



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Third Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, April 12, 2017

Day 20

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 29th Legislature

Third Session

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Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)
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Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)
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Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (ND)
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Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)
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Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)
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Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

Party standings:

New Democrat: 55

Wildrose: 22

Progressive Conservative: 8

Alberta Liberal: 1

Alberta Party: 1

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Kleinsteuber	

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, April 12, 2017

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Please bow your heads. Let us reflect and pray, each in our own way. Hon. members, today is the International Day of Pink, a day against bullying and discrimination. Each of us might want to reflect on those times when one of us may have been have a victim but also maybe a time when we may have been the perpetrator. Bullying is a threat to rights and freedoms and therefore a threat to democracy and to this Chamber.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

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

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is always a pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all of the members of this Assembly one of the school classes that visit this Legislature from my constituency. One of the best ways of learning anything is to do it, and by visiting the Legislature, these young minds have the opportunity to put a real face to the terms “MLA” or “Premier” or the “Speaker of the House.” It is with great pleasure that I would ask the staff and the students of St. Anthony school in Drayton Valley to stand and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It’s my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly on behalf of the Minister of Energy a number of bright young minds from Heart Valley Christian School in the beautiful constituency of Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley. They are accompanied by their teacher Harley Toews and four parent chaperones: Burt and Cindy Barkman, Herman and Judy Neudorf. I’d ask them all to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two introductions. First, a school group. I rise today to welcome Mr. Tyson Mastel and the grade 6 students from Brightview elementary school. I know Brightview well and Tyson as well. He is always the first teacher to invite me to read during Read In Week, and I’m looking forward to getting that call again, Tyson. I now ask that Tyson, his colleagues Allyson Tanner and Cindy Annala, and the Brightview students please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of our Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Hon. members, are there any other school groups?

The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Sorry. Now for my other guests. My apologies, Mr. Speaker. I rise to recognize the province’s optometrists and the care that they provide to Albertans every day. Today is eye health day,

and I hope my colleagues were able to stop by the display downstairs, have their eyes examined, and learn a little bit more about Alberta’s eye health situation. I now ask that Dr. Kim Bugera and Dr. Nasir Khan from the Alberta College of Optometrists as well as Dr. Troy Brady, Dr. Kevin Hesterman, and Dr. Brian Wik from the Alberta Association of Optometrists please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of our Assembly. Thank you for being here.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

Ms Babcock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It’s an honour to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of our Assembly Vanessa Schonekess. Vanessa is a paramedic in the Stony Plain constituency with a remarkable history of dedication to the emergency services. I’d ask Vanessa to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It’s my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you an amazing young woman named Rachel Brown, and she’s here today with her mom, Sharon. Rachel attends Richard S. Fowler, where she recently met Bear, a therapy dog, and that has inspired her journey and quest to get her own service dog, so we’re thankful for our government’s recent changes to the regulations on service dogs. I’d like you to join me in welcoming them to the House.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Northern Hills.

Mr. Kleinsteuber: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’d like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two board members from the Reel Fun Film Festival. Please rise when I say your names. Cathy McKee is the festival director. In her first life she was a teacher with the Calgary Catholic and public school boards. Cathy left her career to raise four children, and then as she got older, she began working for the Calgary International Film Festival. Her love of films led to the launch of the Reel Fun Film Festival.

Debbie Muller was a high school science teacher with the Calgary separate school board. She retired to raise her four children and worked as a volunteer at her community school and church. She later became a board member for the film festival. I would now ask that my colleagues extend the traditional greeting of the Legislature.

The Speaker: Welcome.

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

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It’s my pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Miss Jessica Bos. Jessica’s mother, Shannon Hamelin, is a friend of all of us in the opposition caucus. She works side by side with us each day, holding this government to account, and Jessica is here with her mother today. She’s a strong fiscal conservative dedicated to working with us to make sure that this government is replaced in 2019, and I would ask that she rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Mr. Carson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Lonnie Pilkington. Lonnie is a volunteer with the Reel Fun Film Festival in Calgary, which my colleague from Calgary-Northern Hills will discuss further in his member's statement, and is also a constituent of Edmonton-Meadowlark. Prior to her retirement Lonnie worked for Service Alberta for 35 years, and we thank her for her ongoing commitment to our province. I'd ask her to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly two of my constituents from the exemplary riding of Calgary-Foothills that are here today along with their colleagues on behalf of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, better known as CPAWS: Gord James, who is the chair of the CPAWS Southern Alberta Board and a former colleague of mine at Suncor Energy; and Phil Nykyforuk, who is the vice-chair of the CPAWS Southern Alberta Board and a partner at the law firm Gowling Lafleur Henderson LLP in Calgary. I would ask all our guests from CPAWS to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Ethane Jarvis and his son Derek. Ethane is my assistant in the Grande Prairie office. If you could please rise, Ethane and Derek, and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Members' Statements

Government Policies

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, I have been trying to work with the government to get to the bottom of important economic issues for two years now with little success. Just this week both the Minister of Infrastructure and the Premier laughed at my serious questions about the Crown corporation and refused to give any real answers. There has been a pattern from this front bench of undemocratic, insulting behaviour at a time when Albertans are looking for leadership.

Last year the minister of economic development bragged about how he was going to create 100,000 jobs. Since then tens of thousands of Albertans have lost work and seen the introduction of many job-killing policies, like the 100-megatonne cap and the \$5 billion carbon tax and other tax hikes. The minister brags about creating part-time retail jobs while tens of thousands of highly skilled workers sit at home or leave the province after they've run out of EI.

1:40

The CEO of Suncor, a bellwether company of the industry, just warned that there could be no new oil sands investment for the next 10 years. The minister naively tells oil sands producers to use AITC and CITC to create jobs. It's ridiculous. Those \$5 million tax credits have no relevance in developing oil sands projects. This is a crisis situation. How does the NDP respond? By killing thousands of well-paying coal jobs with an ideologically confused coal phase-out plan. Even the cabinet seems to be unaligned or in disagreement.

I have been trying to meet with the minister for three months to discuss these important questions, and he has no time for me, while I can get appointments on short notice with four ministers from Saskatchewan. Albertans expect government to work with them. The Premier and cabinet must do better.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Northern Hills.

Reel Fun Film Festival in Calgary

Mr. Kleinsteuber: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since 2006 the Reel Fun Film Festival has provided youth and families with the very best in film. This year marks the 10th anniversary. Running for a full week each year, the festival partners with Landmark Cinemas in Calgary-Northern Hills to showcase international, award-winning films, including Canadian premieres, to audiences of all ages. This year films were viewed by 6,640 kindergarten through grade 12 students from 41 Calgary classrooms.

