and debt situation in this province. I would like to think that as mature legislators we would be willing to have an adult conversation about revenue, and that includes the PST.

Are we going to pass this all on to our children, or are we going to start paying our share now of getting this debt under control? To talk about a PST, a 2 per cent increase, for example – that would take us back to what we were paying for many years under the federal GST. A harmonized PST would take us to 7 per cent, which we paid long ago, and if we're serious about trying to address intergenerational equity and not dump a whole bunch more burden and debt and increased cost of living onto our children and our grandchildren, we have to start talking about a PST. There is just no other option.

I hesitate to say that. Politically, nobody wants to say the word. When we are charged with some of the most important decisions for the future of the province, if we can't talk about it here, where can we talk about it? Out in the media it's often used as a whip to whip parties that talk in terms of a responsible stewardship for the future. The reality is that over decades we have built up a massive infrastructure debt and deficit. Since the Klein cuts of the '90s we have a social deficit that has not been addressed. We have an environmental debt that we are now starting to address in terms of stronger legislation around environment and regulations around the environment.

Whether or not it's all as efficiently spent as we would all like it to be – and we admonish the government to look assiduously at every budget in the public sector and hold the line on new contracts. At the same time we have to as responsible adults have an adult conversation about revenue and about a reasonable tax. We're still the lowest taxed jurisdiction in the country, and we are adding very significant burdens onto future generations without even addressing the question of a PST. I find that really discouraging, frankly. I would hope that we can have an honest conversation about it, regardless of the fact that they may not be doing optimal management. We are going to be faced with a big debt in 2019. Let's talk about how we're going to at least start to make for some intergenerational equity and start paying some of our way.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)? Go ahead.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Madam Speaker. If I could, please, I'd just like to take a second and ask the hon. member a couple of things. The CBC a week or two ago again clearly pointed out Alberta's spending problem. The fact that our province spends \$2,700 more per year per capita than any other province – and as we've seen our wait times slip and we've seen our infrastructure problems, I would challenge you to explain where we get the value for that extra money.

4:10

Then when it comes to the PST, I often wonder: what does the Alberta advantage mean to the average family? Alberta in a good year gets \$8 billion, \$9 billion, or \$10 billion in royalties. Of course, no question that in the last couple of years it's been substantially lower, I think even in the \$2 billion to \$3 billion or \$4 billion vicinity, but, hon. member, I don't think any other province comes anywhere close to that. Most provinces hardly get anything, if any. We make more in royalties than other provinces receive in PST. How does that correlate, in your thinking, with what the Alberta advantage would be for the people that live in Alberta?

Thank you.

Dr. Swann: Well, Madam Speaker, we're talking about apples and oranges. Most people in this province recognize that we have not saved our oil money for 30 years. Why is that? Why have we not saved it over 30 years? Under Peter Lougheed we were receiving 29 per cent royalties. In the last 15 years it's been about 7 to 9 per cent royalties, so either we're not bringing in enough money or we're not saving it in an appropriate fashion or both.

That doesn't address the question of the reality that we have been building debt and deficit for the last 25 years in this province. If we want the services, the schools, the hospitals, the roads, and the standard of living that we enjoy here, the real question, with respect, is: are you going to pass this on to your children, or are you going to start paying your share now? That's the question I think we have to ask.

When you get into power, we'll be asking you the same question. Can you maintain services and infrastructure with the budget you suggested? Impossible. Nobody believes that you're credible in talking about a balanced budget by 2017. It's just not credible. The numbers don't add up unless you make massive cuts to the services and the supports and the schools and the hospitals and the roads. It just doesn't add up, so let's get real about leaving a massive debt to our children and grandchildren: \$40 billion, \$50 billion, \$60 billion is not going to be paid off in a few years. Let's face it.

The Speaker: Any other questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, I'll recognize the hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Good afternoon, everybody. I know this is riveting – riveting – info. I know. I have two amazing sons. I'm sure you've all realized that by now. They are the centre of my world, and I would pretty much do anything for them. As a mom I've had to learn to set boundaries, and even more difficult I've had to learn to say no many, many, many times. I'm a tough mom. If you ever ask my kids, they'll certainly agree with you. Along with my husband, we've really, really worked hard to help our sons, who are 20 and 18, to be independent and self-starters, responsible with their money, how to invest, and reward for good behaviour. At least in my family those are really important things. I'm not tough to be mean or rude or cause them any grief or

any harm or to take anything away from them. I mean, they're amazing young men, and granted I'm obviously biased because they're mine.

Mrs. Pitt: They're pretty great.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you.

I need to ensure, and so does my husband, that they have the opportunity to learn to be self-reliant, self-sufficient, and self-supporting, autonomous adults in the ability that they have. That is the amazing part. For every other parent in here, I'm sure that you can agree that that's the joy and the challenge of being a parent. Often it would be so much simpler, especially when we're talking about cleaning, especially when I have two boys and a husband, whom I love immensely – but they don't clean the way that I do. It would be simpler for me to say, "Okay, I'll do it," and be okay with that. "I'll do that for you." My sons are at home right now while I'm here, so they're cooking, they're cleaning, and they're taking care of picking up the dog poop, all that fun stuff, that is their responsibility. Nevertheless, it is their job, and they're responsible for that, and that is the fun part of their responsibilities within our house. And they work, and they go to school.

In my mind, I'm sure I could probably do it faster and neater and better, but the important aspect here is that it's their responsibility to do those things, and we're trying to enforce that with them at home. I really don't want to deprive them of having the opportunity to prove to themselves, their employers, and everybody else who is going to eventually look up to them that they are capable of doing these things. If they're wanting advances on their paycheques or anything like that, they have to ask for it, they have to prove why, and they have to understand how that's going to impact the paycheque at the end of the day, and they don't get extra just because they ask for it. Again, as a parent I could easily solve their problems for them, but I choose to help my young men develop the skills and understanding that they need to be self-governing adults.

Which brings me to interim supply, Madam Speaker. The government needs to learn, like my young men, how to spend within their means and present a budget on time to ensure that they are able to continue with the important business of governing the province. I expect this from my government, and so do Albertans. We thought in 2015 and again last year: they're a new government. Having never been in government, it would be very, very difficult for me to try and understand the absolute complexity and difficulty that comes along with this massive undertaking. However, we are at a new time and a new session, and I'm quite sure and quite confident that the government knows – well, they should know – what they're doing. I mean, in the business world there are consequences for this.

Again this year we see them asking for more money and an advance to tide them over until they get the budget together. Again, I say this with great humility. I mean, I understand that budgets may not always be prepared. But, please, some clarity. Please. What really bothers me about interim supply is that we're essentially writing a blank cheque to the government again. Personally, I'm not buying into this, and neither are Albertans. There's no information that is provided that will allow Albertans to understand what this money will be used for and who is going to be accountable for the expenditures. Accountability, please. We are asked to make decisions about humongous amounts of money without knowing exactly where that money will be spent.

