



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, March 20, 2018

Day 7

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta
The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)
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Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (NDP),
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Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)
Vacant, Fort McMurray-Conklin
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Party standings:

New Democratic: 54 United Conservative: 25 Alberta Party: 3 Alberta Liberal: 1 Progressive Conservative: 1 Independent: 1 Vacant: 2

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, March 20, 2018

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Good afternoon. Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

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

Dr. Turner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a real pleasure for me to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Legislature three classes from St. Mary elementary school in the riding of Edmonton-Whitemud. It's actually quite close to my constituency office in Riverbend Square. The students are accompanied by their teachers, Mr. Richard Harris, Mrs. Olga Dos Santos, Ms Nancy McNeill, and Mrs. Jennifer Hudon, and also their chaperones, Ms Luiza Klebek, Mrs. Jill Davis, and Mrs. Kristina Givens. I'd ask them to rise – I think they're spread throughout the gallery – and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

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

Mr. Horne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly the school group from Muriel Martin school. The students today are accompanied by their teachers, Mrs. Jody Bialowas and Mrs. Heather McDonald, and they are accompanied by parents – I'm sorry, I'm going to butcher this – Mr. Justin Douzich and Mrs. Kira Douzich. I would ask them all to rise today and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Hon. members, are there any other school groups?

Seeing none, the hon. Minister of Culture and Tourism.

Miranda: Merci, M. le Président. Je suis heureux de présenter à vous et aux membres de cette Assemblée des représentants de la Francophonie albertaine. Ces personnes sont ici aujourd'hui pour célébrer la 30e Journée internationale de la Francophonie et le premier Mois de la Francophonie albertaine. Aujourd'hui nous accueillons des représentants de la communauté qui appuient et qui favorisent la promotion et le développement des communautés d'expression française à l'Alberta. Grâce à leur travail et à leur dévouement, appuyés par de nombreux Albertains, notre province est accueillante et inclusive.

Je vous présente donc M. Marc Arnal et Mme Marie-Laure Polydore, membres du conseil d'administration de l'Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta; et Mme Isabelle Laurin, directrice générale. Se joignant à eux aujourd'hui sont des conseillers et des administrateurs scolaires des quatre conseils scolaires francophones de la province, M. Étienne Alary et Mme Malorie Aubé, conseillers du Conseil scolaire Centre-Nord; et M. Donald Michaud, directeur exécutif de la Fédération des conseils scolaires francophones de l'Alberta. Et finalement, je souhaite souligner la présence de ma merveilleuse équipe du Secrétariat francophone au ministère de la Culture et du Tourisme. Je souhaite à nos invités de belles célébrations et leur demande de se lever afin de recevoir les souhaits de bienvenue traditionnels de l'Assemblée.

Merci.

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

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly members of the board of the Sixties Scoop Indigenous Society of Alberta, or SSISA. Over the past few months SSISA leaders and members partnered with Minister Feehan and myself to engage with '60s scoop survivors across the province on what a meaningful government apology should look like. Today I'm honoured to introduce from SSISA Adam North Peigan, the president; Sharon Gladue-Paskimin, vice-president; Sandra Relling, treasurer; Kathy Hamelin, director; Lena Wildman, director; Lew Jobs, director; and Orlando Alexis, director. The SSISA board members are joined today by Shelbi Relling, Petra Jobs, and Shandan LaMarche. I ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly Ellie Shuster and Greta Gerstner. You know that there's nothing I like doing more than talking about educational issues in Alberta today with fellow educators. Today I had the pleasure of meeting Ellie and Greta, who represent the Strategic Alliance for Alberta Students with Learning Challenges. They were advocating for students with learning challenges by ensuring that there is appropriate teacher training, mandatory early screening for learning and developmental challenges, and the appropriate supports for students. This is an amazing group, and I would ask them to stand and the Members of this Legislative Assembly to give them the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly my constituent Elisabeth Bourdouleix and her brother David and her parents, Shirley and Xavier. Elisabeth is a sixth-grade student at l'école la Mission, one of two francophone schools in my constituency of St. Albert. It is my honour to welcome her here today to learn about the work we do as provincial representatives. I ask Elisabeth and her entire family to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

Mr. Westhead: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour today for me to introduce Meg Ohsada, an artist based in Calgary who resides in Canmore. She's not only a celebrated artist but also an award-winning athlete representing Canada at the Special Olympics as a figure skater. Meg's work entitled *Three Sisters* is a beautiful representation of the famed mountain range, with felted wool, that is currently on display at the Alberta Hong Kong office as part of the Indefinite Arts Centre tour of east Asia, which I'll speak more about in my member's statement. Meg is joined by her parents, Noriko and Kaoru, as well as J.S. Ryu, CEO of the Indefinite Arts Centre. I'd ask my guests to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Ms McKittrick: M. le Président, it is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you Mr. Rob Sproule, co-owner of Salisbury Greenhouse. Rob is joined by his wife, Megan Hahn, and their children Aidan and Brynn Sproule. Salisbury Greenhouse is a third-generation family business that has served Sherwood Park since 1965. Rob has been instrumental in developing the school garden project, which assists schools in establishing schoolyard gardens. Thank you, Rob and Salisbury Greenhouse, for demonstrating that, truly, gardening is all about community. I look forward to spring gardening soon, too. I will ask Rob, Megan, Aidan, and Brynn to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.
Oh, I'm sorry. Another introduction?

Ms McKittrick: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I should have mentioned.

Mr. Speaker, it's also my pleasure to introduce to you and through you guests from the Wecan Food Basket Society: the program manager, Suzanne Rigsby; the board chair, Sacha Deelstra; and the vice-chair, Paige Nelson. For 25 years the Wecan Food Basket Society has given people the opportunity to purchase nutritious food at an affordable price through their food basket program. Wecan has 25 locations throughout Edmonton and surrounding area. Their vision, that every person has the right to enough food to live a good and healthy life, has significantly helped to address the issue of food security in our communities. I thank Wecan for their great work and ask them to now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.
The Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce guests from the University of Alberta Faculty of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences, who are joining us during Pharmacist Awareness Month. We value the significant innovation and contributions made by pharmacy professionals to the health and wellness of Albertans. I now ask that Dr. Neal Davies, Dr. Ravina Sanghera, Jody Shkrobot, and Andrew MacIsaac, who are seated in the public gallery, please rise and receive the warm welcome of our Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.
Hon. members, are there any other guest introductions? The Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Ross Ford, the reeve of the county of Warner, in my riding. Ross is a strong advocate for reasonable species-at-risk legislation. I'd like him to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

1:40 Members' Statements

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

Journée Internationale de la Francophonie

Connolly: Merci, M. le Président. C'est avec une immense fierté que je suis ici aujourd'hui pour célébrer la Journée internationale de la Francophonie. Plus tôt ce mois-ci notre gouvernement a proclamé le mois de mars Mois de la Francophonie albertaine. Cette proclamation réaffirme l'engagement de notre gouvernement de

favoriser la reconnaissance de l'histoire, des réussites, et des contributions des Albertains d'expression française.

Les Albertains et les Albertaines d'expression française ont de quoi célébrer cette année, en commençant par l'adoption de la première politique en matière de Francophonie de l'Alberta et l'établissement d'un conseil consultatif en matière de Francophonie. Avant cette adoption l'Alberta était la seule province, avec une autre province, à n'avoir aucune politique à l'appui de la communauté de langue officielle, et nous sommes fiers d'avoir remédié à des années de négligence. Et, M. le Président, il aura fallu plus de 30 ans pour que le drapeau franco-albertain devienne un emblème officiel de la province d'Alberta. En fait, les populations d'expression française de l'Alberta sont parmi les plus nombreuses et les plus diverses au pays, en plus d'y connaître l'une des croissances les plus rapides.

De toute l'histoire de l'Alberta aucun autre gouvernement n'a compté autant de ministres et de députés qui parlent français.

À titre de vice-président de la section de l'Alberta de l'Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie, je parle d'expérience en réitérant la présence grandissante du fait français en Alberta, au pays et même dans le monde entier. Je ressens une grande fierté quand je vois que l'énergie ne cesse d'augmenter au sein de la Francophonie de Calgary et de toute la province, et je remercie le ministre de l'Éducation d'avoir autorisé, après des années d'inaction, la construction de nouvelles écoles francophones, qui garantissent à notre communauté sa place en Alberta.

Je suis fier aujourd'hui d'affirmer que nous continuerons d'appuyer nos communautés franco-albertaines.

Merci.

[Translation] Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with incredible pride that I stand today to celebrate Journée internationale de la Francophonie. Earlier this month our government proclaimed March as le Mois de la Francophonie Albertaine. This proclamation fulfills our government's commitment to improve recognition of French-speaking Albertans' history, achievements, and contributions.

French-speaking Albertans have much to celebrate this year, starting with Alberta's first French policy and the establishment of a Francophonie advisory council. Up until now Alberta was one of only two provinces without a policy supporting the official language community, a legacy of neglect that we are proud to correct. And, Mr. Speaker, it took over 30 years for the Franco-Albertan flag to become an official emblem of the province of Alberta. In fact, Alberta has one of the largest, fastest growing, and culturally diverse French-speaking populations in the country.