On day 2 I stopped by to meet the festival director and cofounder, Cathy McKee. To select films, Cathy and teacher liaison Debbie Muller scour the planet looking for international, award-winning, family-friendly films with high-quality content, suitable language, and affordable screening costs. During the festival volunteers pitch in to organize the school groups, and they have concessions ready for them when they arrive. Yes, popcorn and drinks are available.

This year they screened 18 films from 16 countries, one an international premiere, nine Canadian premieres, and three western Canadian premieres, one made by a local Calgary writer and director.

When I asked what students learn by attending the festival, Cathy told me that the experience of seeing award-winning global films that can be linked to curriculum is unique, and the experience extends beyond the theatre into the classrooms and homes. One such film is *Fanny's Journey*, a film about Jewish children forced to flee Nazi-occupied France for Switzerland during World War II. I attended the screening and noted few dry eyes in the theatre.

Calgary-Northern Hills is certainly fortunate to have community-minded folks like Cathy McKee, Debbie Muller, Lonnie Pilkington, and many other volunteers who have made this event such a success over the past decade. The festival has been operated for 10 years by 100 per cent volunteers with sponsorship to cover costs from the local film industry and private business donations and sponsorship.

I wish them every success as Cathy and her team carry this film festival on into the future for the benefit of all Albertans.

Thank you.

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

Vaisakhi

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a proud Sikh it is an honour to rise today to acknowledge Vaisakhi, which is a special time of year for my family and my community. Vaisakhi is a historical and a religious festival in Sikhism. It is celebrated on the first day of the month of Vaisakh of the Sikh calendar every year. Vaisakhi marks the Sikh new year and commemorates the formation of Khalsa Panth by Guru Gobind Singh, our 10th guru, in 1699.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta has a thriving Sikh community. In our province our community has been a proud contributor to our economy, provincial culture, the Alberta way of life, and leadership. And I can't help but remember our dear friend Manmeet today.

Vaisakhi is time for seva, or selfless service, which fits in well with the province because Albertans are well known for selfless

service, always willing to lend a hand to those in need, expecting nothing in return, which we all saw in the Fort McMurray wildfire last year.

Mr. Speaker, there will be a number of Sikh celebrations for Vaisakhi around the province this weekend, and I urge all members of this House to attend one near them. Those who have attended can attest to the excitement of this colourful celebration.

Our 10th guru created Khalsa Panth and gave us the principles of Sikhism and expected Sikhs to live by those principles. A few days before Vaisakhi I want to challenge all the Sikhs living in Alberta and around the world with a simple question: are we living by the principles given to us by our guru on this important day? The principles are protecting the truth, equality, protecting the underprivileged, living a life of integrity, dedication, and meditation on the divine name with love and devotion. My challenge to you today is that we continue to make our 10th guru proud.

To all the Sikhs around the world: I wish you a happy Vaisakhi and a very happy and prosperous new year. [Remarks in Punjabi] Hail the Khalsa who belong to the Lord God. Hail the Lord God to whom belongs the victory. [As submitted]

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

Stony Plain Emergency Services

Ms Babcock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today it's my privilege to rise and speak about the amazing staff of emergency services in the constituency of Stony Plain. These people are on the front line of health care and public safety, working every day to keep us safe and healthy. I am so proud to be part of a government that supports our front-line workers.

Recently I had the honour of attending the unsung heroes award gala. This gala was held to honour those individuals from emergency services that go above and beyond the call of duty. Not only do these people put themselves in harm's way in order to help others and work demanding shifts; they also reach out to the community to engage, teach, and bring awareness about all aspects of protective services.

The recipient for paramedics was Vanessa Schonekess, who I had the honour of introducing earlier. Vanessa started with the EMS in Leduc in 1982, volunteering with the Tri-county EMS team. Soon she was recruited by the Parkland Ambulance Authority, and she moved to Stony Plain in 1983. Vanessa was one of only two paramedics in Parkland county at the time, and because of this, she worked many demanding shifts and provided advanced life support backup for our communities until more paramedics were trained.

Vanessa has worked as a supervisor and teacher in both basic and advanced life support for adults and pediatrics. She continues to mentor new staff and students, bringing new courses and training to EMS as well as teaching the first LEAP course to paramedics, which centres around the care of palliative patients. She has worked closely with RCMP, victims' services, peace officers, and fire services for many years and richly deserves this recognition.

Along with Vanessa two other outstanding individuals in our community, RCMP officer Constable Patricia Chornoby and Stony Plain Fire Chief Trevor Mistal, were also recognized for their services.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

World Curling Championships

Ms Fitzpatrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The nuance and strategy of the game are as varied as a chess game. It requires the endurance of a marathoner, the agility of a gymnast. The game to which I refer is curling, a sport which has been played in Canada for longer than my lifetime. Now, I've heard some people say that watching curling is like watching paint dry. I say: absolutely not so.

Last week in Edmonton the world spotlight was on Alberta. Edmonton hosted the 2017 World Men's Curling Championship. Thousands of fans attended from across Canada and the world. An exciting and historic win was delivered by fellow Newfoundlander and hometown hero Brad Gushue and his team of Nichols, Gallant, and Walker. The brilliant Gushue team was the first team to go undefeated in the world men's championship since 1995. Gushue has also led his team to a gold medal at the Olympics in Torino and a gold medal in the junior international championships, from my research the only curler to have done so.

Now, this was not the only recent win for Canada in curling. On March 26 Rachel Homan and her team – Miskew, Courtney, and Weagle – from Ontario won the World Women's Curling Championship in Beijing. Her team also went undefeated in that championship, and this was the first gold for Canada since 2008.

Canada has a lot to be proud of with the accomplishments of these great athletes.

I will have the honour of bringing greetings to the World Senior Curling Championships, which will be held in Lethbridge beginning on April 22. This will be another opportunity for Alberta to shine on the world stage, and I invite all of Alberta to Lethbridge.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Hon. members, before we start the clock, I just want to, as a courtesy to all, remind members of the memo that was distributed to everyone, I think, on February 13. Just to refresh your memory, "Members may use their mobile devices during Oral Question Period but must only use them as reading devices and not for streaming, sending or receiving messages."

Start the clock.

The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

1:50

Oral Question Period

Residential No-charge Energy Savings Program

Mr. Jean: The NDP is dripping with hypocrisy. They say that they're protecting Albertans from private-sector energy sales agents at their doors while mandating that the installers of their free light bulb program have sales experience. Now, Mr. Speaker, Ecofitt is told to poke around inside people's homes to identify ways to upsell further energy efficiency solutions. They are salespeople. That's the mandate the NDP has given them. They're not just installing lightbulbs. Does the Premier see the hypocrisy of sending companies into Albertans' homes to upsell and act as PR agents for the NDP government?