So, Madam Speaker, because I view this government and the people in this House as my political family, I am going to request much more information. Yesterday I asked a few questions, and the answers that I received were not very clear, so if I could, I would

like to ask for some clarity about the interim supply for the Education portfolio because I have some very real concerns about the expenses of \$721.5 million and the capital investment of almost \$303 million and the financial transactions of \$3.2 million in the Education portion of the interim supply.

Firstly, I would like to know what the government means when they say stable funding? Stable funding in my opinion – and in reference especially to my question about Education, because the government set a budget last year, Madam Speaker, and now we're concerned about stable funding, but it's their own funding model. This is based on, if I'm to understand it, the budget from last year. So did the government not build stability and sustainability into their budget process? I mean, I guess mistakes happen, but this is becoming the norm. If this is the future of budgeting, Houston, we have a problem.

An Hon. Member: Edmonton, we have a problem.

Mrs. Aheer: Yeah.

Is the government not able, Madam Speaker, to prepare a sustainable budget that will take them across more than one year at a time? That's a stable funding model. The government continues to say that they want to make life better for Albertans, that there is a stable funding model. I'd like to see that.

The government also stated that there would be no disruption of funding under the Education capital plan and that stakeholders would not notice any difference and there would be no impact on the ability to provide services. I'm a little bit confused by that answer and would like some clarification.

In the interim supply bill the government is asking for an advance of almost \$303 million for capital expenditures, but in supplementary supply last week they transferred \$107 million from capital to operations. Maybe this just needs to be explained to me a little bit more clearly, but why would you transfer funds out of capital in one and then ask for an advance the next week? I don't know. It simply doesn't make sense to me. I love clarity, and if somebody can explain it to me, that would be wonderful.

4:20

Further, the government stated that the \$302 million plus was for modernizations and completions. I need some clarity on that as well. My question is around whether or not the modernizations and completions are the ones from the previous government's plan, that this government is finishing, or if these are new projects. The reason that I need clarity on this is that the budget requirements between projects that have begun, those that were in the planning stage, and those that are shovel ready to start from scratch are vastly different. The government keeps announcing that they built new schools in 20 months. Wow. One can only assume that some were started before this government was elected.

An Hon. Member: No way.

Mrs. Aheer: I know. Just saying.

I would also like to know if these projects are on time and on budget. Again, are we talking about previous projects, modernizations, projects that are in the works, ones that are starting? Where are we? What do we mean by modernizations and completions, and what are those dollar figures, please?

I would also like to know whether \$302 million is what we can expect for expenses month by month. Is this a recurring number across the year, or is this amount weighted more heavily for the spring? I mean, overall, the government is requesting – and I think this is correct – \$7.2 billion, a huge sum of money, massive dollars, to run the province until they can come up with the budget. That's

huge, and that amount is to keep the province running for two months. Am I understanding that correctly?

I have so many questions about this blank cheque that the government is requesting through this interim bill and how these dollars are going to be used. Albertans are asking how these dollars are going to be spent and used. The biggest questions, of course, are around the inability of the government to put together a fully informed, responsible fiscal plan that looks to reduce our deficit and get Albertans out of debt. Simply providing a blank cheque without accountability measures perpetuates the spending problem that this government struggles with. It doesn't provide a set of criteria against which the actions of the government may be measured, so we have no place to understand where the government is and where they're going.

Alberta has the highest – I repeat, and we've heard this again – per capita spending of the largest provinces in Canada. This is patchwork budgeting, at best. Many concerns could be hidden, so where's the transparency? Over the last 10 years spending has grown faster than inflation and population growth, and Albertans want an end to it.

At a time, Madam Speaker, when our economy is in shambles and thousands of Albertans are out of work and the government seems bent on making things worse, this interim budget reflects the NDP's inability to plan their budget timing properly, at the minimum. At the minimum. We can't get the budget in on time. I mean, don't Albertans deserve and shouldn't they expect real leadership not only on spending problems but the respect that they deserve on knowing that that budget will be presented when it should be presented, on time? These are just some of the questions that I have.

I mean, the government gives us grief, as they have today, for asking about spending dollars in our constituencies and on behalf of the province, but that's because we know that there are places where they can find efficiencies. This is in order to accommodate the actual needs of Albertans. We know the government is capable of doing this. We need to see action here.

Taxpayer dollars are not only relegated to the government. Every single person in this province – these are Albertans' dollars that we're responsible for here. We have a responsibility, when our constituencies bring issues forward, to ask and to request that the government look at our numbers, that we bring from this side, equally to those that come from that side. This isn't about slashing and spending; this is Albertans' money, their dollars.

If somebody asks me what's happening with their dollars and about infrastructure pieces, you can bet I'm going to ask about it. If there is a more efficient way that the government can spend those dollars to make sure that those services are provided, fantastic. But please do not berate me for doing my job and bringing concerns to this Legislature on behalf of my constituents when they have issues. They deserve to find out about their tax dollars.

I am very pleased, on one hand, to see that the interim budget is less than last year's, but I am extremely concerned, along with Albertans, that they're being asked to write a blank cheque without any information. What is more concerning to me is that I have not read or heard about any cost-saving measures from this government. If there was some way, Madam Speaker, that we could see that this interim supply is part of a complete fiscal plan that included cost savings and an approach to conservative economic strategies, I would be extremely inclined to support it.

These are tough times. We understand that. But tough times mean that governments need to be able to stand up on behalf of their people and say to them, "This is what we are doing for you," not through programs that tout ideas of light bulbs and other things that we've heard about but through real planning and thoughtful process

that actually engages Albertans so they understand that the government has their best interests at heart.

This interim supply is part of the government's approach to leaving Albertans so far in debt that our grandchildren will be paying for it, as the Member for Calgary-Mountain View said, far, far, far into the future for decisions that are being made today.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Under Standing Order 29(2)(a), any questions or comments?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill?

Hon. Government House Leader, did you wish to close debate on this bill?

Mr. Mason: No. That's fine, Madam Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 5 read a second time]

Bill 2

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

[Adjourned debate March 9: Mr. Bilous]

The Deputy Speaker: Any hon. members wishing to speak to Bill 2? I will recognize Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Soon after I was elected in May of 2015 someone quite wise asked me what was important to me as an MLA. After thinking about it, I came up with three things that are important to me as an MLA and as a human being. I think Alberta should lead the world in energy innovation; I think that high-speed Internet connectivity should reach all people in Alberta, with a focus on rural and indigenous Albertans; and I think that women and girls should be able to walk alone, without fear.

Fear of harassment and fear of assault are real for many, many women and girls, and I wonder how much of the energy that we put into keeping ourselves safe could go into more productive pursuits like creating a more equitable society and collaborating to solve the big problems our world is facing. This is particularly important to me because I am a survivor of repeated sexual assaults as a child. Before I share my story, I want to caution anyone who may be sensitive that what I am sharing might trigger a reaction for them.