Our government has more ministers and MLAs who speak French than any other government in the history of Alberta.

As vice-president of the Alberta section of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie, APF, I can speak from personal experience about the growing French-speaking presence in Alberta, across our country, and even the world. I am incredibly proud of the growing strength of our Francophonie in Calgary and across Alberta, and I have to thank the Minister of Education for finally building, after years of neglect, new francophone schools, which secures our community's place in Alberta.

Today I stand proudly and say we will always stand with our Franco-Albertan communities. [As submitted]

Ryan McBeath

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, it is with a very, very heavy heart today that I rise to say a few words about a young man of such promise who lost his life one week ago. Only a senior at the Olds high school, in many ways Ryan McBeath was Alberta's son. An honours student,

a friend to everyone he met, Ryan genuinely brought joy to those around him. A promising young player, Ryan played most of his midget hockey in Red Deer, ultimately playing triple-A midget with the Optimist Chiefs, and was an associate player for the AJHL Drumheller Dragons. Praised by his teammates for his physical and mental toughness, Ryan was a leader on and off the ice.

Our community, our region, and our province have all lost a great young man of outstanding character, who always tried to play his game and live his life in the right way. Ryan's loss is not fair, and looking for reasons is senseless and can only provide cold comfort. Far better to remember this young man, how he lit up the lives of so many, and do our best to live up to his memory.

It is my hope that we can use this tragic event to each love our families and care for our community a little more. I ask that each of you take a moment to reflect on the impact of Ryan's life and say a prayer for those who loved him and who feel his loss so deeply. To the Minister of Education, who was Ryan's cousin: know that all of us in this House are with you today as you mourn the loss of this special young man.

On behalf of our community I want to thank the Red Deer Rebels, Don Cherry, all of Ryan's friends and teammates, the Olds high school, and everyone who continues to help us remember one of the best that our province has had.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

School Nutrition Programs

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. March is Nutrition Month. As parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Education I have visited school nutrition program sites throughout the province. Hungry students cannot concentrate on learning. This program is a universal program which every student can access.

After a successful pilot the government expanded the program to include all 62 school authorities for the 2017-2018 school year. Each board receives funding to support the delivery of nutrition programs tailored to their school communities, feeding students and modelling nutrition best practices. Each program is as unique as the schools and communities in which they are located. This government investment, in partnership with communities, is making a difference in the health and learning outcomes of children, in nurturing a greater awareness of food security in our communities, and in the challenges faced by many to put healthy food on their tables.

Strathcona county family and community services, through the parent link centre, is a community partner with WeCan Food Basket Society. Every month WeCan provides members with fresh meat, fresh fruit, and a variety of fresh vegetables for a flat rate of \$25. They continue to provide individuals and families who are struggling come month-end with enough healthy food to make it to the end of the month. This year they are celebrating their 25th anniversary.

Salisbury Greenhouse, under the leadership of Rob Sproule, who I introduced earlier, has worked with many of our local schools to develop vegetable gardens and teach children about growing their own food. This program has been a success, and it's expanding to most schools in partnership with Strathcona county's urban agriculture strategy. Woodbridge Farms school is a great example of how they have incorporated their community garden into the curriculum. Thank you to Salisbury Greenhouse for your commitment to healthy eating and education for our students.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate how community leadership and provincial support from the Ministry of Education for nutrition

programs is giving students the opportunity to learn about healthy eating.

Thank you.

Government Energy Policies

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, when I have discussions with Albertans about this NDP government, they often tell me that they have a hard time understanding or even believing what the NDP stand for. Frankly, I don't blame them. I have a hard time keeping track of their latest public stance as well. One would almost think, by listening to the Premier of late, that they have seen the light about the UCP's positions and ideas and are ready to get onboard.

Let's take pipelines for an example, Mr. Speaker. Members of the NDP have in the past been found at pipeline protests. That's a fact that Albertans haven't forgotten. Even the Premier on at least one occasion found herself amongst these antipipeline activists. Now, one year before the next election, we see a complete 180-degree change in their attitude. The NDP caucus is so excited to share their new-found support for pipelines that they have taken to texting hundreds of thousands of Albertans to spread the good news.

Mr. Speaker, if you're having a hard time following their flip-flops, just think of how confused Albertans are. Even when it comes to resource development more broadly, Albertans have a lot of conflicting information coming at them. On the one hand, the Premier tells people that she is a champion for our industry and that she is doing them a great favour by buying them social licence through saddling them with the unpopular carbon tax. On the other hand, their own Alberta NDP constitution, which you can find on their website, under appendix C states: "Meeting human material needs must not use more of Earth's resources than can be renewed within each generation." If the NDP's pipeline protestations haven't got Albertans scratching their heads, this statement in their constitution surely must.

Mr. Speaker, if the NDP want Albertans to believe they have really changed the way they feel about Alberta's oil and gas industry, they may want to change their constitution to reflect their new New Democratic Party position.

Indefinite Arts Centre

Mr. Westhead: Mr. Speaker, the Indefinite Arts Centre is Canada's oldest and largest disability arts organization. This organization serves more than 300 artists living with developmental disabilities who come to the centre to create incredible works of art with the support of the centre's dedicated staff and volunteers. The centre was recently given a grant by the ministry of community services so that they can expand their hours and give artists increased studio time.

On January 17 Indefinite Arts held its Launchpad event at the Dialog design gallery in Calgary, where artwork was on display from more than 30 artists. Seeing their work first-hand isn't just meant to change the way we think about people living with developmental disabilities; it's also meant to reignite a sense of pride in our province, knowing that the government of Alberta and indeed all Albertans play a critical role in supporting organizations like Indefinite Arts Centre.

Mr. Speaker, you'll be pleased to know that the works of those 30 artists featured at the Launchpad event have recently made their way to Asia in order to showcase a whole new side of Alberta on the global stage. Those works of art had their opening last week and are currently on display at the Alberta Hong Kong office thanks to support received from the consulate general of Canada in Hong

Kong, the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, and the Alberta Foundation for the Arts. With the art created at the Indefinite Arts Centre eventually making its way to Seoul, Korea, for display at the national disability arts and culture centre, Alberta will be showcased not only as a great place for trade and investment but also as a place embodying inclusivity, diversity, and creativity.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask all members of this House to join me in congratulating J.S. Ryu, the CEO of Indefinite Arts Centre, their entire team of staff and volunteers, and, most importantly, the artists like Meg Ohsada, whose works will be proudly representing Alberta in Asia this year.

1:50

Oral Question Period

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

Carbon Levy Rate

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At various times the hon. the Premier has said that she will proceed with a 67 per cent increase in Alberta's carbon tax if a pipeline is approved or if construction begins or if construction is completed or if oil moves through that pipeline, so I'm here to ask today: what's her position today? What is the necessary condition for her to increase her carbon tax by 67 per cent?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What I've said quite consistently since before the Kinder Morgan pipeline was approved by the federal government and since then is that when the federal government came out with the pan-Canadian framework, Alberta would support it in return for ensuring that the pipeline is completed. Now, to be clear, it may well be that the pan-Canadian framework will come into effect while the pipeline is still well in construction, and we'll certainly give that some consideration then. The issue is that the two go together, and we will ensure . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Kenney: Will the Premier commit to not raising the carbon tax above \$50 a tonne under any condition?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What I've said many times is that looking forward at least six years at this point, we have absolutely no plan to go above \$50. Indeed, we would not even get to that point if, again, as I say, we don't see the Kinder Morgan pipeline well into construction, with everyone clearly understanding that it's going to be complete, something that I actually do think is going to happen. That's the position that we've taken. It's the same position we've taken all along. The two go together. The climate change leadership plan and the pipeline go together. That's why we're going to get it built.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, in the Premier's view, a carbon tax has to be how high in order to achieve Paris greenhouse gas emission targets?

Ms Notley: Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, I think what's really important here is that the member opposite ought to stop reaching out to reports that have nothing to do with this government in order to fearmonger and in order, quite frankly, to distract the attention of Albertans from the fact that he can't even get folks in his caucus to agree that human-caused climate change is real. I suppose that part

of the reason for that is that we can't get the leader himself to say the words that human-caused climate change is real. The fact of the matter is that our plan is going to reduce emissions. We are proud of that, we are making progress, and we're going to keep doing it.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Kenney: Once again, human-caused climate change is real. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Provincial Fiscal Policies

Mr. Kenney: What's not real is that we don't have a Premier, Mr. Speaker, who's actually willing to answer straightforward, factual questions. So let me try. I think this is maybe the sixth or seventh time. Does the government of Alberta have a position about how high a carbon tax has to be in order to achieve global greenhouse gas emission targets? Is she accusing Environment Canada of being fearmongers? Do they agree with Environment Canada that it has to be \$300 a tonne? Do they agree with their own adviser, Professor Leach, that it has to be \$200 a tonne? These are not unreasonable questions. It would be nice if the Premier tried to answer them.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What we agree with is the plan that we have implemented thus far because we have made a decision that we in Alberta are going to do our part as Canadians to bring down emissions. As a result of the climate leadership plan that this government brought in, we will see emissions reduced from a business-as-usual case of well over 310 megatonnes down to around 225 megatonnes by 2030. What we see there is real change, real improvements, something that had been long overdue under the leadership of the previous Conservative government not only in Alberta but . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Kenney: Yet again she refuses to answer, Mr. Speaker.