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, yesterday I very clearly distinguished between door-to-door sales and helping Albertans save money on their energy bills. I'm not going to go back to that quite yet.

When it comes to hypocrisy, the member opposite sat in a government for nine years and not a peep about equalization that whole time, but he comes here and talks about it. He sat in government for nine years, watched the judges problem grow and grow and grow, said not a word, came back here and complains

about it. He sat in government for nine years, didn't get any pipelines, came back here . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Jean: There is no denying it, Mr. Speaker. This contract with Ecofitt is a sweetheart deal that is a kick in the teeth to Alberta businesses. It's a massive competitive advantage for Ecofitt as they get tens of millions of dollars from the NDP to build their Ontario business. Ecofitt currently advertises things that don't even fall under the no-charge savings program; for instance, energy monitors, pre-rinse sprayers, window and door caulking, shrink-fit window kits, weather strips, and the list goes on and on. How can the NDP guarantee these products won't be pushed on Albertans door to door when Ecofitt comes into their homes?

The Speaker: The hon. minister of environment.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, what we have done is ensured a ban on door-to-door energy sales and some of the predatory practices that we saw seniors, in particular, being subjected to. It was not a ban that was supported by the conservative parties because they're not interested in making life better for Albertans. What we have not done is banned door-to-door savings because we are making life more affordable for all Albertans.

Mr. Jean: The Premier keeps insisting that she's trying to help Albertans with their energy bills, but here are the facts. She is crushing Albertans with a massive new carbon tax. Heating bills, gas bills, and groceries are all going to be more expensive this year, and – wait for it – she plans to raise the tax by 150 per cent next year. She is sending a company into people's homes with taxpayer money to install light bulbs and poke around their homes to educate and upsell homeowners on their products. Now, how can the Premier possibly stand behind her government's own gross hypocrisy?

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, what our government is focused on doing is making life more affordable for Albertans, and that's exactly what we are doing. So low- and middle-income Albertans are getting rebates. So all Albertans, 90,000 households at last count, are getting help with saving on their energy bills. So families across Alberta are getting help with their school fees. So students all across Alberta are getting help with their tuition fees. You know what? We're just getting started. I know the members opposite don't want to help make life more affordable for Albertans, but we are just . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.
Second main question.

Canadian Free Trade Agreement

Mr. Jean: The ink is barely dry on the Canadian free trade agreement, and the NDP are already making our trade partners extremely nervous. You see, they drove a hard bargain in free trade talks, telling other provinces that they'd have to deal with a brand new Crown corporation that Alberta would create to handle procurement. The NDP went as far as insisting it be in the final trade agreement. Now they want us to believe it was all just a joke, a farce, that they never really meant it. What are our provincial trade partners and potential investors to think when only days after the trade deal is signed by this government, the NDP are putting the entire commitment of the contract in doubt?

Ms Notley: You know, Mr. Speaker, the minister yesterday made it very, very clear that we have no intention of moving forward with

a Crown corporation. You know what? The other thing that the minister said and that bears repeating is that our government is absolutely committed to standing up for Alberta jobs, and that's exactly what we did in that agreement. If the member opposite wants to go outside onto the streets of Edmonton or the streets of Calgary and explain why he's angry that we aren't creating jobs in Saskatchewan and Ontario, I suggest he go right ahead and that he come back and let us know how that worked for him.

Mr. Jean: Along with the creation of a new Crown corporation, the NDP negotiated exceptions to this trade agreement dealing with the disposition of Crown lands, residency requirements for hunting permits, alcohol, resource extraction, and power contracts. Free trade agreement? My goodness. It's all in the agreement that the NDP signed, Mr. Speaker, but perhaps all of that, too, was some part of an elaborate ruse to hoodwink our provincial neighbours. I'm wondering when the Premier plans to fill in her counterparts across the country as well as Albertans at home on what other parts of this free trade agreement she doesn't actually plan to honour. [interjections]

The Speaker: Quiet.

Ms Notley: You know, Mr. Speaker, I understand that the member for Regina-Somewhere is very concerned about the jobs in Saskatchewan and jobs in Quebec and jobs in Ontario. He's doing a lovely job for them, but you know what? Our government is focused on jobs for Albertans, and that is exactly what that deal is going to deliver.

Mr. Jean: The NDP government's handling of this file is so confusing that it's hard to tell what they really want as an outcome. Thankfully for all of us, there were others at the table when Alberta bungled negotiations. For instance, she's right. Saskatchewan's Economy minister has stated that, and I quote, it was a consistent Alberta position, that both at the officials level and the political level Alberta has been very consistent that they intended to create a Crown. End quote. Will the Premier just come clean and either admit that they were in over their heads negotiating or that they actually are creating a Crown corporation? Come clean with Albertans.

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I believe the first question has been answered several times in that we are not moving forward in terms of creating a Crown corporation. Here's what we are moving forward on. We are investing over \$30 billion in infrastructure for Alberta families and Alberta communities. You know what? We're going to do everything we can to make sure that it's Albertans that work on those projects. You know what else we are doing? We are working with the people of Fort McMurray as they rebuild, and we are making sure that it is businesses from Fort McMurray that get those contracts. You know what else? We are moving forward to a new renewable energy . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Let me remind everyone in the House: 35 seconds each.
The Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Information and Privacy Commissioner Report

Mr. Cooper: A new report from the Privacy Commissioner released yesterday is another black mark on this government. They have quickly adopted a shocking pattern of secrecy and dishonesty.

I've never seen comments from the Privacy Commissioner in Alberta dripping with such contempt for a government that consistently blocks access to information and Albertans getting it. It's outrageous. It's clear that the NDP can no longer be trusted. Why does the Premier think it's okay to block the Privacy Commissioner from doing her job?

2:00

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, it would be helpful if the member opposite were to read the report a little closer because the report addresses investigations of conduct that occurred between 2009 and 2014, conduct that was delivered by their new slow-dance partners slightly over to the left or to the right. Who knows? That's what the report is about. Our government has been working diligently on improving transparency and access for Albertans, and I look forward to our Minister of Justice talking about just how we're doing that.

Mr. Cooper: "What should have been a relatively straightforward investigation has concluded under a shadow that . . . has the potential to erode public confidence in an open and accountable government." This is under the Premier's watch. She has the ability to release the information today, but they continue to block the Privacy Commissioner from getting that information. What is the Premier hiding? Why is she trying so very hard to hide this information from Albertans?