When I was five I went to spend a week with some family friends out of town. I was so excited to have so many sleepovers in a row with their daughter, who was around my age, and to explore a new town. I loved my life as a little kid. I was outgoing and bold and confident. I loved who I was and was probably annoying in my sheer joy about life. On the second or third night at my friend's house something woke me up in the dark. I remember feeling so afraid while my friend's older brother assaulted me. I didn't understand what was happening, and he told me that he would kill me if I said anything, and I believed him. He was a lot older and bigger than me. There was nothing I could do to save myself from what was happening. Overnight my confidence evaporated.

4:30

A few months later my family ended up moving to the same town as my abuser, and I continued to be abused at every opportunity he could find to assault me. I was an only child, and I found it very hard to make friends in my new town. I became the target of bullies in town. A group of older boys would tease me mercilessly. I was terrified of them. I would have done anything so that they wouldn't

touch me. I never spoke up. I never talked back. I never defended myself to them because I knew the danger in provoking older boys.

The assaults continued off and on until I was about 12 and I fought back. Like many small-town Alberta kids, I spent a lot of time at the rink. I was a figure skater, and my dad coached a hockey team. My abuser ended up playing hockey for my dad, and I saw him far more than I wanted to. He cornered me at the rink one day when he thought he could get away with assaulting me again. I used my knee to forcefully stop what he was doing. He never touched me again.

The experience changed me. Like many survivors, I've sought help for PTSD, depression, and anxiety. The easy confidence of my childhood disappeared and was replaced with distrust and isolation. Other survivors can face challenges with substance abuse and suicide attempts. I commend everyone who has ever sought to heal from sexual assault and those who keep on keeping on every day, who haven't sought out support yet to help them overcome what happened to them.

I never shared what happened to me until after I had my own children. It wasn't until about 10 years ago that I even knew that I could still report what happened to me, and I figured it was my responsibility to report the assaults so that his name would be on record in case anyone else ever came forward.

The process of reporting was difficult. After giving my statement at home, I had to go to police headquarters and relate what happened to me to a man that I didn't know, in a small room, with a closed door. I was very grateful when that was over.

The case got transferred to the RCMP because the events took place in their jurisdiction. Again I had to sit in a small room with a closed door and tell a man I didn't know about what happened to me when I was a child. The case was investigated, but there were never any charges laid.

I was reminded of the experience recently when I read a *Globe and Mail* article by Robyn Doolittle. It's called *Unfounded*. If you want to read it, it's very good. I'll table some copies tomorrow. One in 5 sexual assault claims are dismissed as baseless. Many others never result in charges.

The experience left me feeling empty and alone. It felt like the police didn't believe me, and I need to tell everyone here that the most important thing that you can say to a survivor is: I believe you. We have trouble believing what happened to us ourselves. It's traumatizing, it's shocking, and it's so hard to process it.

I want to share some statistics on sexual assault and abuse that I researched in preparing to speak to this bill today. There are varying numbers, depending on where you look, but overall the story is that the number of assaults reported is very low in comparison to the number of assaults that occur. Of those reported, survivors are unlikely to see the perpetrator convicted or jailed.

The percentage of sexual assaults reported to the police is 6 per cent. The percentage of date rape sexual assaults reported is 1 to 2 per cent. The percentage of sexual assault reports that are false is 2 to 4 per cent. It doesn't happen very often. The percentage of all sexual abuse and sexual assault victims that are under the age of 17, like I was, is 60 per cent. The percentage of sex crimes victims that are women is 80 per cent. The percentage of disabled women that will be sexually assaulted during their lifetime is 83 per cent. The percentage of sexual assault victims that are boys under 16 is 15 per cent. The percentage of assailants that are friends or family of the victim is 80 per cent. It's someone that you know, very likely.

I thought pretty hard about sharing my experience today, and I thank you for being so kind to me. [Standing ovation] Thanks.

I am grateful to people like Sheldon Kennedy, who transformed his experience into an oasis of support for kids like me in Calgary with the Sheldon Kennedy Child Advocacy Centre; Sean McCann,

a Canadian musician you probably know from Great Big Sea, who has recently shared his story of abuse and his struggle with alcoholism in order to give other people hope; Scottish MP Michelle Thomson, who heroically told her story as a survivor of sexual violence as a young woman in the U.K. House of Commons; and Elizabeth Halpin, who is the young woman who spoke at the announcement for Bill 2 and talked to the impact that this bill will have for victims if it passes.

Right now as the law stands, a survivor has to bring a civil case to court within two years. That's a very short time if you're in the process of putting your life back together, and it passes by very quickly. Healing takes time. It takes place over a lifetime. The more time we can give survivors to take care of their immediate needs and to grow stronger before considering a civil case, the better. With this legislation the time limit will be lifted for civil cases of either sexual or domestic violence.

I'm confident that everyone here wants to eradicate sexual assault and to hold perpetrators to account so that no one has to feel the fear and shame that go along with being a survivor ever again. We aren't there yet. The criminal justice system can't meet all of the need for being heard that survivors have. A time limit is the worst reason to not hold perpetrators accountable. This bill is an important step along the way, giving survivors the opportunity to have their voices heard in court and to clear the path to further healing.

Secrets grow in the dark. Let's shed light on this destructive problem.

I urge everyone to vote in favour of Bill 2. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Under Standing Order 29(2)(a), any questions or comments? The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I just wanted to commend the hon. member for her courageousness and her courage. That was just amazing. Again, I commend you.

The Deputy Speaker: Chestermere-Rocky View under 29(2)(a).

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you. I'm beyond words. Thank you so much for the courage. I echo the words of my colleagues over here for sharing your story and shedding some very much-needed light. You're an inspiration to many, many young women who will be looking to this House to find out how to move forward. Because you're in such a public position, this must have been very difficult for you, and we certainly commend you for coming forward.

Thank you so much.

The Deputy Speaker: We still have a few minutes under 29(2)(a). Did you wish to comment, Red Deer-North?

Mrs. Schreiner: Yes. Thank you. I don't have a question; I just have a comment. I just want to thank you on behalf of all Albertans for having the courage to tell your story today. I know it was a hard story to tell, but thank you from the bottom of my heart.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other questions or comments under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd also like to thank you for sharing. I know the powerful words that you've shared today are going to be so impactful to so many people that are struggling with this very issue. It's going to give them the strength to come forward.

Thank you so much.

Cortes-Vargas: Madam Speaker, through you, I would like to not only commend the member for these comments but for her continual

advocacy on this issue. She has been, as I've known her, an endless advocate for women and for women's rights and for ending sexual violence. That that passion comes from a very insightful place and a personal experience is something that I know many women share with her. Because of the statistics that she shared, we know that this is not only for you. It does take bravery to share a personal story, but it allows us to have that lens of personal experience, that diversity that having a caucus from different parts of life brings forward. How that translates into legislation is even bigger.

So for all of your contributions, not just your personal sharing, thank you so much.

4:40

The Deputy Speaker: I'll recognize Calgary-Lougheed.