Today the Finance minister donned his virtual reality goggles to prepare for his virtual reality budget, which he says is going to be balanced by 2023. Does that projection of balance include the 67 per cent increase in revenues from the carbon tax?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, what we know is that we have said very definitively to Albertans that we will lay out a path to balance that they can look at and they can evaluate, unlike the members opposite, who can only talk about things like a \$700 million tax cut for the top 1 per cent without ever talking to Albertans about what they'd cut to achieve that. We will lay out our path to balance on Thursday, and I suggest that the member stay tuned.

Mr. Kenney: So for the record the government is refusing to rule out a carbon tax increase in their fiscal plan, Mr. Speaker.

On the latter point the Premier talks about how this government raised personal and business taxes as well as property taxes. Is the Premier aware that three years later – three years later – revenues from personal income and business taxes are down even though they've raised the rate? Will she admit that this is a fiscal failure of her government?

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, what I will do is say that as a government we have a responsibility to look at all the evidence and to understand that sometimes more than one factor contributes to certain outcomes. In this case what we had was a precipitous drop in the price of oil and the largest recession in a couple of generations and a number of people who lost their jobs. Absolutely, income tax and corporate tax went down because we were in a recession. Thanks to the decisions of this government, we are now coming out of it. Things are looking up, jobs are up, income is up, exports are up, and . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Provincial Fiscal Policies and Energy Policies

Mr. Kenney: What's up, Mr. Speaker, since the NDP came to office, is unemployment. What's up are business bankruptcies. What's up are taxes. What's up is the debt, which is on track to being quadrupled, nearly a billion dollars a month that they are borrowing.

But the question for the Premier is this. She says that we're just the passive victims of commodity prices. Will she acknowledge that investment in oil and gas all around the world is up, partly driven by investment that has fled Alberta?

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, absolutely under no circumstances will I acknowledge such a thing. In fact, what I will do is say that our government has the backs of Albertans and that we are coming out of this recession and that, in fact, we have managed to recover about 90,000 jobs. We know we have more to do. That has been our commitment from the very outset. What we won't do is cut our way to success. We will not give a tax break to the top 1 per cent of friends and insiders and somehow claim that that is the path to economic recovery because what the evidence shows is that it is not.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, what the evidence shows is that they raised personal income taxes and taxes on employers and that revenues are down from those sources, one of the reasons that they've been mortgaging our future with the quadrupling of our debt, projected by the bond-rating agencies' six credit downgrades.

Mr. Speaker, the question is this. Does the government absolutely commit that it will not raise the carbon tax as part of its fiscal plan?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, what I've said is that the member opposite can stay tuned for the budget on Thursday. Of course, you know, we know full well that at this point we plan to go along with the federal plan, which does involve an increase of \$40, then to \$50 in 2021, so that's not news. What I will say, though, is that the member opposite – when you look at those folks, those 100,000-plus people who lost their jobs a couple of years ago, if you had gone to them and said that our answer is to give those who are still employed, making lots and lots of money, a billion-dollar tax break, I'm pretty sure . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Premier said that Tzaporah Berman, her hand-picked co-chair of the oil sands advisory group, only came out with views that were opposed to our energy industry after her appointment. It was a great shock to the NDP, even though the same person said in 2011 that we need to shut down the tar sands and that our oil sands feel like Mordor,

another word for hell. So will the Premier admit that it was just a big mistake? Her environment minister is now blaming the energy companies for appointing Tzaporah Berman, who is now supporting law-breaking activity to stop the pipeline. Can they just admit that it was a bad call?

2:00

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, what I can admit is that the climate leadership plan has put us closer to building a pipeline than ever, and what I can admit is that while I understand that the member opposite thinks he can make hay by waving the white flag and predicting the demise of the pipeline – and probably he's inclined to do that because after 10 years in Ottawa he couldn't get a pipeline built – the fact of the matter is that the climate leadership plan is part of an overall strategy that this government embarked upon to get a pipeline built to tidewater. We are closer than ever. I hope that the member opposite will celebrate the success when it happens.

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

Carbon Levy and Greenhouse Gas Emission Reduction

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When I door-knock in my constituency or pretty much anywhere all around Alberta, the issue I hear more about than any other is the carbon tax, and when the Alberta Party's new leader, Stephen Mandel, travels the province, the same thing happens. Now, most Albertans agree with the need for action on climate change, and so does the Alberta Party, but there's confusion about the connection between the way this government's carbon tax is structured and actual emission reductions. To the Premier: what specific metrics do you have that show the connection between your carbon tax and actual CO₂ emission reductions?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, what we have are the projections through our climate leadership plan, which show that we are likely to see reductions in emissions from business as usual at around 320 megatonnes to roughly 225 megatonnes by 2030. That will happen through a number of different strategies. The implementation of a carbon tax or a carbon levy, which, of course, is something that most experts believe brings about behavioural change that results in a reduction in emissions, combined with the additional incentives that we are applying to renewable energy and to innovation is how we . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

First supplemental.

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, unlike the Official Opposition, the Alberta Party believes that climate change is real, it is human caused, and it is a problem that we must innovate our way out of. But, having said that, the Albertans I talk with tell me they don't understand that connection between increasing their home, farm, and business heating bills and solving climate change. Again to the Premier: what percentage reduction of natural gas demand for home heating, businesses, farms, and not-for-profits do you expect as a result of your carbon tax?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, most experts in the field will outline that there are a number of features to any program that is designed to reduce emissions. One of them, through a carbon levy, through a carbon tax, is to slowly bring about

change in people's behaviours, whether they are individuals or otherwise. Now, as the member opposite knows, 60 per cent of Alberta households actually get a rebate, so in fact they can come out ahead if they are able to make the changes that we talked about. In addition, that money is going towards efforts to reduce emissions, whether it be through efficiency, through renewable energy, through innovation, and we know that that . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Clark: So if they get a rebate, they're not going to consume less, so we don't produce less carbon, so your plan has no effect. But here's the challenge. Total consumer and commercial demand only makes up about 13 per cent of natural gas use in Alberta, so it's important to fish where the fish are, and the carbon-emitting fish are not in the home heating pond. They're not with commercial users or farms or the many not-for-profits, who have been unfairly targeted by this government. To the Premier: given that your carbon tax won't have the stated effect of actually reducing carbon emissions, will you commit to eliminating the carbon tax on home heating, small businesses, farms, and not-for-profits?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What I will commit to do is to carry on with the climate leadership plan, that was developed in consultation with industry leaders, with communities, with indigenous communities, with environmentalists, because as a whole this package is designed to reduce emissions across the economy, across the full sector. Some have more to contribute than others, but it doesn't mean that everyone doesn't have something to contribute. We have implemented it in a way that supports families, supports communities, brings down emissions, and innovates and actually ultimately generates more economic growth, and we're proud of that.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.
The hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

Red Deer College

Ms Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On March 1, after a very long, 25-year struggle, our government announced that Red Deer College is finally on the road to degree-granting status, ensuring that students will no longer have to uproot their lives to complete their education. This announcement means that students and their families will no longer have the financial and emotional burden of leaving the community that they are a part of. Would the minister be able to elaborate on the process that RDC and the province will embark on and maybe give a time frame for this exciting transformation?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I want to thank my hon. friend for her advocacy on behalf of the community of Red Deer in helping make this happen. Our government is committed to ensuring that every Albertan has access to affordable, high-quality education regardless of their location in the province. Many Albertans go to RDC to fulfill their dreams, and that's why I'm very proud to support this initiative to give it degree-granting status. But becoming a university takes time, and we know that offering additional degree programs doesn't happen overnight. That's why our government is going to work with Red Deer College and the Campus Alberta Quality Council to make sure that the degrees that they offer meet the needs of the local community.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is something that Red Deer has been waiting for for many, many years. When will they be able to start offering degree programs?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. We are still very early in the process, but we are committed to making sure that Red Deer College goes down this path to degree-granting status. We're working to make sure that all of our colleges and universities have the resources they need, and that's why we've provided annual 2 per cent increases in their operating grants every year along with additional backfill funding to support the tuition freeze. Our opponents, on the other hand, would of course make significant cuts to universities and colleges to pay for their billion-dollar tax break for wealthy individuals and corporations. We're not going to let that happen. We're going to make life better for students.

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

Ms Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government recently announced that it intends to provide funding for postsecondary programs in the tech sector. Will this funding be available for RDC?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for that question as well. I was very pleased to announce with the Minister of Economic Development and Trade our \$43 million investment in the creation of 3,000 new tech spaces in universities and colleges all across the province. This is a really exciting initiative that will support the development of the high-tech sector here in Alberta. We are also going to seek the advice of experts on how we should allocate those monies and where those spaces should be created, and I look forward to engaging in that process and supporting students in receiving the high-tech education that Albertans need.