Ms Notley: Again, Mr. Speaker, I urge the member opposite to read the timeline in the report that he's referring to. The investigations and the requests were made in March 2015, at which point the whole thing went to the courts, and everything essentially stopped because the Supreme Court of Canada was reviewing the issues. We indicated that once that decision was made and once the Privacy Commissioner made recommendations, we would consider them and look at how we can move forward. We got that report yesterday, and we look forward to acting on many of those recommendations to improve freedom of information . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, the Premier has access to the information today, yesterday, and two years ago, and she ought to release it. This is the third report in three months condemning the actions of this government. This is the type of nonsense that the government promised would stop when they took over, and it hasn't. The government is continuing to abuse the system. They're politically interfering to cover up information, and it's all being done under the guise of solicitor-client privilege. Will the Premier fix the law? If not, why not, and what are you hiding? [interjections]

The Speaker: Quiet, please, everyone. [interjection] Hon. member.
The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. That was a lovely display of drama. The only thing is that the member opposite should have turned another 45 degrees to his left and asked his new slow-dance partner that beautifully delivered question because that's what the report is about. Just yesterday the Privacy Commissioner tabled recommendations that arose as a result of the November decision of the Supreme Court of Canada. We have committed that we will look at those recommendations, and we will move forward to build on the work that we have already done to improve transparency, to improve response times, and to . . .

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

Employment and Labour Code Consultations

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker, Alberta has benefited from labour peace over the years. Workers have been paid. Business has been allowed to make a profit. These things go well together, and they create prosperity. The Alberta Chambers of Commerce has concerns that the current labour consultations are inadequate in light of the significant changes contemplated. The minister has the letter. To the Premier: since your minister has refused to fix the consultation process, will you now direct that that consultation period be extended in order to get proper input from business, organized labour, and all working Albertans?

Ms Notley: You know, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite suggests that everything was working fine and that workers were getting paid, and in most cases they were unless they were sick, in which case they wouldn't get paid, they wouldn't get access to EI that many other people in Canada would get, and they might get fired. You know what? That wasn't actually working so well for all Albertans. It is time that these issues get reviewed. That's what we committed to doing. That's what we are doing. We're getting all the information. We will ensure that everyone will have been heard from, and then we will move forward in a responsible way that benefits all Albertans.

Mr. McIver: Well, 5 per cent unemployment was a lot better than the Premier's 10.

Though it's reasonable for the minister to want to update labour legislation, it can be said that with only 45 labour stoppages in the last decade, this is not an urgent situation. It could be called a solution looking for a problem. Labour peace, high employment, and profits are a formula for prosperity and a high standard of living. Premier, since workers have benefited from the current system for years, including in unionized workplaces, can you assure Albertans that you have no plan to subject workers to intimidation by taking away the secret ballot provision in the legislation?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure that members of the Supreme Court of Canada will be interested to hear that the member opposite sees them as a solution looking for a problem. You know what? We don't think that is true. We think it is time for us to move forward, to modernize things, and to also do so in a way that encourages wide-ranging consultation and good discussions. That's exactly what we will do.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad the Premier mentioned a wide range of consultation because the credibility of labour relations is based on balance between labour interests and business interests at the Labour Relations Board. With the latest order in council four out of the six new picks were from the labour side. To the Premier: since you like to say that you bring different voices to the table, can you assure Alberta workers and businesses that you will maintain the balance between business and labour at the Labour Relations Board?

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, I do find it interesting that the member opposite suggests there was balance when back when they were in government, they had a Minister of Labour who refused in

principle to ever meet with the leader of the Federation of Labour while he was Minister of Labour. Notwithstanding that, we absolutely believe in balance, and that's absolutely the way we would move forward. It just happened that the vacancies that came up were worker ones. Of course, the labour board must maintain balance, and we are absolutely committed to that.

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

Information and Privacy Commissioner Report (continued)

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The very first thing I did as an MLA was try to put a stop to unauthorized shredding. Transparency and openness are core values of the Alberta Party, and we expected that this new government would take their once-in-a-generation victory as an opportunity to make real changes to Alberta's FOIP laws. Yesterday the Privacy Commissioner issued a report that says that there was "possible political interference" and that she has "been thwarted by the refusal of the former and current governments" to grant access to records. To the Premier: what's going on over there? What caused the commissioner to accuse your government of withholding records?

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Indeed, the commissioner also notes that there have been improvements under our government, and that is because we have taken action to hire more FOIP co-ordinators, something that was necessary. The commissioner identified that there was a long-standing resourcing problem, so we've moved forward with that. Even while waiting for the decision from the Supreme Court of Canada, the Minister of Justice has asked her officials to do work on significantly narrowing the application of the solicitor-client privilege exception, that had been overused by the previous government. We are taking action. We know there's more to do. We look forward to doing that.

2:10

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Clark: "Former and current governments," Mr. Speaker.

It never ceases to amaze me how quickly a new government acquires bad habits. When in opposition, the NDP loudly and correctly criticized the PCs for withholding information. You also complained about their partisan advertising budget, using their majority to push through controversial legislation, and gratuitous puffball questions. My, how things change. Again to the Premier: is your government obstructing the work of the Privacy Commissioner because now that you're in charge, you'd rather keep things secret? [interjections]

The Speaker: Quiet.

Ms Notley: What we are doing, Mr. Speaker, is supporting the work of the Privacy Commissioner as a result of the initiatives taken by our Minister of Justice and as a result of just yesterday receiving the recommendations from the Privacy Commissioner now that she's responded to the decision of the Supreme Court of Canada, that wasn't made until November 2016. As a result of that work having just been finished, we look forward to working with her and ultimately with members of this Assembly to improve our transparency, to improve access to information because that benefits all Albertans.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A very straightforward and simple question. The Privacy Commissioner made a clear request for simple changes to Alberta's FOIP Act to address her concerns. Given that it's only going to take a couple of weeks from the time labour consultations wrap up until we see substantial legislative changes in this House, a simple question to the Premier: will you accept the commissioner's request and bring changes to the FOIP Act this spring?

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, as I've said, we just received the request and the report from the FOIP commissioner yesterday, so we will review it. We will review it as part of likely a broader review of the freedom of information legislation and probably a broader review that would happen in an all-party committee. As we know from the last time that the member opposite participated in what was supposed to be a very clear discussion in an all-party meeting, things kind of went off the rails, and it took a little bit longer than expected. [interjection]

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

Ms Notley: We certainly do plan to move forward on improving transparency, and we look forward to working with the commissioner, taking into account her recommendations, and having further discussions going forward.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.
Calgary-Northern Hills.