Mr. Rodney: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I don't know how you could do what you just did, and like others, I want to thank you so much for sharing your story. It is going to have a huge impact, I trust, on people not just in Alberta but far beyond.

I wonder if the hon. member would like to make a comment. What specific advice would you have for someone who has been assaulted, male or female, any age? And what advice would you have for someone out there who might be thinking that they might want to assault someone, male or female? Those people need to hear very strong messages, too. Having been through it yourself, perhaps they will take it from you as to what to do and what not to do.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill, did you wish to respond?

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you for the question. My advice to anyone who hasn't reported is to seek help, seek support for yourself. That's the most important thing to be able to get through any difficult situation in life. We all deserve support. There's no shame to be had. It's not because of what you wore or what you did or what you said. It was the choice of someone else.

And to anyone who has assaulted someone else or who feels that urge to assault someone else, I would say something similar. Seek support. There is help. You know that what you want to do is wrong, and the impact on other people's lives is devastating. It takes so much for survivors to get through what they've experienced, and it's a waste of time and energy that could be spent on much more productive, beautiful things.

The Deputy Speaker: The time allotted for 29(2)(a) has expired.

Other members wishing to speak to the bill? I'll recognize Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Again to the member: I'm so completely grateful.

This bill on so many levels is necessary. As you know, the younger of my two sons is special needs. When he was first diagnosed, when he was little, he was nonverbal. So many of the concerns that you have as a parent when your children are students and when they're in care are about making sure that they understand about the sanctity of their body and their mind and who they are, being able to speak up for themselves, being able to lay limitations and barriers to their comfort and what they're comfortable with. When they lack the ability to be verbal, that becomes a whole other side of things.

My son had the privilege of attending Renfrew special services in Calgary, and it was an amazing program. I volunteered excessively, probably, at that school simply because my son was nonverbal. There were so many children there, and they needed help with

everything from being fed, sometimes, to toileting and many, many other things like that. There's a great opportunity for volunteering and tremendous human beings which, you know, 90 per cent of the world are, but there is also tremendous opportunity to abuse in that situation.

One of the things that this bill will help to bring forward and which is especially important is for victims who are in the minor age category, which is what the member went through. During those times of trauma, even when you are able to speak, when you have a voice, when you've been traumatized that badly and you are afraid and you respect the person that is traumatizing you or you're expected to respect that person who is traumatizing you – and there are all sorts of things within the way that we live our lives, culturally and everything, that can contribute to how a person is going to interpret the actions that are being put upon them at that time. Sometimes it won't be until you're older and have processed or maybe have seen another friend or somebody else who's gone through this before you actually realize what you endured and what you survived. It's absolutely imperative that that's in there.

When you add special needs into that and with those shocking statistics, it becomes even more imperative that we not only say out loud that we believe the victims of these horrific, horrific situations but also that we are understanding and listening and looking for the signs and the body language. Are there things that are happening as a result of that? Not everybody will have the verbal capacity to be able to explain what has happened to them.

There are many, many opportunities within this bill for people to be able to, hopefully, move forward, find ways to heal, find help, communities to surround them with supports. One of the things that I've realized, not only in being here but just in life, is that when you have the courage to stand up and say those things, whether that's in a place like this or to your family, it's quite amazing to me how many people and the support that rallies around you. But you don't realize that until sometimes within a legislative body like this, where we actually give that push to make it be okay to speak out loud and to get rid of the stigma. There shouldn't be any. These young people that have experienced these horrific things that have happened to them need to be able to know that the people that are representing them in government are going to be the first ones to stand up for them and are going to be the ones that help them with that healing process.

The extended time to be able to go after an assailant is equally as important as making sure that for people who have been traumatized all along the spectrum and the timelines, there is time also to be able to – sometimes identifying the person that has assaulted you is probably one of the hardest things that can happen. In situations where they are friends or children of friends that are part of your family or especially if it's family members, there are, in the mind of the person who has been victimized, huge consequences for bringing forward the name of a family member or a neighbour or anybody else because of all of the things that are combined with that. They realize very quickly that they're not the only one that's impacted by this, and the idea that they're not able to protect themselves for the sake of what's going on around them is just horrible.

So being able to extend that time, giving people the ability to – again, it might come through therapy. It might come through a relationship or a discussion with somebody else, where all of a sudden you're triggered to understanding what happened to you. You'll remember or sometimes be able to put together the pieces of who assaulted you and that it was inappropriate. These are highly, highly important pieces, and I'm so, again, grateful that this legislation will be put in place.

I would like to add one other little piece. This just adds to this bill. It has to do with another piece of legislation that I feel needs to go hand in hand with this, and that is part of that triage protocol that we've been talking about. In situations like this we have to make sure that when people come forward and have this amount of courage to stand up and literally tell intimate and horrific details of what has happened to them, not only are they supported by legislation that gives them the time and the ability to come forward with that legislation but that they're also supported within the justice system. Those two things have to go hand in hand.

We have one piece here that's very, very important to the civil part of this, but we also need to make sure that the processing of these situations is not as difficult as it is right now. Along with that, it's very important – and I would suggest that with this incredible legislation we're also heavily looking into the triage protocol to make sure that prosecutors are not being instructed to not take on difficult cases. These are difficult cases.

4:50

As the member said, being believed is part of it, but proving what happened to her is a whole other piece. She wasn't always believed by the people that she told. And then she was taken into tiny, little spaces with people she didn't know to have to tell her story over and over and over again, as if the trauma itself wasn't enough.

So, please, along with this legislation, if I could ask this Legislature to look at the triage protocol to make sure that cases like the member's and other people's are looked at and are prosecuted appropriately and that we are cutting through the red tape of this situation so that these victims find justice and we also make sure that we are sending a message to the perpetrators of these horrible offences that we will not stand down and that we are going to protect our citizens of this province.

Thank you.

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Are there any questions or comments with respect to the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing and hearing none, the Member for Calgary-Hawkwood.

Connolly: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I want to commend the member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill for her incredible story. I luckily had the opportunity to spend some time with the Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill's daughter when I was in London, and I can tell the House and the member that I can sense the strength and the intelligence that the Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill instilled in her daughter. Unfortunately, I haven't met her son, but I believe that that's also instilled in both of her children.

I want to thank the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General for bringing forward this legislation. Since my colleague became the Solicitor General and Minister of Justice, she has worked tirelessly to help make Alberta's justice system fair for everyone. As we celebrated International Women's Day last week, I think it's important to recognize not only the work of my female colleagues but also highlight this important piece of legislation that makes life better for Albertans who are survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence and their families.

Let me just tell you what this legislation will do. The proposed amendments to the Limitations Act will remove limitations periods for the following civil claims: sexual assault; sexual misconduct involving a minor, intimate relationship, or dependent; and nonsexual assault involving a minor, intimate relationship, or dependent.