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

Pharmacy Funding Framework

Dr. Starke: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. In a recent poll 95 per cent of Albertans said that pharmacists were the most accessible health care professionals. Now, Alberta's 5,000 pharmacists are trusted front-line health care professionals in every sense of the word, and that's why it's baffling to understand why Alberta Health forced the provincial Pharmacists' Association, the RxA, to sign a nondisclosure agreement during recent negotiations on a new pharmacy funding framework. To the Health minister: for a government that prides itself on openness and transparency, why was it necessary to muzzle trusted front-line professionals with a gag order?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. We respect that negotiations happen at the table, and like is the case with all organizations that we're negotiating with, including unionized groups, what we asked for is: before you communicate with your members, please let us know what you'll be saying. That is standard practice, and we're proud to

continue that. We're also proud of the fact that we came up with an agreement that sees a 4.3 per cent increase, which is very reasonable, to ensure that we have access for drugs across Alberta and that we're making sure that that results in the best outcomes for patients.

Dr. Starke: Well, Mr. Speaker, that's certainly not what the pharmacy association has told me. Given that the pharmacists administered over 50 per cent of the flu vaccinations in Alberta last year and given that Alberta Health has failed to meet its own vaccination targets for the past three years and given that the new funding framework cuts the fee paid to pharmacists for administering flu vaccine to a level where it is no longer economically viable for them to provide this service, to the minister: in the interest of public health will you at least consider restoring the previous fee paid to pharmacists for administering flu vaccinations?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I understand that the formula was reached in the past with the previous government, which the member was a part of, and that fee was 50 per cent higher than the next-highest jurisdiction in Canada. So what we've done is that we've brought that fee in line to still be the highest in Canada but not to be an outlier by 50 per cent. We did that in partnership with pharmacists, the RxA, and I'm really proud of the fact that we came to a good outcome there.

2:10

Dr. Starke: Well, you did it behind closed doors under a gag order. Given that pharmacists are taxpayers, too, and they support effective measures to reduce health care spending, provided that it does not harm patient care, and given that the RxA provided the government's hired third-party negotiator with over 40 recommendations for cost savings, none of which were incorporated into the final agreement, to the minister: why did your hired-gun negotiator ignore the recommendations of Alberta pharmacists?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What we did is that we sat down at the table in a respectful way with our budget, which has, as you'll see from last year's budget, a 4.3 per cent increase, and we said that these 12 per cent increases that were reached because of policies under the former government are not fair to Albertans, they're not fair to patients, and we need to find a way to be more sustainable. What we did is that we sat down with both parties and agreed on a formula that will get us there. I understand that perhaps the member opposite wants to defend policies that saw skyrocketing costs at the cost of patient outcomes, but on this side of the House we're always going to put patients first, and we're going to do so in a sustainable way.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Oil Sands Advisory Group Former Co-chair

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On May 4, 2017, the Deputy Premier stated:

We brought people to the table who traditionally have been adversarial, and instead we got good results, which includes two pipelines. I'm not going to apologize for getting good results for Alberta.

Will the Deputy Premier now admit that having Ms Berman on the panel didn't result in two pipelines and, in fact, resulted in her own appointee fighting against pipelines and fighting against Albertans?

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the reminder that we have, because of this government on this side instead of a Conservative government here and a Conservative government in Ottawa, actually gotten approvals. We've gotten two significant approvals that are important for our economy. Construction has already started on line 3 – it's well under way – and we absolutely are moving forward on Kinder Morgan. We will not stop at anything that is in our way. We're going to keep moving forward, keep getting good outcomes for Albertans, and that includes getting our product to tidewater, something that the Official Opposition's leader failed to do over many years in Ottawa.

Mrs. Pitt: Mr. Speaker, I'm asking specifically about the government-appointed woman who is currently fighting our pipelines, right now, as we speak.

On May 4, 2017, again, the Deputy Premier said:

Ms Berman has been effective in working with a number of industry leaders. A number of people joined the table and got good results for Alberta, including two pipelines, and we're going to make sure that we continue to get good access to international markets, which helps Albertans.

What happened?

Ms Hoffman: What happened is a trip down memory lane. We got two pipeline approvals, Mr. Speaker. Two. Line 3 is well under construction, getting our product to the east. Kinder Morgan has had the approvals. We're moving forward. We're not going to stop any time soon because we need to make sure that we get our product to tidewater, something that this province has deserved. We have everything in this province except for a coastline, and that's why we need to work collaboratively to make sure we can get our products to that coastline so that we can get the very best price and so that everybody in Alberta has the opportunity to benefit from the prosperity that we have here. That's why I'm so proud that we have both of those pipelines approved. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order, please.

Mrs. Pitt: Mr. Speaker, we've got police officers right now on the ground getting injured by protesters in B.C., one of which happens to be Ms Berman. Will the government admit it was a mistake to put Ms Berman on the panel in the first place?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, what I will admit is that we brought forward a climate leadership plan shortly after taking government, one that had been ignored by the previous government, that had 44 years to do so. We had a Conservative government in Ottawa for many years that failed to act in a way that could ensure that we got the kinds of approvals that brought us forward to getting Kinder Morgan approved. So what I will admit is that on this side of the House we came up with a plan. Our plan got approvals. We've already got one pipeline well under construction, and the other one will be forthcoming. This side gets results; that side complains.

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

Carbon Levy Rate (continued)

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In November 2016 the Premier said in relation to her government's carbon tax, quote: we have never outlined that \$30 was where it was going to stop; people who talk about effective carbon pricing acknowledge that as time

progresses, it needs to go up. Unquote. Premier, just how effective do you plan to make your carbon tax?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, our price on carbon is at \$30 per tonne, which is where the price on carbon in British Columbia has been for some time. The federal government has announced their intention to bring in a federal price on carbon. So Alberta had a choice. We could move forward with a plan that worked for Albertans and that resulted last year in Canada's fastest economic growth and this year in Canada's fastest economic growth. We could take that plan, or we could take a plan made by Mr. Trudeau in the Prime Minister's office. We chose a made-in-Alberta solution.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Premier has said that she had no choice but to introduce a carbon tax because a federally imposed one was coming down the pike anyway so we had best create our own made-in-Alberta version and given that the Premier is now saying, "That plan was independent. The issue subsequently around additional levies is definitely linked to the pipeline," Premier, why did you ally yourself with the Trudeau Liberals and burden Albertans with an unnecessary tax when your Ottawa friends have done nothing to ensure the building of this pipeline?

The Speaker: The hon. minister of environment.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, the pipeline was approved with specific reference to the climate leadership plan. But it's also really important to note that a federally imposed carbon-pricing framework would not serve Alberta, so we got to work right away. We rolled up our sleeves, we worked with industry on a system of output-based allocations for our large emitters and an economy-wide price that works for all Albertans. We are seeing record economic growth in terms of setting the pace for the country. We're seeing diversification as well.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Gill: Mr. Speaker, the environment minister must be talking about some other province's economic growth because it's not happening here.

Given that the NDP's besties, as we know, Karen Mahon and Tzeporah Berman are protesting against pipelines and that today the environment minister said on the radio that the oil and gas industry wanted these two protestors on the advisory committee, Premier, since your government has failed completely to obtain a pipeline, will you tell Albertans the truth now, that the carbon tax had nothing to do with the pipeline and that your social licence, your carbon tax have completely failed?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, the situation we inherited, the dead end that previous Conservative governments both federally and provincially drove us into, was one where we couldn't get our products to tidewater, and we were having nonstarter conversations on Alberta's climate record. That's why oil companies engaged with environmental groups far before our government took office, companies like Suncor and Shell, CNRL, Cenovus, Conoco, and had those conversations on how to get out from that dead end that certainly Mr. Harper's government had

driven us into and 44 years of provincial Conservative governments had driven us into. We are the government that pulled us out of that dead end.

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

Carbon Levy and Education Costs

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. School boards across Alberta have voiced serious concerns about the carbon tax. The Rocky View school division recently wrote a public letter to parents stating that they anticipate having a \$1 million shortfall in the transportation budget. This school division pays \$360,000 per year in carbon tax alone. They've become so desperate that they are considering transferring funds out of the classroom to cover the transportation budget shortfall. To the Minister of Education: can you explain how transferring money out of the classroom to cover the cost of the carbon tax will improve educational outcomes for our children?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, I have been engaged in constructive conversations with the Rocky View school board in regard to transportation, in regard to their very fast-growing student enrolment population. You know, we built six new schools in the Rocky View district here in the last couple of years – I'm very proud of that – and it's indicative of the investment that we have made in Rocky View and right across the province, more than \$790 million, more money than would have been invested if the Conservative government was to have taken the government in the last election.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess no answer there. I'll try again.

Given that the High Prairie school division recently stated that they would pay roughly \$62,000 in carbon tax at the initial \$20-per-tonne price and given that this cost increased by \$31,000 because of the increase in the price of the carbon tax, which the board chair described as being comparable to the cost of hiring an additional teacher, again to the minister: can the minister explain how having fewer teachers in the classroom is a positive step forward for rural education?

2:20

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said before, we have made significant investments in school boards in regard to enrolment, in regard to capital expenditure, and in regard to transportation as well. We had transportation on our list. We had it as part of the bill in the last session, to review the long outdated transportation formulas and so forth. We're working hard, and we're making investments using the carbon money to invest in infrastructure in schools, to make them more efficient, to save money, and to provide education opportunities for students around climate change.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, given that the minister told school boards in the fall of 2016, "You will not be left in a deficit position as part of the climate leadership plan," and given that he went on to say of the carbon tax, "We will work to ensure

that you are first in line for the money from the funds,” and given that the carbon tax is causing transportation and budgetary shortfalls for school boards across Alberta and given that the minister is pulling \$3 million out of the transportation budget, again to the minister: will you go back to the drawing board, sit down with school boards, and figure out a way to stop handcuffing their budgets with your inane . . .