School Construction

Mr. Kleinsteuber: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In Budget 2017 this government committed to making significant investments in new schools and modernization projects, having allocated \$500 million this year for new school projects. Given that we're catching up on school construction and that we've inherited a school infrastructure deficit from the previous government, to the Minister of Education: how does this government plan to deal with the backlog of crucial school infrastructure that Albertans need?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, since we've taken this term, we have been building schools, with 26 new school projects in this budget. Yes, there has been a considerable backlog, but we had the Auditor General help us to build a way to streamline the situation to make sure that we are building schools and giving long-term planning to those school infrastructure projects. For more than a decade the government failed to do so. I'm here to help clean it up and build schools in every corner of this province.

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

Mr. Kleinsteuber: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that members opposite would make reckless cuts that would only worsen the issue of school infrastructure, to the same minister: how does our government plan to address the issue of much-needed high schools in Alberta such as the north-central high school in Coventry Hills in my constituency. [interjections]

The Speaker: Quiet, please.
The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, I've heard loud and clear from the constituents in Calgary-Northern Hills. We know that there is a high school needed there. There are schools right across the whole province that we are required to build. I've been working closely with school boards and their lists that they give us, and we update those over time. Certainly, we are taking prudent, practical steps to make sure that we build the schools where we need them, to have teachers in the classroom, support staff, and the whole deal because we care about education. We want to make life better for . . .

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

Mr. Kleinsteuber: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that my constituents are concerned about a high school in the area, to the same minister: can you clarify, please, how schools are prioritized and selected for funding?

Mr. Eggen: Mr. Speaker, I'd be very glad to do so. We use the school boards' capital lists. We work with geography. We work with imminent safety concerns. For example, in Drayton Valley there was a school that needed to be taken care of there. Of course, enrolment is the biggest factor because we still see very dramatic growth in all of our population centres, especially in suburban centres. We certainly will address those coming because we have a long-term plan to build schools, make life better for Alberta families, and get the job done.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Labour Legislation Review

Mr. van Dijken: Mr. Speaker, Albertans have expressed their frustration and concerns with the government's labour laws review. This government has consistently failed to properly consult Albertans. To date Ontario has allowed two years for its consultation while Albertans have been given a mere 36 days to provide feedback. The changes to our labour laws back in 1988 were a result of unions, companies, and associations working together for more than a year, and these laws withstood the test of time. Stakeholders in Alberta have asked the minister to extend and enhance the consultation for her labour laws review. My question is: will she?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As the member opposite referenced, the labour legislation that we are reviewing has not been updated since the movie *Beetlejuice* was released. We want to make sure that we have fair and family-friendly workplaces that contribute to a strong Alberta economy. To do that, we are working with companies . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Hon. members, please.

Ms Gray: . . . and organizations that represent businesses. We're working with labour, and we are collecting excellent feedback from Albertans so that we can make sure we have the best workplace legislation in our country.

Mr. van Dijken: Given that yesterday during the budget estimates the minister said that Ontario was different because they're "doing a soup-to-nuts review" and given that this minister's mandate letter to Andy Sims is very broad and includes foundational questions

such as the very definition of an employee, processes to choose, change, or cancel union representation, whether to mandate a Rand formula in collective agreements, broadening the Labour Relations Board mandate, and many more issues, will the minister please clarify how her labour relations review is very focused compared to Ontario's "soup-to-nuts review"?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. For our review of employment standards and labour relations we have chosen to do a focused review where we're looking at a number of key issues. For example, in Alberta someone who needs to take time off because they themselves are sick or their child is sick could lose their job because we do not have job-protected sick leave. We do not need weeks and weeks to talk about that although I understand it can take the members opposite a lot of time to decide if they need to feed hungry kids or not. In this case we are talking to the key players to make sure that we have labour legislation that works for . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Speaker's Ruling Decorum

The Speaker: Hon. members, you will note that I've been using this of late, and I note that increasingly there are a number of you using it. It has to do with the overall volume of this place. I ask on all sides, not only as individuals but also as a group, to please keep it down if you want to influence the policy into the future.

Labour Legislation Review (continued)

Mr. van Dijken: Given the minister's business plan states that "the ministry must meet high expectations for transparency and engagement when making any legislative changes" and given that this minister said, "we absolutely look at making sure that we are meeting our own high expectations" and given it appears that this minister's high expectations are well below the expectations of many Albertans, Minister, tell us why you're not taking more time to hear from Albertans on matters like union certification and collective bargaining. Is it because you already know the results you want?

2:20

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's very important that we consult with employers and employee groups as well as everyday Albertans. Our consultation is ongoing, and I invite all Albertans to go to work.alberta.ca. If you have interest in employment standards or the Labour Relations Code, please weigh in on these important issues. We will continue to accept that feedback as well as work with labour lawyer Andy Sims to make sure that we have reasonable, fair, and responsible legislation for Alberta dealing with issues like that where currently . . .

The Speaker: Quiet.

Ms Gray: . . . someone can get fired if they take a sick day. [interjection]

The Speaker: Hon. member, please. Quiet. Hon. member – you – be quiet. Thank you. Hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain

House-Sundre, I asked you to be quiet. Please, when I ask you to do that, respect this chair.

Thank you.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

Wellness Strategy

Mr. Rodney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The NDP claim to be bending the curve on costs, but their budget is the largest in Alberta history. Let me remind them that wellness programs are positive, proactive, and preventative. They keep people happy, healthy, and out of the hospital, and they increase quality of life while decreasing health care costs. When will the Minister of Health reimplement internationally respected programs, including Alberta's strategic approach to wellness, International Wellness Symposium, provincial wellness forum, workplace wellness summit, Healthy U, Be a Health Champion, aboriginal youth intervention, Communities ChooseWell, injury prevention programs, and more?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the former member of the government, who was associate minister of wellness when a lot of programs actually were cut that did impact people's health and safety, including wellness. I have to say that we know that in this House members opposite tell us to cut each and every day. They tell us that we're being too generous, that we're spending too much money on supporting Albertans. On this side of the House we're going to continue to have Albertans' backs. We're going to make their lives better, and that includes making sure that we have strategic, focused investments in wellness. We know the members opposite want to cut. We're going to protect Albertans.

Mr. Rodney: Those who benefited from these programs would like a real answer.

Perhaps this one. Given the success of programs that helped Albertans make healthier choices, including other ones like Ever Active Schools, MEND, and healthy schools, healthy futures, and given the invaluable work done by Albertans during the provincial wellness engagement tours as well as partnerships embarked upon with Participation – get out for sport, concussions, informed dining, and sodium strategies – when will the minister build on the successes of these programs, and when will she proclaim the Alberta physical activity amendment credit so that Alberta can be the leader in wellness that it was intended to be in the first place?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's always interesting when people on the other side of the House, who had a chance to proclaim legislation and did not, ask us why we're not acting on things that they did not act on themselves. I have to say that it's pretty rich coming from the members opposite, who like to make lots of campaign announcements without actually ever following through on them. We're working with Albertans. For example, this morning I met with parks and rec to work at ways that we're continuing to support communities through grants and local initiatives like community gardens. We are continuing to have Albertans' backs, make their lives better, and not with the deep cuts that the members opposite are proposing.