As the Limitations Act currently dictates, if a person wants to sue for assault, the action must be started within two years from when the person knows or should have known of the incident. This two-

year limitation can create a difficult barrier to justice for survivors. Our priority as government is to move Alberta forward and make life better for Albertans. That means looking out for some of our most vulnerable. Currently almost every other common law jurisdiction in the country, excluding Prince Edward Island, has either removed or updated their limitation period on sexual assault cases, making civil action more accessible to those who need it.

Some of my colleagues might be wondering why anyone would choose civil action. The advocate for survivors and executive director of the Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton does an excellent job of explaining why anyone would choose civil action to seek justice against their abusers. She states, and I quote: because the burden of proof is so high in the criminal justice system, a very small fraction of assault survivors will ever see the inside of a courtroom. For survivors to be able to pursue a civil claim at a time when they are ready to do so and where the burden of proof is significantly less onerous is a change that is truly representative of a government that gets it. When survivors are believed, listened to, and supported, they can reclaim the life they had before the assault, a life that they most definitely deserve to have again. End quote.

Even in 2017 there is a stigma attached to survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence. Many survivors feel ashamed. How could they let this happen, why didn't they fight back, why didn't they fight harder, and what could they have done differently? One thing is clear: sexual assault is always the abuser's fault, never the survivor's, period.

Some populations can feel even deeper shame. Men who experience assault are even less likely to report than their counterparts. Often they may need more time, and Bill 2 will give them that room to pursue action and move forward with dignity. The Alberta Association of Sexual Assault Services helps explain some of the myths surrounding sexual assault. Some wrongly believe that men cannot be sexually assaulted. According to AASAS, "Studies show that 10 to 20% of males (boys, youth, and adults) [will be] sexually violated" in their lifetime.

On the rare occasion when a sexual assault against a male gets reported, a victim is often labelled as gay or even blamed for what happened to them. We don't hear about male sexual assault because the men it happens to often choose to suffer its effects alone. Often the myths surrounding sexual assault silence survivors who may not fit the mould of what many believe someone who has been sexually assaulted looks like. They fall through the cracks.

When we talk about sexual assault and domestic violence, we often leave the LGBTQ-plus community out of the conversation. As an MLA and as a member of the LGBTQ-plus community it's imperative that I take the time to highlight LGBTQ-plus survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence. Many queer or gender-diverse survivors of sexual violence suffer in silence. They fear they will not be believed even though trans and gender-diverse Albertans are more likely to be sexually assaulted in their lifetime.

Unfortunately, in the past Alberta hasn't done as well as other provinces when recording rates of sexual violence, and therefore it can be difficult to understand the scope of violence here in Alberta. We know that according to the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives women in Albertan cities face higher rates of violence compared to women in other Canadian cities. Those rates of violence increase for trans women and gender-diverse Albertans who identify as queer, individuals with disabilities, individuals of colour, and indigenous women.

Beyond that, survivors from the LGBTQ-plus community are often excluded from dominant narratives of what sexual violence looks and feels like. This leads to a lack of institutional support and medical resources that address the unique experiences of those survivors. This, coupled with the intersections of race, class, ability,

language, and immigration status, means that many individuals may not be able to access resources that are located in their communities or that address their lived experiences. Survivors have varied and unique experiences, and their healing and forms of redress will be as unique.

Many people also hold off from seeking justice from their abusers because of fear. With the current legislation there is nothing stopping abusers, who may know the law and know how to work the system, from using the Limitations Act to their advantage, to instill fear for years until they know they are in the clear.

There is a myth that sexual assault is usually committed by strangers, but in about 80 per cent of the cases the sexual assault survivor knows the offender. It doesn't take a lawyer to understand how an abuser could use tactics such as threats and stalking to keep a survivor they are close to from coming forward. That is why this legislation will also lift the limitations on sexual misconduct.

The point I'm trying to make, Mr. Speaker, is that when we remove barriers that prevent survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence from coming forward, we strengthen and empower them. We help vulnerable Albertans from all walks of life. This legislation not only brings us in line with most of the provinces; it propels us forward. With this legislation Alberta will be a leader in addressing sexual misconduct in intimate relationships.

I must also acknowledge the hard work and dedication of my fellow cosponsors for Bill 2, the Member for Calgary-Bow and the Member for Calgary-North West. Both of my colleagues have faced their own challenges as women in politics. Unfortunately, being a woman in public life, as about half of my colleagues will know – well, caucus colleagues and members of the other side as well – often leads to receiving online threats of violence, and frequently those threats are sexualized and based on their gender. While I have received threats based on my age and sexual orientation, they were nowhere near the level of vitriol and hate that many of my colleagues have received. The strength and commitments that I have seen from my colleagues in the face of rape and death threats is empowering. Even though my colleagues face these threats, they do not back down. They continue to fight every day to help make life better for Alberta's women.

That's why together we are cosponsoring this legislation. Every Albertan deserves to feel safe and respected in their communities, homes, schools, universities, workplaces, and even here in the Legislature. Through consultation with front-line workers, non-profit shelters, and women's organizations, we know that this is something that Albertans want. The minister is listening and taking action to address these concerns. Bill 2 will help ensure survivors of sexual and domestic violence are treated with dignity, compassion, and respect. I hope all members of the Legislature will support the bill.

Thank you.

5:00

The Speaker: Any questions or comments to the Member for Calgary-Hawkwood under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing and hearing none, I would recognize the Member for Lethbridge-East.

Ms Fitzpatrick: An Act to Remove Barriers for Survivors of Sexual and Domestic Violence: I would be remiss if I did not stand and speak to this bill, so I now stand in full support of the bill as a second step in this Legislature in addressing domestic and sexual violence.

I thank my colleague for her presentation on this bill and for her courage to stand up and tell her story. I can tell you from my personal experience that it takes an incredible strength to survive,

and that is the first baby step in moving forward. To reach the point of seeking support is often after many, many incidents of abuse, sexual or nonsexual in nature, as the Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill said. It went on for years for her.

I, too, will advise you that what I am about to say may be a trigger moment for some in this Chamber. So now I'm going to ask you to help me with my presentation. I'm going to ask you to close your eyes. I want you to imagine that you are essentially alone. You have been isolated from your family, friends, and support systems. It feels like you're in a cold, bleak room. Someone tells you: "Do not move. Do not resist. Do not breath like that." If you don't obey, you know there will be dire consequences. You are being stripped naked both physically and emotionally, with no ability to stop what is happening. At this point, I ask you: how are you feeling? Are you afraid? Are you humiliated? Are you feeling shame? Do you feel sick? Do you have any ability to remove yourself from this situation?

Please open your eyes. If you really put yourself into this scenario through your imagination, you would feel your self-esteem being eroded and destroyed. You would feel the sense of being trapped. When this occurs to someone every day through actions just like this, actions that are aimed to break and control you, you lose control of everything around you.

How quickly can this happen? It is mind-boggling how quickly it can happen, and it doesn't matter how smart you are, what kind of family you come from, how much money you have. None of this matters anymore. The person you were is being destroyed.