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, I have had constructive engagements with all of our school boards. We work together to find solutions in order to move students to school in a safe manner, to ensure that there are teachers in the classroom, and that we make those capital investments in schools. What is not constructive is when certain people from the members opposite use this same information to try to promote themselves, to try to use this as a political wedge issue, and to not represent the information and the situation as it really is in our fine school system.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Trampoline Safety Standards

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last year a resident of my riding suffered an injury while attending a local trampoline park. A tragic injury led this young man to suffer a broken neck, resulting in paralysis from the chest down. To the Minister of Municipal Affairs: what standards are currently in place to protect the safety of consumers?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the member for the question. I know she is a fierce advocate for her constituents and has been on this issue. Currently the international standard is set out by the American society for testing and materials. Alberta is a member of this body and contributes on proposals to organizations. The government is working with the Safety Codes Council, industry, and safety systems experts to determine the appropriateness of government regulation in this industry. The government of Alberta is committed to the protection and safety of Albertan consumers.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: how are the standards developed?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned, the American society for testing and materials, the international safety standards organization, has developed standards for trampoline parks operating in North America. The elevating devices and amusement rides administrator represents Alberta on ASTM standard committees and provides regular input on development of standards created for the amusement ride industry. The safety of Albertans, obviously, is a top priority for our government. I was deeply concerned to hear of this accident and accidents like this, and we will continue to work to explore solutions.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: as I know this issue affects not only Sherwood Park but everywhere

throughout the province, what steps are you and the ministry taking to address the concerns?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. The ASTM recently released an updated standard for trampoline parks, in early 2018, and the government is working with the Safety Codes Council to review it with industry and safety system experts. I've also instructed my department to explore other potential regulatory solutions and my legal department to examine the potential precedent such a solution would entail across other muscular propulsion activities. I encourage all Albertans involved in extreme sports or any sports to take appropriate precautions and be aware of the risks involved in those activities.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Carbon Levy Rebates for Seniors

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When this government rolled out carbon tax rebate cheques, they bragged about how the money would be used to help those less fortunate like seniors. Low-income seniors living in subsidized housing pay 30 per cent of their gross income for rent. Revenue Canada does not consider these rebates as income, yet we have been told that the minister of seniors very quietly decided to allow the government housing foundations to include these rebates as seniors' income for rent calculation purposes, forcing seniors to pay higher rent. To the minister of seniors: is that really so?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we're making life better by protecting front-line care and making life more affordable for seniors in Alberta as part of our overall investment in affordable housing and in seniors' services. We've got 260,000 seniors eligible to receive up to \$300 annually from the carbon levy rebate. We've also provided a \$500,000 grant to the four largest housing management bodies to conduct energy efficiency audits on provincially owned affordable housing units. We're continuing to work for seniors, not against them.

Mr. Orr: So seniors' rent is included, and they do pay higher rent.

Given that the government has committed to the federal carbon tax scheme, which would see a further 67 per cent increase to the carbon tax and, we assume, a proportionate increase to seniors' rent, funding carbon tax, really, on the backs of low-income seniors, has the government bothered to do any analysis whatsoever on how this will impact seniors in our province?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, rather than having a federally designed carbon-pricing system imposed on us, as the Leader of the Official Opposition would prefer given that he spends a lot of time thinking about Ottawa, I prefer to have a made-in-Alberta solution. That's why we have the seniors' rebates that we do and the rebates for all low- and middle-income Albertans, and that's why we are investing in things like energy efficiency retrofits and so on. We'll have more to say about that with respect to seniors' programs as we go ahead.

Mr. Orr: Wow. What a dodge.

To the minister of seniors again. Since we know that this tax affects everything that low-income seniors buy, from gas in their cars to groceries at the store, how could you as minister use this rebate to force a carbon tax increase in rent from an already low-income senior who depends on subsidies, especially after they spent their lives building this province from the ground up?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, low- and middle-income Albertans, two-thirds of Albertans, in fact, are eligible for a rebate, \$300 per individual and more for couples.

In addition to that, this government protected more than \$800 million in seniors' benefits over the last two years. Those are seniors' benefits that would have been on the chopping block had the members opposite been making decisions, Mr. Speaker, and that's because they'd have to do those cuts in order to pay for tax cuts for their wealthy friends.

Provincial Renewable Energy Contracts

Mr. Cooper: This government has made a complete and utter mess of the entire electricity system. It all started with a rash and ideological decision to make changes that forced companies like Enmax and Capital Power to turn back their power purchase agreements. This was allowed because of a change-in-law clause that the government knew about or should have known about. To the minister. You're currently signing multiyear, multi hundred million dollar contracts for renewable energy. Is there a change-in-law clause in any of those contracts? Yes or no?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, certainly, we have taken action over backroom deals, that were made many years ago by the previous Conservative government, to protect Albertans. In the deregulation we saw price spikes, which we have taken action against so that customers can see a reliable electricity system and predictable bills.

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, it sounds to me like the minister wasn't a hundred per cent sure, so I'll give her another opportunity to answer the very simple question. Is there a change-in-law clause in the renewable contracts? Yes or no? Or is the minister unsure?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, as we transition to 30 per cent renewables by 2030, we are working hard to protect Alberta families from price spikes, which we've seen in previous decades. You know, we struck deals with our power companies in the transition. We are transitioning towards fair bills, a reliable system, and sustainability in our system as well.

2:30

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, given that this minister made a decision that cost Albertans well over \$800 million based upon a change-in-law clause, the question is very simple. Is there a change-in-law clause in the renewable contracts that she is currently signing? Yes or no?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's interesting that our Conservative opposition here is defending a backroom deal that was made many decades ago regarding a change in law that was

done in the backrooms and was in favour of the businesses rather than regular Albertans. I'm pleased to say that we've struck the last deal with Enmax. It's fair to Enmax, it's fair to our province, and it's fair to Albertans. It has no impact on Albertans. You know, as I've mentioned many times, these are deals that are good for Albertans. It's interesting that our opposition continues to defend backroom deals.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

International Cargo and Passenger Air Service

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Attracting and retaining international passenger and cargo flights is an integral part of supporting international market access for Alberta. If you can't get your product to market, you have no market at all. To the Minister of Transportation. Key international cargo and passenger flights provide lift to our growing economy. What are you and your department specifically doing to attract and retain these key trade links?

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

Mr. Bilous: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. There are a number of initiatives that our government has undertaken, including partnering with our two airports, Edmonton International Airport and YYC. They participated on previous trade missions. We're working in lockstep with them as they continue to attract not only companies but also attract those crucial cargo flights. As the member accurately points out, we need to get our products to tidewater, and our government has been very proactive on this and will continue to work with our businesses to increase their market access to markets around the world. We have 12 international offices, and I'm very proud of the work that we're doing with industry.

Mr. Gotfried: Mr. Speaker, given that China is obviously a key market for a variety of Alberta products and given that the minister of economic development has been to China numerous times and must understand the importance of retaining current international flights and given that it has been brought to my attention that both Air China Cargo and Cathay Pacific Cargo are experiencing challenges, to the minister: could you please provide an update on the status of these flights and what you and your government are doing to retain them?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned earlier, there are a number of things that our government is doing working with our airports to support the expansion of flights. Under our government we've seen a number of new flights, both passenger and cargo. We continue to work closely with Edmonton International, which is where the Air China Cargo flights are coming out of. I can tell you that it is absolutely critical that we get our products to market. On that front both the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry and the Minister of Energy and I myself have participated in trade missions in order to expand critical trade, and because of it, exports are up.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Gotfried: Mr. Speaker, given that as of Saturday the twice-weekly Cathay Pacific Cargo flight, carrying 135,000 kilograms of

payload per flight from Alberta to Hong Kong, will be cancelled and given that the three-times-weekly Air China Cargo flight, carrying 101,000 kilograms of payload per flight from Alberta to Shanghai, has been suspended and given that neither Economic Development nor Transportation had any contact with at least one of these carriers over the last three years, again to the minister: how can you say you're supporting key trade links when it seems nobody is minding the store?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The premise of the member's question is false. I can tell you again that our government has been working very closely with our airports that work directly with the airlines. We've also had conversations with the airlines in order to look at ways to enhance our cargo service. We will continue to support our businesses and to support our airports in their endeavour to ensure that our businesses are getting their products to the international market. I'm proud of the work that we've done, and I wish the members opposite would be as well.

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

Psychiatric Hospital Beds in St. Paul

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, I had such good luck pressuring the Health minister for the Lac La Biche dialysis unit that I thought I would try again. The St. Therese health centre in St. Paul was designated as a psychiatric hub for a large portion of northeastern Alberta by AHS. To the minister: are you aware of the significant stress this has put on health care delivery in my community of St. Paul as well as added costs incurred by AHS for transportation, accommodation, and the hiring of contract security to supervise patients because they cannot access beds in the psychiatric unit?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. I've been really proud of some of the investments we've made in his riding. Very recently we opened a new dialysis unit in Lac La Biche, for example, which we know is really good news for northeastern Alberta.