Mr. Rodney: They're looking backwards, and they're going backwards.

Given that the Alberta Get Outdoors Weekend, or GO Weekend, brought together students and seniors and people at work in an

invaluable tradition of energizing Albertans after a long, cold winter and given that GO mobilized amateur and professional athletes as well as those who simply enjoy a walk in the great outdoors to reap limitless physical and mental benefits and given that this cost taxpayers absolutely nothing and was passed by all parties in this Legislature, why did the NDP again not do anything about Alberta Get Outdoors Weekend, which was to be celebrated last weekend? Is that a matter of oops; you did it again?

Ms Hoffman: In terms of a Britney quote, I know the member opposite likes to pretend everything he did was perfect. But guess what the members opposite did. They did a lot of announcements that actually had no action behind them. We're actually moving forward with communities, with partners and making sure we're working in partnership. We are of course continuing to support Albertans throughout our province. We're glad to have a good, strong future, Mr. Speaker, not pushing for drastic, erratic cuts like the members opposite are and having announcements that they don't actually have any plans to fulfill.

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

Carbon Levy and Vulnerable Albertans

Mr. Yao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On December 2, 2016, Seniors and Housing received two letters from housing management bodies explaining that they'd have to levy a \$10 fee to cover the cost of their carbon tax. They pointed out that 95 per cent of their clients would be receiving the carbon rebates, yet the housing management bodies would be the ones paying the cost of the tax. The government's manager of stakeholder relations ordered the housing management bodies not to charge the \$10 fee, that their decision would be reviewed once we have the evidence of the actual effect. To the Minister of Seniors and Housing: what has your ministry done to alleviate the impact on the housing management bodies due to the effects of the carbon tax?

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

Ms Sigurdson: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we're working very closely with our housing management bodies to support them through this time of transition. We've invested \$57 million to support them for energy efficiency upgrades, for furnaces, triple-pane windows, that kind of thing. Certainly, seniors themselves are receiving the rebate; 260,000 seniors will receive up to \$300 in rebates. We're working very closely with seniors and housing management bodies to support them during this time.

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, nonprofit organizations have to cover the cost of this NDP, job-killing carbon tax. The increase in the minimum wage is going to impact their already stretched budgets, and all these increases could cost as much as an extra \$10,000 to \$15,000 a year. Given that nonprofit organizations cannot run up endless debts by creating spending deficits each year like this government does, can the minister explain why they expect nonprofits to live within their means and meet the needs of their vulnerable clients when they are being hit by this job-killing carbon tax?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, we're working with nonprofit agencies also. We've rolled out energy efficiency programs to support them to have energy

efficiency upgrades, and we certainly are supporting them to serve their clients well. We know that the opposition doesn't care about those programs and would be cutting billions of dollars from the budget. We're working with nonprofits and housing management bodies and seniors to make life better for Albertans.

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, the opposition recently told this government that a job-killing carbon tax would increase the cost of everything and hurt nonprofit organizations. Given that I've talked with at least one nonprofit organization that does not know how it will absorb this carbon tax and given that this policy is having a negative impact on some of the most vulnerable within our society, to the minister: when will you scrap this carbon tax on nonprofits?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, nonprofits, housing management bodies serve vulnerable seniors throughout the province, and we're very grateful for their service to us. We work closely with them. We're investing in energy efficiency programs for them. We're doing energy audits to support them to know what the best investment is of that \$57 million that we're working on. We know that the opposition want to be climate deniers and not take care of any of these issues, so we're very pleased to be making life better for Albertans.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Judge and Lawyer Training on Sexual Offences

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. All across this country Canadians have taken to the streets to protest outdated, outrageous, and outright sexist comments coming from our courts. Sexual assault myths and stereotypes and victim-shaming comments like "why couldn't you just keep your knees together?" deter victims from coming forward and can even revictimize the person. Minister, considering lawyers, both defence and Crown attorneys, have a role to play in ensuring a respectful victim process, does the minister support mandatory training for lawyers who represent sexual assault victims?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, our government firmly believes that these sorts of myths and stereotypes have no place in the courtroom. That's why I wrote the letter which initiated the complaint against Mr. Justice Camp and resulted in his ultimate removal, and we are very proud of that. We continue to believe that these sorts of myths and stereotypes absolutely have no place at all within the law, and we'll continue to support education not only for judges but also for lawyers.

Mrs. Pitt: Mr. Speaker, given that four Alberta court judges have recently come under fire for their disgustingly insensitive comments and given that Alberta's Chief Justice Neil Wittmann has advocated for more training for the judiciary on topics of sexual violence and given that he has also stated his outright disagreement that education opportunities infringe on judicial independence, to the minister: will your government support introducing voluntary training on sexual misconduct for judges under the purview of the Chief Justice?

2:30

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Not only do we support voluntary training for judges on sexual assault law; it's already provided. In fact, just last year at the judges' conference they did a very long working group on this. We pay a grant to the National Judicial Institute to ensure that they have access to all of these materials. But in addition to education, this is a larger problem. It speaks to the quality of appointments being made to the bench. That is why we are so careful in ensuring that we are appointing Albertans who have experience in these sorts of matters.

An Hon. Member: And the NDP world view.

Mr. Mason: Who appointed them?

The Speaker: Government House Leader. [interjections] Government House Leader.

Mrs. Pitt: Mr. Speaker, given that protecting sexual assault victims from revictimization and court reforms are nonpartisan issues and given that this is also being addressed at a national level, where Thomas Mulcair and the NDP have put forward a motion to fast-track the Conservative leader's bill, will this NDP government also take action and allow for unanimous consent to debate a motion to dispel rape and sexual assault myths and stereotypes from our courts?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I find it interesting that as we were having a conversation about the importance of appointing people who want to respect the law and respect survivors of sexual assault, the members opposite were screaming about the NDP world view. Well, they're absolutely correct. It is the world view of this side of the House that survivors of sexual assault deserve respect. They deserve respect in the courts, and they deserve respect in this House.