I did seek help when the girls and I escaped. I had to. I had to deal with the stress I was feeling, the nightmares, the fear. I had to rebuild to grow into the person I am today. This is 35 years of support and growth. Physically, I seemed to be all right, until I wasn't. It took time to gradually learn the lessons, that I had been trapped in this hell, and they were as varied and as many as any other person caught in such a trap.

When my girls and I escaped, we left with what we could carry and the clothes on our backs. Had it not been for some family and friends who gave us support, we would have been at the mercy of whatever came our way.

I had an education. I had strength to do whatever I needed to do to protect my children, thank God. I never received a cent of support from my ex, so times were pretty tough. I had to draw on every ounce of inner strength that I had. The need to protect my children from both this harsh situation and the harsh realities of this world was almost unbearable. I worked hard. I scrimped and saved. I did things like buying material on sale and making clothes for the girls and myself because I didn't have the money for store-bought clothing. We lived on a very tight budget, and by the time I was able to get back on my feet and feel strong enough to pursue some financial support for the girls, it was too late.

How long do you think it would take you to regain your self-esteem, to actually acknowledge what had occurred, and to ask for help, ask for what should have been available for you and your family? How long, and how strong do you need to be to get back on your feet? By eliminating limitation periods, we are making the legal system more accessible to victims of sexual and domestic violence. Survivors need to become thrivers, and that takes time. Thrivers are those who have become empowered to come forward on their own terms and when they are ready, not when somebody else says that they are ready. This truly is not easy.

The judge who gave me a lecture on how expensive it would be to keep my ex in jail for the time that he had been sentenced was not respectful. He did not leave me with my dignity intact. I felt neither compassion nor respect. The decision to report sexual or domestic violence is deeply personal and can be extremely difficult.

It had taken me nine years to finally lay charges, and those charges were only on the last two incidents. He was charged with domestic violence. He was my husband, so they didn't charge him with rape. There was no rape kit or hospital examination despite the fact that he had raped me and that I had visible signs of that rape on me. There were some barriers every time I turned around. This bill will make some changes to that attitude.

I was surviving by doing the things I had to do to protect my daughters and myself. I was skilled. I was an educated adult. I was a parent, but I was a single parent. So when I applied for employment with the federal government, I was asked the normal questions for the position which I sought. I was also asked who would take care of my children if there were an accident or if they were sick while I was at work. I knew that if I said that I would leave and take care of my children, I would not get that job. I answered that by saying that I had family and friends who would support me, which I did, but I didn't answer that question because I would not have gotten that job. Have you ever been asked that question when you applied for a job? Did you every have to worry about finding someone to babysit your children ever? Do you have to worry about a supervisor making advances and threatening your livelihood if you're not compliant because he knows that you need the job?

Every Albertan deserves to feel safe and respected in their communities, their homes, and their workplaces. It took me 35 years to tell my story publicly. To do this was incredibly difficult. Barriers were everywhere. This bill will tear down some of those barriers. Our government is committed to ensuring survivors of sexual and domestic violence are treated with dignity, compassion, and respect.

I expect everyone in this Chamber, as several other members have said, to support this bill. Will you support this bill and be part of the solution, or will you be part of the problem?

5:10

The Speaker: Are there any questions or comments under 29(2)(a) to the Member for Lethbridge-East? The Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I mostly just have comments. I want to commend the member for giving all Albertans real insight into what it's like for victims of domestic violence and how trapped somebody can feel in those circumstances and to thank her for her candour and generosity in sharing with us and also for giving hope to people and focusing on thriving. I think that's really important for anyone who has survived any assault.

The Speaker: Are there any other members under 29(2)(a)?
The Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Cooper: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 2, An Act to Remove Barriers for Survivors of Sexual and Domestic Violence. Before I begin, I'd just like to thank the Member for Lethbridge-East for her remarks as I have done in the past in this House when she has shared passionately and heartfully about what is a very horrific situation. I thank her for her bravery and her comments and the advocacy that she does on this very important issue that faces so many.

Mr. Speaker, it's so unfortunate that these horrific situations of sexual assault and domestic violence affect so many Albertans right across the province. As we know, 1 in 3 women will experience some form of sexual assault and sexual violence. You know, I wish that we lived in a place and in a society and in a world where it was zero. I think about my girls, and I think about my sisters, of which I have two. There is a very real possibility that of just those three,

one of them will experience an absolutely life-changing event that's horrific.

Mr. Speaker, I want to be clear that I support Bill 2, that it's not just the government that is taking steps to pass legislation like Bill 2 but that it is certainly members of the opposition as well. There is a very cumulative desire to have Bill 2 enacted and to continue to make steps towards protecting victims of these most horrific crimes. I think that's an important point to make, that it is about making steps towards protecting victims.

Even after Bill 2 is passed here in this place, there will still be more work to do. We all have a responsibility to ensure that that work continues, whether it's around education, whether it's around providing additional resources, whether it's ensuring that we're doing what we can as individuals to make our society a safer place, whether it is speaking up publicly against sexual abuse and sexual violence and domestic violence. We all have a role to play, not just in legislation but day in and day out in speaking against those that would make light of these crimes, speaking out against those who would joke about this, speaking out against people who even make flippant remarks that are disparaging against women or disparaging against victims. We need to do our part in ensuring that women and victims of sexual abuse know that they will be believed, that they will be heard. We also need to make sure that we take proactive and swift steps to ensure that the judicial system is in a place where those individuals who have had crimes committed against them are assured that their case is being heard.

Members on this side of the House and others have advocated strongly over the last number of weeks to ensure that we have the resources in place, that those who come forward under circumstances – as you know, Mr. Speaker, many of these sort of crimes go unreported. It takes – you know, we've heard in the Chamber today that it often takes years and years and years to have the courage. We need to make sure that when that happens, those who are victims of sexual abuse, the vast majority of those being women, are supported through what is a very, very, very difficult time. So I'm proud to stand and speak in favour of Bill 2 and the steps that it takes to provide recourse for those women to extend the time for victims to file claims against those who have perpetrated the crimes.

It's important that we send messages from this Chamber that we believe that there is a desire, a societal desire, to ensure that we're doing as much as possible to ensure that these crimes aren't happening, that we encourage women who have been victims to come forward and to see justice served. I'm pleased that the government is taking this step. I am also pleased to see other legislation coming forward from other areas of the House that have to do with crimes predominantly against women in the form of Bill 202, which I know will be debated later in this session.

I am honoured to be able to support the government in this endeavour. I think it's something that we should all be doing, and I look forward to this bill becoming law and being part of that solution. It's not the end solution, but it's part of the solution, and I think we are all well served to ensure that women in our province and right across our country are treated with the dignity, the respect, the belief that they ought to be. I look forward to doing that through the rest of this debate as well.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any questions under 29(2)(a) for the Opposition House Leader?