I'd be happy to discuss this matter with him and see if there's something that we can do to address the concerns that he might raise or gather more information that might be helpful in his understanding of the situation as well.

Mr. Hanson: Given, Mr. Speaker, that of the 20 available beds in the psychiatric unit only half of them are being utilized and given that the ER department is often unable to deal with other patients because it is acting as a holding area while waiting for a bed to open, Minister, surely even you must be able to find efficiencies in a \$20 billion budget to open existing beds and help alleviate the stress that this lack of beds is having on health care delivery in our community?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. We have been effective at finding a number of different efficiencies and using them to invest in communities, including communities in the member's own riding, like the investment of that important dialysis unit, which expands

capacity and other opportunities. On this side of the House we believe in public health care. We believe in investing in communities that we know require these services and that are major employers in these communities as well. We're proud to protect and defend public health care. I look forward to opportunities to discuss that in estimates because I'm confident that while the member asks for increased resources today, tomorrow he'll be asking for cuts.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you. Given, Mr. Speaker, that I've made personal requests for a meeting with the minister's office to address this matter and given that a letter was sent to the minister signed by virtually every physician and psychiatrist at the hospital stating their real concerns for patient safety, to the minister: why have you not responded to this crisis situation in St. Paul, and when will you meet with us to address the important issue of public safety?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. As I said in my first response, I'm happy to take some time to meet with the member and discuss this matter more fully with him and with the right staff in the room to support that. As you might imagine, I have a very full calendar. I'm proud to have it that way. This afternoon I'll be meeting with a number of municipalities from AAMD and C; actually, I think it's called RMA now. Of course, I'd be very happy to take the time to meet with the member. This is standard practice in my office. I think we've done it in the past, and I'm happy to do it again.

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

Misericordia Hospital Emergency Room Capital Plan

Mr. Carson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In Budget 2016 our government committed capital investments for the Misericordia over four years to improve care for patients accessing the emergency department. This funding is long overdue as more than 51,000 patients visited the Mis emergency in 2015-16, double the capacity of the 48-year-old facility. Construction of the new department is set to begin by late 2018 after the project scope and competitive bid process are finished. Can the Minister of Health please update the House on where we are in the process and if construction will begin on time?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. Alberta has the fastest growing economy in Canada, as we know, and things are looking up in Alberta and in our capital city. Growth means more pressure on our older hospital facilities, made worse by years of neglect and budget cuts under previous governments. Albertans can't wait for important services and infrastructure. That's why our government is making investments that matter. Planning and design are well under way, and I would like to thank this specific member for his advocacy in this area.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Carson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the minister please share with the House how this investment will improve the care for those in my community and communities across this province?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It means shorter wait times and better access to care for patients across Edmonton and northern Alberta. This is the first major investment in the Misericordia's emergency department in nearly three decades. It's shameful how Conservatives operated in Alberta. When times were bad, they cut services for Albertans; when times were good, they cut taxes for the richest of their friends. This government is different. This government is protecting the services that Albertans count on.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Carson: Thank you. Can the Minister of Health reassure the community that these improvements to the emergency department will not interrupt the services that people require while the Misericordia is under construction?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Misericordia hospital is absolutely critical to the emergency room services that we provide in Edmonton and to folks from northern Alberta as well. About 50,000 Alberta patients go to that emergency room every single year. While we make improvements, that won't change. The new emergency department will be built strategically to minimize disruptions. Patients will still get the highest quality of care without compromising ambulance access or the needs of the front-line staff who are there.

Unlike Conservative governments, who knew how to cut, we're building for the future, strengthening the care Albertans rely on, not cutting. We're building.

Provincial Renewable Energy Contracts

(continued)

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, this government has made a complete and utter mess of the electricity system. Estimates range between \$800 million and \$2 billion that they have cost Alberta taxpayers because of their mismanagement of the PPA agreements, including a change-in-law clause. To the minister of Environment or Energy. The question is simple. Is there a change-in-law clause in your renewable contracts? Yes or no?

2:40

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, there is a change-of-law clause. It is a well-drafted commercial change of law that is proportional to whatever change in law that the government has made. So if there's a tiny change, there will be a tiny change in cost. This is what the clause should have looked like way back when the Conservatives made their backroom deals decades ago.

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, let me get this straight. Given that you claimed that you didn't know about the change-in-law clause previously and now you're writing them into your contracts and you have used this as an excuse to cost Albertans billions of dollars, will you now admit that you were wrong previously when you cost Albertans \$800 million because of a change-of-law clause contract?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What I will admit is that decades ago the previous government got it wrong. They did not do a proper change-of-law clause. What happened was that losses that were accumulating before the change in law were

allowed to be accounted for, so a tiny change in law made the government responsible for huge losses that were there before. What we've done is that we've properly written it into these where a small change in law, small accounting for losses.

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, it wasn't a tiny change in law. It was a massive ideological change that this government implemented on the PPAs. I find it very interesting that the minister says that they were backroom deals that they didn't know about, yet today they are including a change-in-law clause in the very contracts that they're signing. My question is very simple. Will the minister now admit that they were wrong and cost Albertans over a billion dollars because of their lack of knowledge of the change-in-law clause then?

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. What I will admit is that his colleagues, who he continues to sit with, negotiated contracts that had clauses in them that were totally unfair to consumers. What I will admit is that this side of the House makes sure that we stand up for the people of this province. That's why we worked to address this, that's why we reached fair settlements with all of the impacted parties, and that's why moving forward, we have fair clauses that acknowledge that if there's a small change in law, there'll be small changes in accounting, unlike what the members opposite did, which was to create a giant loophole that put all of the risk back on the people of Alberta. That wasn't fair. That wasn't just. This side fights for justice and for the people of this province.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I've received some suggestions that there may be tweeting out of the Legislature, and I would just use this opportunity to remind all of you that that's not been an acceptable practice.

I would also give you 30 seconds before we go to the next member's statement.

Members' Statements

(continued)

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

Journée Internationale de la Francophonie

Mr. Kenney: Merci, M. le Président. En tant que je suis chef de l'opposition officielle et leader du parti conservateur uni, je tiens à marquer et à célébrer la Journée internationale de la Francophonie aujourd'hui. Je vous salue d'avoir organisé une réception là-dessus, M. le Président. Je suis désolé que je l'ai raté.

M. le Président, la première langue européenne parlée au Canada était le français. C'était la première langue européenne parlée dans les Territoires du Nord-Ouest et ici en Alberta. La communauté francophone depuis notre début en tant que province, en tant que pays était centrale dans notre identité et notre histoire. On peut voir les noms qui nous entourent: Grandin, juste à côté d'ici, ici à Edmonton, fondé par l'évêque Grandin; St. Albert, St. Paul, Falher, toutes ces communautés qui étaient historiques, les communautés fondatrices de l'Alberta, fondées par les francophones, y compris notre communauté métis, évidemment.

Mais nous avons vécu l'élargissement de cette communauté avec l'immigration. J'étais très fier, en tant que ministre d'immigration, d'avoir le plan d'action pour renforcer les communautés francophones en situation minoritaire, et je suis très fier de ceux et celles qui sont venus en Alberta avec leur capacité francophone,

comme mes amis, par exemple, Roger Fodjo, un ressortissant camerounais, un romancier, écrivain, un homme d'un grand intellect; mon ami Dicky Dikamba, un ressortissant congolais, qui a organisé le travail acharné des bénévoles pour la communauté franco-africaine ici en Alberta. Nous avons des milliers de familles qui envoient leurs enfants aux écoles francophones d'immersion pour continuer cette grande tradition.

Alors, à tous les francophones de l'Alberta, je vous salue célébrez cette journée.

[Translation] Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As Leader of the Official Opposition and the United Conservative Party I would like to mark and celebrate International Francophonie Day. I salute you for organizing a reception downstairs, Mr. Speaker, and I'm very sorry to have missed it.

Mr. Speaker, the first European language spoken in Canada was French. It was the first European language spoken in the Northwest Territories and here in Alberta. And, Mr. Speaker, since our beginnings as a province and as a country the francophone community has been central to our identity and our history. We can see in the names that surround us: Grandin here in Edmonton, founded by Bishop Grandin; St. Albert, St. Paul, Falher: all of these communities have been historic, founding communities of Alberta, founded by francophones, including, of course, our Métis communities.

But we have also seen the growth of the francophone community with immigration. I was very proud as minister of immigration to have had an action plan to reinforce minority francophone communities, and I was very proud of those who came to Alberta with their ability to speak French, like some of my friends: for example, Roger Fodjo, an immigrant from Cameroon, a novelist, writer, a man of great intellect; my friend Dicky Dikamba, a Congolese immigrant who is a relentless volunteer organizer for the Franco-African community here in Alberta. We have thousands of families who send their children to francophone and French immersion schools to continue this great tradition.

So to all of Alberta's francophones, I salute you and celebrate this day with you. [As submitted]

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Notices of Motions

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

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give notice pursuant to Standing Order 15(2) that at the appropriate time I will be rising on a point of privilege regarding the deliberate misleading statements made yesterday by the Minister of Environment and Parks. I have the appropriate number of copies of the letter that was provided to your office by the required time this morning.