Employment and Labour Code Consultations (continued)

Mr. Gotfried: Mr. Speaker, when government introduces sweeping changes to legislation, it's important that as many affected stakeholders as possible are able to speak directly with the minister responsible in order to ensure, of course, that all sides of the issue are truly heard. Upcoming changes to employment standards and labour code are a perfect example of changes in government policy which will affect hundreds of thousands of Albertans. Again to the Minister of Labour. Edmonton, Calgary, Grande Prairie, and Lethbridge: which, if any, of these did you actually attend?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Making sure that our lives are up to date with today's modern workplaces is a priority for this government. Making sure that we have a consultation where we're able to hear from Albertans, making sure that we have representatives from labour organizations and employers is important. I did attend some of the consultations, and I am pleased to be able to report that we had common ground with all members. Employers, in fact, were surprised that Alberta does not have job-protected sick leave. Most didn't realize we were so out of step with other jurisdictions.

Mr. Gotfried: Mr. Speaker, given that affected stakeholders would simply like the opportunity to have an honest conversation with the minister and to inform her of potentially serious consequences of

proposed policy changes and given that we heard that invitation-only consultations to date have been light on business representation while union presence has been consistently and notably strong, again to the minister: which businesses or business advocacy groups have you personally consulted with regarding proposed policy changes?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Talking about Alberta's workplace legislation is one of my core responsibilities, and I have been doing that since my appointment, including talking to Alberta Chambers of Commerce, Edmonton chamber, Calgary chambers, chambers across this province, CFIB, other organizations throughout this process. All of these organizations have been invited to participate in this process. We are making sure that we are hearing from a balance of voices: from the employer side, the labour side, all Albertans. Anyone interested in employment standards or labour relations should go online and commit their thoughts on this process, which is open right now.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Gotfried: Mr. Speaker, given that this government has already failed to consult on numerous occasions with impacted stakeholders prior to introducing controversial legislation in this House and given that thousands of Albertans have repeatedly and loudly expressed their distaste for this type of behaviour right here on the steps of the Legislature and given that government should listen to all viewpoints, not just the ones which align with their world view, again to the minister: stakeholders want to be heard. Will you do the right thing and extend and enhance consultations? Albertans want to know.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is very important to us that we have family-friendly, fair, and modern workplace legislation, that Alberta has been lacking. We are making sure that we are engaging fully, including over 700 employers having completed the survey online, including nearly 50 employer representatives attending the meetings that were held across Alberta. We have been engaging completely with Albertans. I am looking forward to seeing the results of the consultation, and again I invite anyone who wants to participate to do so now.

Support for Indigenous Women

Mr. Malkinson: Mr. Speaker, this year I once again participated in the Valentine's Day missing and murdered indigenous women's march at Scarboro church in my riding, and once again I heard heart-wrenching stories of indigenous families who have lost a daughter or a mother. To the Minister of Indigenous Relations: what has your ministry done to support the work of the national inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women and girls?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question and his ongoing advocacy in this area. Alberta, of course, is in full support of the national inquiry and has been one of the original people to call for the inquiry in this country. We also believe it's important to consult with the members of families who have lost a family member, a girl or a woman, as we did in our fall conference with family members here in Edmonton.

Shortly after we were elected, we made the call, and subsequently we have put in the orders in council to ensure that the commissioners, when they come to Alberta, have all of the jurisdiction that they need.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, could you please keep the volume down.

First supplemental.

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that I understand the province is playing a role in helping families who have loved ones go missing, again to the Minister of Indigenous Relations: what formal structures have been put in place to provide support for these families?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. The federal government has set aside \$11.7 million for provinces and territories to establish family information liaison units. The Alberta unit will be fully staffed by mid-April 2017. The FILUs will be a one-stop information and support service for families of missing and murdered indigenous women rather than referring families to other services. These units are to help relatives of missing and murdered indigenous women navigate the justice system and to offer support.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Minister of Indigenous Relations: what other measures are being taken to address the needs of indigenous women in Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. We are very pleased with our progress in working with the indigenous women in this province. In December we appointed 32 women to the First Nations Women's Economic Security Council and the Métis Women's Economic Security Council, and for the very first time we provided core funding for the Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women and have expanded programs of antiviolence such as the I Am a Kind Man campaign and the Moose Hide campaign. Other ministries in this government have also provided services such as Children's Services, which is providing funding for pregnancy pathways, an inner-city program for pregnant and homeless indigenous women.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Water Co-operatives Funding

Mr. Stier: Mr. Speaker, my question today is for the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure. Minister, as you know, for decades water co-ops have been formed, and there is an Alberta water co-op association with dozens of member boards. These are normally funded by joint federal and provincial programs. In this year's federal budget, actually, is a program for \$165 million destined for Alberta known as the green infrastructure clean water and waste-water fund to supply communities with clean, dependable drinking water. Minister, has your ministry received this funding, please?

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much for the question. Mr. Speaker, the member raises an important question, which is access to clean drinking water. Now, in terms of the provincial funding, which I'll deal with first, our program does not contain enough resources to support everybody that is seeking to expand their water supply, so we limit it to certain types of programs, and they're limited to municipalities and water commissions. Currently it does not cover water co-ops. As much as I would like to do that, we're going to have to find a way to do that. That is going to take a bit of time. Perhaps the federal program may assist us in . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

2:40

Mr. Stier: Again to the minister, Mr. Speaker: given that the Leavings Water Co-op near Claresholm is out of a local supply of water and has met you and your ministry regarding their urgent need to supply over 550 people with reliable, clean water and have been refused on the basis that there are apparently no grants available for this purpose and given that the \$165 million provincial clean water funds seem destined for these types of critical needs, why has this Leavings Water Co-op proposal not been given an opportunity to apply for this program?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member is correct that I have met with the Leavings co-op. I have great sympathy for their situation. They're dependent on well water, and they would like to extend the water line to bring a number of farms into the program. Unfortunately, with the limited funds available and the criteria under the existing water for life the municipal water or waste-water program does not cover co-ops. It is intended for municipalities and water commissions and waste-water commissions only.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Stier: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Given, though, that very recently the Minister of Environment and Parks announced new funding for a water line in my constituency from Cowley to Beaver Mines that was backed apparently by both federal and provincial governments and valued at approximately the same value as the Leavings Co-op, around \$5 million, near Claresholm, yet that one is for a much greater urgent need here near Claresholm – Minister, these people have travelled with their hats in their hands. They're out of water. Why has this government not provided the co-op board with information on how to apply for this new federal-provincial clean water grant?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We have offered support to connect the Leavings Water Co-op. There are a number of options that they have, including water rates for their members, that could help close the gap. But I will undertake, thanks to the hon. member, to look further into this matter to see if we can alleviate the situation through the use of the federal program.

The Speaker: Hon. members, in 30 seconds we will continue with members' statements.

Members' Statements

(continued)

Government Policies

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, over the past two years the NDP have made things go from bad to worse, and their actions show a blatant disrespect for the good people of Alberta. Saskatchewan used to be Alberta's closest partner, but the Premier found it wise to spend her time picking fights with Brad Wall, severely damaging that relationship.