Are there any other members who wish to speak to Bill 2? Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

Cortes-Vargas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise today and speak to Bill 2, the sexual and domestic violence limitation

act. I've heard many stories as to why this is important. As many members on our government bench have shared, I would just like to take a moment partly because there was a comment that was made afterwards, after some of the personal sharing, that went to express: wow; I didn't know that so many people around me have experienced this. I feel like that's a common comment because there seems to be still, like, a stigmatization of shame in expressing the stories, that it's still difficult to do, and to some extent not be put into a box of whether you are a victim or not.

5:20

Because of that I want to continue on that course and share a bit about my own story, Mr. Speaker. Of course, when we look at something like this, we're looking at how to reduce barriers. The reason I want to share my own story is because we also need to understand the limitations of the things that we move forward and the people that it may not reach.

Mr. Speaker, I myself have been a victim of sexual assault. I had this experience at five years old. I know that an act like this would not help a person in my position because, like many other immigrants, that experience did not happen in Canada. So you go into the barriers faced by folks that have experienced this, but when you add to it immigration and when you add to it different kinds of experiences, it complicates it. It's hard to understand that we can reduce barriers but that there still is going to be a level of discrepancy depending on what your background is. I think that that's part of the theory as well when studying gender theory and intersectionality and the effects that having a different background and being an immigrant could have on your impact to address the issues that come up. It's quite complicated.

Mr. Speaker, just to explain a little bit about my own story, one of the things that I'm proud that this bill reflects is the taking away of the limitation of time. I know for myself, having experienced that throughout my childhood and having it be very much like a lot of the statistics that say that it's a family member and it's someone that you know and someone that should be there to protect you, knowing that that's something that occurs regularly, it's something that we need to talk about. It's something that we continuously need to address and go further than just addressing the voices of those who were affected but also those who are committed to stop these acts and not be a part of them. Making sure that we develop a wellness curriculum that talks about healthy relationships is critically important in developing this change.

I know for myself there had been many times in telling my story where some of the responses I got were: well, that must also explain why you're gay. I think there's an element of stereotypes that happen for victims that they continuously experience when they share these stories. At the end of the day, it goes into blaming everybody except the perpetrator.

Because it happened to me as a child and it happened to me by a family member, I've even heard someone blame my mother for not protecting me. You know what? To so many extents I take issue with that because my mother is the very reason that I believe in resiliency, and there's no way that any experience that I'll have will bring me down. Mr. Speaker, it speaks to a culture, a culture of blame and stigmatizing everybody but the perpetrator. You know, the sole person responsible for what I experienced is the man himself. That is something that I want to continue to elevate.

You go into the experiences and say: "Well, why didn't this person catch it? Why didn't this person say it? Why didn't you speak up at a certain point?" And that brings me back to the limitation. Speaking up requires supports. It requires knowing that people, as the member said, will believe you, that people will not fault you for perhaps waiting. So when we look at something like a

time limitation, it really doesn't take into account the experience of the person that has been victimized in this situation. And if that's the most important part, then that's the part that needs to be prioritized.

In order to speak up – I remember the very first day that I had to talk about it. I didn't actually talk about it. I had a letter that had been written by the perpetrator about the situation that happened. That day it was the letter that I just handed to my mother, and I ran away from home. As the wise woman she is, she never pressured me to do anything or to talk about anything else faster than I could, but she told me one thing: whenever I do want to talk about it, she'll be there; whatever I need she would provide. If that meant taking clothes to my friend's house, where I was staying, that's where she would go.

The Speaker: Take your time, hon. member. You have supporters in this room.

Cortes-Vargas: Mr. Speaker, telling my mom was hard enough. Having to explain it to other people and having to hear the responses that are given – even though I know a lot of people go into, "Oh, that should have never happened," even within those comments those things that I've already mentioned, "Oh, well, why didn't someone catch it?" or later on, "Is that why you're gay?" come in – makes it extremely complicated to want to speak up because it is easy for people to attribute other factors to the story that you're telling, and then it's hard to control the narrative in which it's portrayed.

Mr. Speaker, removing this limitation isn't just a recognition of their experience, but it is something essential to respecting people's dignity and worth and making sure that it is up to them, that it is their choice as to when they do it, depending on their personal situation and, at the end of the day, knowing that no matter how much time has passed, what has been made wrong can never be made right.

We had a run in Strathcona county that talked about creating allies for asking for consent.

You know, even if it had only been one day, it would have changed the course of my life. Those kinds of situations forever change the way you interact in relationships. They change the way that you experience even sleeping, Mr. Speaker. It changes a lot of things about you. Chemically speaking, your brain changes as well as your capacity to interpret the world around you and risk assessments. In all of that, it complicates your capacity to speak up. It complicates all of that, so that element is extremely important.

You know, I wish that I had spoken up, but I can't change the past, and I know that I spoke up at the time that I needed to. Mr. Speaker, I know that at the end of the day, the more we talk about this and the more that people stand up and say, "Not only do I know what the effects are because I've heard these stories," but when they stand up and say, "I will be committed to learning about what a healthy relationship entails and what consent means," you know, those are the kinds of changes that really make substantial differences. For me, developing healthy relationships then became a big pillar of my life.

You know, for many reasons being part of the LGBTQ community is complicated, but one of the strengths that I have studied in being part of the LGBTQ community is that because a lot of societal expectations no longer apply to you, you get this freedom to redefine and re-create roles. Because, you know, you have two women in a female same-sex relationship, you get to redefine these things, and you get to talk about things that in heterosexual relationships might just be assumed or might just be a gender role that is kind of placed. These things are continuously negotiated, and that

is one of the many strengths of same-sex relationships and one of them that has been documented in many cases. Part of the benefit of that is actually being able to talk about personal boundaries, about how to deal with certain situations, because none of that is assumed.

5:30

Also, I wanted to talk both about my experience as an immigrant in experiencing this, because of the legal complications that it implies, but also about, being part of the queer community, how tired I am of that comment. You know, just for the record I have pictures from when I was four years old holding hands with women. Like, you know, I really don't like the song, but I was kind of *Born This Way*. The comments sometimes are tiring about GSAs, that we're creating a culture where we're cultivating someone turning gay or that having a cookie could make you that way. It's just exhausting because it just isn't possible, in my mind. I didn't choose this, I didn't choose those experiences, but what I do get to choose is what I do in regard to society's way of interpreting these circumstances.

Mr. Speaker, I may not do it right all the time, but I'm committed to being an advocate and to listening to how we can make things better. I know that one of the things that can do that is by telling a story, and while I'm not okay with telling a whole bunch of my own personal story, I will say that in a lot of ways it changed me. It was really painful to experience, and it was a terrifying experience, you know, that exercise of closing your eyes and experiencing those things and the feeling of being trapped. I think many people can identify with that that have gone through that experience. You don't know what to do. Again, it's about fighting the stigma of: "Why didn't you fight back? Why didn't you stop it? Why did you let it reoccur?" It was not my choice. It shall never be regarded as my choice. The only person responsible is the perpetrator. I refused to the end, and I reject that premise.