Tabling Returns and Reports

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

Mr. Ceci: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table five copies of an excerpt from the Bank of Montreal's provincial economic outlook. In the outlook it states that Alberta is leading the prairies in GDP growth, job growth, housing starts, and has the lowest percentage of debt to GDP in 2017. It shows, as I said, that we have the lowest net debt to GDP in all of Canada. Things are looking up in Alberta.

Thank you very much.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table five copies of the two documents from Momentum, a Calgary nonprofit that works to help those living in poverty learn the skills they need to get out of poverty and stay there. These documents demonstrate that nonprofits like Momentum already engage in sustainable practices by looking at three key factors when purchasing resources: environmental, social, and economic sustainability. Nonprofits in Alberta are leading the way in sustainability and not, as the opposition says, suffering because of government policies which promote sustainability.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table five copies of an excerpt from ATB Financial's economic and research team, titled It's Taking Longer to Find Work in Alberta. An expert: unemployment last year "was the highest it has been since . . . 1976."

The Speaker: The Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite copies of many letters addressed to the Minister of Health. I recently was at a sold-out fundraiser, Time is Muscle, which is to say that time without treatment equals critical loss of heart muscle, in Alberta's central health region. Doctors have revealed that 35 lives a year are lost or irreversible heart damage occurs in patients waiting for or travelling in ambulances to receive heart therapies that should occur within minutes in Red Deer. Millions are spent on transportation that should fund life-saving care. So we hope that she will read at least one of these letters and that soon this crisis will be resolved because it is a matter of grave concern.

2:50

The Clerk: Tablings to the Clerk.

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

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I referenced today during question period . . .

The Speaker: I'm sorry. I was looking at my note. I think this is not the time, hon. member. If you have a tabling, if you could do that tomorrow. Thank you.

Hon. members, I believe we had a point of privilege raised by the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Privilege Misleading the House

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak to a point of privilege. As you know, points of privilege should not be taken or entered into lightly. Points of privilege are a serious matter, and it's unfortunate that we have to address this issue today in this Chamber. But it needs to be addressed, as do many other serious matters that we address inside this Chamber on a daily basis.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I want to make, first, a number of references and then point to a number of facts that will lead to my belief that the Minister of Environment and Parks and MLA for Lethbridge-West misled this House yesterday, March 19, 2018, and, in fact, made misleading statements in this Assembly.

With respect to privilege and issues of contempt, you will find in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, 2017, chapter 3, page 82, where it speaks of breaches of privilege, a list

of a number of those breaches, one of which says – and I'll spare you, Mr. Speaker, reading all of them; this is the one that I think we are talking about today – “deliberately attempting to mislead the House or a committee (by way of statement, evidence, or petition).”

Mr. Speaker, you will also find, in *Erskine May's Parliamentary Practice*, 24th edition, page 254, section 15, under Misconduct of Members or Officers, under the heading Members Deliberately Misleading the House, the following: “The Commons may treat the making of a deliberately misleading statement as a contempt.”

Mr. Speaker, as was indicated in my notice of breach of privilege, which, I might add, met the requirements of providing the appropriate written notice, as laid out in Standing Order 15(2):

A Member wishing to raise a [point] of privilege shall give written notice containing a brief statement . . .

as I did, Mr. Speaker,

. . . to the Speaker and, if practicable, to any person whose conduct may be called into question, at least 2 hours before the opening of the afternoon sitting,

you will notice that the written notice that I provided was stamped by your office at 11:12 a.m., providing more than two hours' notice.

Mr. Speaker, on March 19, 2018, yesterday, the Minister of Environment and Parks, in response to a question from myself, said the following:

I met with the mayor of Rocky Mountain House a couple of weeks ago and discussed the economic development and tourism opportunities that are available through the regional advisory council's advice. I would encourage the member to spend less time on conspiracy theories and more time on providing his reactions back to his own party's regional advisory council.

The minister clearly stated that she had a meeting with Her Worship Ms Tammy Burke, the mayor of the town of Rocky Mountain House.

But last night we found out from the mayor of Rocky Mountain House that there was no such meeting. At no time was there any such meeting. To be clear on that, Mr. Speaker, there was no meeting with the mayor. At no time, I should say, had the mayor actually met with the minister in regard to the Bighorn backcountry, which is what the question was about, or met with the minister about economic opportunities that the minister referred to in her answer. The mayor and the minister have not had a meeting. The mayor did inform us – and I will table an e-mail from the mayor confirming this – that she did once see the minister in a hospitality suite at a reception in Edmonton on March 5. However, Her Worship was clear that there was no meeting, just a brief, “light conversation,” that is common in a hospitality suite.

As such, the statements from the minister, the statements that the minister made in this House, are clearly in contempt of this House. It seems that there has been no meeting, that no meeting took place, again, in regard to the Bighorn backcountry, which was the content of the question being debated yesterday, or in regard to economic development, that the minister refers to in her response. The fact is, Mr. Speaker, to be clear, that the mayor of Rocky Mountain House and the minister did not have a meeting. The minister of environment showed contempt for this Assembly because she chose to answer a question by referring to a meeting that did not take place, thereby misleading this Assembly.

Just as highlighted in *Erskine May* – again, in March the minister said in her response to a question in the House the following. Sorry. I jumped spots on you, Mr. Speaker. As *Erskine May's Treatise on the Law, Privileges, Proceedings and Usage of Parliament*, 24th edition, page 254, states with respect to the United Kingdom, “The Commons may treat the making of a deliberately misleading statement as a contempt.” It is a three-part test for that to happen. First, as articulated by the former Clerk of the New Zealand House

of the Assembly, David McGee – for those following along at home, it can be found in the third edition of this book, *Parliamentary Practice in New Zealand*, on pages 653 to 654. The three parts of the test are as follows: one, it must be proven that the statement was misleading; two, it must be established that the member making the statement knew at the time that the statement was incorrect; and three, that in making the statement the member intended to mislead the House.

Let me address the first part of the test first, Mr. Speaker. As confirmed by Her Worship Tammy Burke, the mayor of Rocky Mountain House, no such meeting took place, which certainly confirms that the first test is met. The minister stating that a meeting took place that did not take place is clearly misleading this Assembly. The minister or the Government House Leader may try to argue that speaking briefly in a crowded, noisy room at a public function for a brief moment is a meeting. I would argue that that is ridiculous and further proves misleading of this House if that is the assertion. To argue that you would say that every time you or I say “hi” or have brief, idle chit-chat anywhere is a meeting is ridiculous. In fact, as I said, I think that would show that there was more intent to mislead this House. Last night and tonight MLAs will be at hospitality suites for AAMDC. One of us briefly saying “hi” and shaking hands and speaking for a few brief moments to someone is not a meeting. Clearly, attempting to pass such in this Assembly is misleading. Mayor Burke described this brief encounter as, I quote, light conversation at best.

In regard to the second and third test, the second test is that it must be established that a member knew it was a misleading statement and, three, that in making the statement the member intended to mislead the House. The fact is established by Mayor Burke that there was never a meeting. The minister of environment knows that there was no meeting, and by stating that a meeting happened that did not in fact happen, the minister clearly knew her statement was misleading.

But what is more alarming, Mr. Speaker, is that in my second supplemental to this question I challenged the minister on the fact that there was no meeting with the mayor, because I knew there was not, clearly saying the following:

The minister just stood up in this House and said that she met with the mayor of Rocky Mountain House. I know the mayor of Rocky Mountain House. This minister has not met with the mayor of Rocky Mountain House about this issue or the town of Rocky Mountain House.

The minister at that point could have risen and acknowledged that that meeting never took place, that maybe she was mistaken. She could have withdrawn her comments. Instead, she chose to let the misleading comments stand, deliberately and knowingly allowed her misleading comments to stand on the record in this House. At that point the minister knew that she had misled the House and clearly confirmed that she had deliberately and knowingly misled the House as she attempted to avoid answering a serious question that was being asked in this Chamber.

Mr. Speaker, the community I represent was very upset to hear the minister's statements. Immediately, the mayor began receiving phone calls about the situation from very confused residents. The mayor, of course, had to confirm that no such meeting had taken place. Clearly, utilizing the mayor's name – a brief encounter in a public place with brief moments of light conversation, as described by the mayor of Rocky Mountain House, is not a meeting, and saying such to this House rather than answering the question is deliberately misleading the House to avoid the issue and is a breach of privilege of the members of this Assembly.

Also, Mr. Speaker, it does a great disservice to Her Worship Mayor Burke and her constituents. While Mayor Burke is not a

member of this Assembly and the question is not about the impact on Mayor Burke as far as a point of privilege, at the very least the mayor is owed an apology from this minister, and the community of Rocky Mountain House and the community of Clearwater county are owed an apology for this minister's behaviour. I will stress that both those communities have been trying to get a meeting with the minister for a long time and would be happy to meet for real at any time.

Mr. Speaker, I will close with this. It's very clear to me and I hope it is clear to you that the minister of environment, a minister of the Crown, misled this Assembly while attempting to deflect a question in question period. By misleading this Assembly, she has misled Albertans. As such, it is my hope that you, too, will find the same, that a prima facie breach of privilege has occurred.