Remember the long lost days of provincial surpluses? The Premier's last disaster of a budget was a harsh reminder that the NDP just can't seem to help themselves from trying to spend their way to prosperity. Albertans know that running a \$10 billion deficit and racking up a \$70 billion debt isn't the way to get our province back on track.

It's no secret that money management isn't a strength of the NDP, but even the opposition was shocked to learn that the environment minister picked the third-lowest bidder for the Ecofitt boondoggle of installing light bulbs using the carbon tax slush fund, most shockingly because she told Albertans that she selected the most competitive bid.

The NDP also changed the rules for AIMCo, an independent organization responsible for investing Alberta's heritage savings trust fund, otherwise known as Alberta's future, Mr. Speaker. Why did they do this? So that the NDP can plant political insiders in high-ranking positions. What's worse is that the Premier's own staff have already been caught red-handed politically interfering with AIMCo.

When it comes to operating a transparent government, the NDP is an embarrassment. Yesterday the Privacy Commissioner slammed the NDP for their failure to provide accountability, showing that they have embraced the secretive practices that they once decried. The NDP has deeply damaged our province. My message to Albertans is simple.

The opposition will continue to fight to make Alberta a competitive marketplace, a safe community, and the best place in the world to raise a family and start a business. In 2019 Albertans will cast their ballot, and the orange experiment will be a painful but distant memory. [interjections]

The Speaker: Quiet.

Tabling Returns and Reports

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

Mr. van Dijken: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am tabling the five copies necessary: with regard to labour laws, a letter to the editor in the *Edmonton Journal* this morning by Mr. Bert MacKay, quoting that he was part of the process that took over one year to work out the new labour legislation at that time.

The Speaker: Strathmore-Brooks, you had something?

Mr. Fildebrandt: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Since I have to stick around, I thought that I may as well make another tabling on day 10 of fun tablings. On the 9th of March I wrote a letter to the hon. Government House Leader quoting the now Premier calling the Public Affairs Bureau someone who recharacterizes the truth and spins it. I'll table the requisite five copies for the delight of the Government House Leader.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, we had a point of order.
The Government House Leader.

Point of Order
Oral Questions

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. During question period today the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek was asking the Minister of Labour questions about her attendance at an event, a conference of some sort, that he felt she should be at. It's well known in the House that questions ought to be on a matter of government policy. It's not an opportunity for the opposition to take attendance; it is an opportunity for them to hold the government accountable for the policy positions that the government takes. I'd ask that those types of questions be ruled out of order in the future.

Mr. Rodney: I'm quite surprised that there was no citation given, Mr. Speaker. I don't know how there can be a point of order, first of all, as there is no citation.

Secondly, we were not referring to any absence in the House. In fact, the question was: "To the Minister of Labour, Edmonton, Calgary, Grande Prairie, and Lethbridge: which, if any, of these did you actually attend?" It was directly related to government policy, that being stakeholder consultation with respect to changes in legislation to the employment standards and labour code.

Mr. Speaker, it was a bizarre day again in this House, and I'm really surprised that this would be picked on. Again, no citation, related to policy, having nothing to do with absences in the House: I think that we should move on.

The Speaker: Hon. member, I think in this instance I agree with the opposition. I do not see a point of order in this situation.

Point of Clarification

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, I know that there is lots going on today, but I'd just like to briefly rise, if I may, on a point of order. Under 13(2) "The Speaker shall explain the reasons for any decision on the request of a Member."

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to just briefly point to *Beauchesne's* with respect to decorum in the House and what may or may not be appropriate with respect to clothing inside the Chamber. You will find in *Beauchesne's*, sixth edition, page 98, under 329, a fairly extensive discussion about what may or may not be permitted inside the Chamber.

I know that earlier today we saw three members of the government – and I understand that they may have some affiliations with northern Alberta and, in particular, enjoyment of one hockey team or another. Perhaps you saw some Oilers jerseys inside the Chamber earlier today as well, but *Beauchesne's* is fairly clear about what is appropriate to wear inside the Chamber and what isn't appropriate. I can only imagine that they would have asked permission from you, Mr. Speaker, to wear such a jersey in such an important place like this. If you could explain why you would allow

an Oilers jersey in this place when everyone knows that a Flames jersey would be much more appropriate. [laughter]

2:50

The Speaker: Gosh, it's nice to hear laughter in this place.

Mr. Rodney: Actually, there's a long history of this, I'd point out, through the Speaker, to the hon. Opposition House Leader. The fact of the matter is that indeed written permission would be required. Mr. Speaker, if you do that, then that's just great. I think anything that we can do for the spirit of Edmonton, for the spirit of Calgary, for the spirit of Alberta is a great thing to do.

That being said, traditionally in the past previous Speakers have ruled this way: either written permission or – and I'm not making this up – a person is permitted to wear such a uniform if they provide every other member of the Legislature with the same jersey. You can look it up, sir. I've seen it on a few occasions, including from this area of the province a while back when that junior hockey team was doing well. Perhaps you could provide the Opposition House Leader with some clarity and the rest of us because – let's face it – the battle of Alberta could be great, but it could be ugly, right? Go Flames.

The Speaker: To the point of order, Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, under section 13(2) – and this is the citation – "The Speaker shall explain the reasons for any decision on the request of a Member." It is my understanding that the decision of the Speaker with respect to this limited the wearing of jerseys to Alberta teams. I simply have to ask: why not Montreal?

The Speaker: Hon. members, this is probably one of the most challenging rulings I've been called upon to make. I feel that out of respect for this House – I want you to know that I'd better take some time; we'd all better take some time. Under this vestment there's something orange and something red.

An Hon. Member: Oh, nonpartisan.

The Speaker: That's exactly correct.

Hon. members, the daily Routine is now concluded. Pursuant to Standing Order 59.01(5)(b) the House stands adjourned till tomorrow afternoon at 1:30.

Don't leave yet.

The legislative policy committees will convene in the afternoon and tomorrow morning for consideration of the main estimates. This afternoon Resource Stewardship will consider the estimates for Municipal Affairs in the Rocky Mountain Room. Tomorrow morning Resource Stewardship will consider the estimates for Indigenous Relations in the Parkland Room, and Families and Communities will consider the estimates of Seniors and Housing in the Rocky Mountain Room.

[The Assembly adjourned at 2:54 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 59.01(5)(b)]

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For inquiries contact:

Managing Editor

Alberta Hansard

3rd Floor, 9820 – 107 St

EDMONTON, AB T5K 1E7

Telephone: 780.427.1875