You know, one of the things I'm most proud of our government for is our capacity to bring into the Legislature people from diverse backgrounds. It's something that people talk about as being important, but the ability to accomplish it takes a lot of commitment. It takes more than just talking about being open. It takes the commitment of going out there and sometimes convincing people to step down to make space for others. It's hard to do, Mr. Speaker, and the reason that someone should choose to do that and make that commitment is because we see legislation like this, legislation that dramatically changes the tone and tenor of a justice system that for many years was a place that people associated as not understanding them. Many victims feel that their voice isn't being represented there. The fact that you have eyes viewing pieces of legislation that have experienced this provides a different form of decision-making and provides a more informed way to move forward than if you didn't.

Thank you. [Standing ovation]

The Speaker: Are there any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for her comments. They are extremely heartfelt and wise. I might say that in my life I don't always get it right as well, but I, too, am learning. Hopefully, we continue to learn together. I just wanted to say thank you and also offer you the opportunity to conclude your remarks if you had any that were remaining.

Cortes-Vargas: Thank you. You know, I'd just say: let's continue this work, because it's great. It's so important. Let's just keep doing what we're doing. I'm so happy to be surrounded by so many

colleagues across the way and beside me. Whenever I don't have the strength to do something myself, I know who I can fall back on.

The Speaker: Calgary-Mountain View under 29(2)(a).

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, hon. member, for sharing your story. It's very important for all of us, especially those in the public systems that are supposed to be caring for people going through these challenging times. I think of the justice system, I also think of the social services system, and I also think of the health care system, where people are supposed to be prepared and trained and able to meaningfully help in the transition back to health and recovery, posttraumatic support, whatever. Tell us about your experience with the public services in Alberta and how they have met or not met your needs, if you chose to use them.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Cortes-Vargas: Thank you. Yes, I'd actually like to speak about an organization from my community, Saffron, the sexual assault centre of Strathcona county. I'm just going to say that it was one of the places I reached out to.

I think the complication, especially in our situation, was money. It was the cost associated with reaching out for those supports. There was part of it in developing a conversation and being able to talk about it that I had to go through, and accessing those supports was helpful that way. But timing was an issue for me. If I wasn't open to talking about it, I wouldn't be okay with getting the supports at that time. Sometimes it was the people that I had to discuss it with, if they didn't completely understand the lens through which I saw things culturally. You know, being part of the Spanish culture, the way of discussing difficult situations works a little bit differently. Having that cultural understanding sometimes makes that difference as well.

It's difficult to access those kinds of supports. I know that I started working with Multicultural Health Brokers in Edmonton because they actually do a lot of culturally sensitive work with community members, using brokers to assist in gathering those supports and building cultural sensitivity in the people delivering that support as well. That made a difference in a lot of ways.

I know that throughout it becomes a process. I might not be that old, but going through years of reaching out to different psychologists and things like that, it really came down to cost at the end of the day, the difficulty to continuously see the supports through. There were different points in my life where I was more open to receiving those supports than others. When I was, it wasn't necessarily in alignment to when I had the money or benefits to do that.

I was an educational assistant. I had three jobs when I was working through school, Mr. Speaker, and I didn't have benefits, so that was one of the times that I would have been okay, actually, going to see a psychologist, but I just didn't have the money to. The reason I was working three jobs was because it was really expensive to go to school. I had things to pay for. My parents were immigrants. They weren't able to save for my education, right? In those kinds of situations it's very complicated, which is, again, why I stand with this government in all of the investment in supports to the front-line services and to the administration that it takes to deliver those services in an effective way. It is very complicated to execute those things.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

5:40

The Speaker: Hon. members, if you might allow the Speaker to make a personal observation, let me say to all of you that it is a

privilege on all sides of the House to be in a situation like this. As a father of four daughters and 11 grandchildren one thinks about these issues very, very much.

The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in support of Bill 2, An Act to Remove Barriers for Survivors of Sexual and Domestic Violence. I want to begin by just saying that I really do appreciate the stories that have been told today. I think it's fairly well known that no matter what kind of trauma we experience, when we're able to tell our stories, there's healing in the telling. I guess, especially for today, my prayer for those who have shared their stories would be that today, in fact, would be a day of ongoing healing and wholeness and discovering the inner beauty within.

Any time we think about creating a law, I think it sometimes helps to think a little bit about: why would we enact such a law? I've been sitting here thinking it through a little bit, and I just offer a few comments in that regard. You could ask the question: is the objective or is the end deterrence or restraint so that it doesn't happen again, so that others are protected? Of course, we would all hope and wish that that would be the case, and in some way it probably is part of the benefit of enacting this kind of a law, but there are also lots of studies out there that indicate that law doesn't necessarily really deter behaviour that's criminal or inappropriate.

Most of the legal philosophers that write on it that I've been able to read ultimately end up talking about the need for inner and personal restraint. While I realize that in our society some of the spiritual values of inner restraint and personal self-control and control of the passions are maybe not very popular, the reality is that maybe in our society we need to hear a little bit more about that because social or legal restraint often isn't as effective as we might wish that it would be.

We could also imagine that maybe the desire by enacting such a law would be justice for those who have been unjustly treated. While I think that maybe there is an element of justice there, on the other hand I also have this deep sort of feeling that any kind of legal action doesn't really ultimately create justice for the kinds of abuses that we're talking about. I don't know that there is real justice that can somehow restore everything and make it as if it didn't happen and it's all of a sudden all right again. So while justice has a part of it, I guess I struggle that that's even possible in these kinds of cases in this world.

Some might want to say that we enact these kinds of laws out of vengeance. I don't think that's the spirit of what this is about, and I think we all realize that vengeance often destroys ourselves more

than the other person anyway. This kind of a law isn't about vengeance. That's just more destruction.

I guess where I end up in the end is that maybe enacting a law like this, which takes away barriers, in effect will give a glimmer of hope, and maybe it will become a means by which those who have experienced this kind of injustice and all the rest of it will in fact be able to find it as part of their journey to wholeness. I guess that would be my biggest wish to see out of this kind of a law, that it would be a means, an aid, an opening of a pathway to inner healing, to the wholeness of the soul, to be able to move on and to grow and to be truly beautiful people because of what we enact here today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

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

The Speaker: Hon. members, in accordance with Standing Order 64(3) the chair is required to put the question to the House on every appropriation bill on the Order Paper for second reading.

[Motion carried; Bill 4 read a second time]

Mr. Mason: If we've concluded the business of the day, Mr. Speaker, then I will move that we . . .

Mr. Cooper: We can vote on Bill 2 if you want.

Mr. Mason: Pardon me?

Mr. Cooper: We can vote on Bill 2 if you want.

Mr. Mason: I know. I think there are some members that would still like to speak to that.

So, Madam Speaker . . . [interjections] Well, we do it the other way all the time, so it's only fair. It's only fair, Mr. Speaker. But I'm sorry.

The Speaker: No, you're not.

Mr. Mason: The Speaker has tremendous insight.

I think we've made wonderful progress. The government will keep running. Things will carry on. I'll move that we call it 6 o'clock, Mr. Speaker, and adjourn until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:47 p.m.]

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