I'm also willing to move that this matter be referred to the appropriate standing committee. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

3:00

The Speaker: Hon. member, I was taking notes. What was the third point out of New Zealand that you raised?

Mr. Nixon: One second, Mr. Speaker. You can find it in the third edition of Speaker McGee's book, *Parliamentary Practice in New Zealand*, on pages 653 and 654.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Regarding this matter of privilege, having just heard the allegation and the details now, we'd like time to review and to make our case tomorrow.

The Speaker: I'll defer the matter until tomorrow.

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

The Chair: I'd like to call the Committee of the Whole to order.

Bill 3

Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2018

The Chair: Are there any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's my pleasure to stand and speak today on interim supply. You know, we're being asked to approve billions of dollars in spending, and the government has provided us with little information or context. It's like asking us to sign a blank cheque and give it to them. This government is chronically underprepared, and it results in less transparency and accountability to Alberta taxpayers.

[Mr. Dach in the chair]

When we asked really good questions that sought more specific information about where interim supply money was actually being spent, the Finance minister and the rest of Executive Council stonewalled or outright failed to provide any specific information. Unacceptable for members to be told they need to wait until the budget is announced on Thursday before they'll find out where this

money is going to be spent. We're talking about interim supply now, remember. This Legislature is being asked to provide this government with a cheque for \$8.5 billion without knowing where any of this money is going.

You know, the minister sitting here said: just support the government. He asked the opposition just to support the government in interim supply. That's what we were supposed to do. Well, I wonder, if things go a different way and the minister is sitting in opposition next year, if he'll just support the government when they come in with interim supply and don't answer any questions. If the government would have been prepared, they would have had the budget done on time. We wouldn't need this interim supply as well.

The minister was asked by my colleague – you know, he said that the business tax was increased from 10 to 12 per cent, which resulted in a 20 per cent increase to this business tax. The minister said: well, that's not 20 per cent. So if from 10 per cent to 12 per cent isn't 20 per cent, I wish the minister would tell us exactly what percentage increase that would be. According to my calculations it's 20 per cent, so maybe the minister can get us that answer.

Since it seems we can't get answers to questions or aren't even supposed to ask them, then maybe I'll just stand up here and make comments like the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie did, who obviously doesn't understand budgeting and the infrastructure and the building process in this province. He brags about all the new schools that were built in his constituency. Well, I can you tell that it was no thanks to them. He scoffs at the signs that we put up with nothing behind them, Mr. Chair, but, you know, behind every one of those signs today there's a new school.

You know, the process is that Infrastructure gets direction from Education on where the new schools will be built. They can't start designing, doing the testing, applying for development permits until Education says: this is where you're going to build the next school. Once that's been decided by Education, then Infrastructure has a job to do the soil testing, to get the development permits, to design it, get it tender ready, and that takes sometimes a couple of years. In some cities it takes a year to get a development permit, Mr. Chair.

But it wouldn't be fair to all of a sudden not tell a community that there's a school going there, keep it a secret until you start building it, because sometimes, Mr. Chair, people with young kids are looking to move to a community, and if they see that, well, there's no school there, they're not going to move there. But if they've got a one-year-old and see there's a sign that a new school is going up, they'll be happy to move there. Plus, young families in a community with no school might tend to move away, but if there's a sign up saying that there's a new school coming in two years, they'll be fine with staying.

The previous government built 250 new schools. So far this government has announced 30 schools and hasn't built one. They've made 30 announcements and haven't built any, so for him to stand up and say, "I got these schools built in my constituency" is truly not right, Mr. Chair. Not one new school has been announced and built and opened by this government, but there were lots that these members liked to cut the ribbon for and take the credit for that were started and budgeted by the previous government.

Same as hospitals. Lots of new hospitals being opened, like in High Prairie, Edson, Grande Prairie, Medicine Hat. They were all projects that were started by the previous government. There's a new hospital announced in Edmonton, and, you know, that's a good thing for Edmonton, but when they announced the hospital, they didn't even have a site, so they couldn't put up a sign, Mr. Chair. But they announced it. Now they do have a site, and they do have a sign up. Amazing. They criticized us for that, and now they're doing the same thing. The other part is that they put the sign up, but they

still don't have the project budgeted for. They put, you know, \$300 million in the budget, but we know that hospital is going to cost way more than that.

To criticize the way we did things in the past and then do the same thing but worse is a little bit rich, but good for Edmonton for getting a hospital. But just so the people in Edmonton know, the regional hospital being built in Grande Prairie services the whole northwest region. Well, all the people coming to that new hospital, Mr. Chair, used to come to Edmonton, so building a new hospital in Grande Prairie has freed up a lot of spaces in Edmonton. That's something that people don't always think about. Good for Edmonton for getting a new hospital, but the Grande Prairie one helps the residents of Edmonton as well.

You know, a good announcement today from the Minister of Municipal Affairs on behalf of the agriculture minister about funding the ag societies, a three-year commitment to funding that. That was done at the new rural municipalities association. I'm not sure what they're going to call their acronym, whether it's ARMA or just RMA. That was a good announcement and something we've been asking the government for. But when I asked the question last week, the Finance minister said, "Well, we can't tell you what's in the budget," yet today he announced that he hasn't announced the budget yet, so I thought that was a little strange as well.

3:10

You know, we're supposed to get up here and talk about the interim supply, but we're not supposed to ask questions or get any answers. I could go on about why there's \$200 million less in the Transportation budget in this interim than last year, but we won't get an answer, and I don't expect to. Maybe it's not a fair question, but we're supposed to be here to debate the interim supply. I'm supposed to get up and speak about it, so that's what I'm doing. When other people get up and speak and make statements that aren't necessarily friendly with the facts, I've got to get up and make statements that might correct them. So if we're not allowed to get answers to our questions, I just wanted to clear up a few of the misconceptions in this House.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Acting Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other hon. members that wish to speak? The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you for your comments in regard to the interim supply. I have just a couple of things that I think need to be perhaps filled out or corrected.

As the Education minister, of course, we were moving forward on schools that were approved to be built. I found out very quickly that the financing was not in place to build those schools so we needed to scramble. We needed to make some adjustments because the previous government failed to build schools for a long time, for a generation, and then they announced a flurry of schools just before the last election. You know, as we said, we had some signs sitting in fields, and then the sign would fall down, and there's still no school there. We went ahead and built those schools, but the first thing I had to do was actually move capital into the budget to actually build those schools. Quite frankly, between that deficit, that capital that wasn't there and the government's admission that they were not going to fund for enrolment, Education was sitting on the edge of a precipice, Mr. Chair, a precipice that would not allow schools to be built, that would not allow spaces to be available for a fast-growing population. It would have been chaos.

I mean, Albertans made a choice around that. I think education was a big part of the choice they made in the last election. The

people spoke, and you have a fine, fine government here now, who is making life better for Albertans, investing in education, making sure we got those schools built. You know, that's it. That's what happened.

Certainly, interim supply is an interesting thing because, of course, you have movement during the course of the year. In Education the movement that we saw was an increase in enrolment from 1.8 per cent to 2.2 per cent. That differential was the sum total of our interim supply that we're asking here for the Legislature to consider. Again, respectfully to the Education critic across the way last night talking about maintenance money, an adjustment that I made was that I moved that maintenance money from operating to capital. This was part of a way by which I could compel boards to make sure that they were spending money that was meant for infrastructure maintenance and so forth on infrastructure. That was the sum total of that part of our interim supply for Education. In fact, it was exactly no change in the budget that we debated and voted on last year.

So the sum total of my interim supply was to cover off the increase in enrolments in the schools across our province, which, again, is indicative of a sense of hope and optimism. You know, we're seeing more families moving to Alberta, and we're seeing lots of those families having children, right? There's no better sort of a way of indicating the health of an economy than for people to be having children and, you know, filling up our schools and buying houses and laying down roots and building a future for themselves and for their kids. So I'm pretty happy about that. Yeah. We've got a long way to go – right? – to the recovery from the economic downturn, but I certainly can see signs of optimism in Education, and I'm very proud of that.

Thank you.

The Acting Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

Are there other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti. Way up there.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I didn't want to turn this into a debate with the Education minister. I thought it was a Finance debate, but that's good. I don't have the numbers, you know, in front of me for the years back. When we budgeted for those schools, it was a five-year budget, and the money was in there. But I do know that in the second year of this government they transferred a hundred million dollars out of capital. The minister said that he had too much money in the capital build plan, and he transferred it out. So I find it a little funny, his statement today. I can go back and look a couple of years, and I think I can confirm that number. So when he said that they had to transfer it in, when he transferred it out: we might have to debate that at another time because I'm not prepared.

I will give the minister credit. You know, he talks about growth in his schools. The growth he's seeing today is nothing compared to what we saw five and eight years ago at 8 per cent growth. That's why we needed to build all those schools, because Alberta was growing way faster than it is today. But I will give the minister credit – we started those schools, and lots of them were built and open before this government came along – for finishing them all and opening them. There are some great new schools in the province today because of the stuff we started and he finished. I'll thank him for finishing them; they're good schools. Our students in Alberta will enjoy them for many years to come. I don't know; we'll have to wait until after Thursday, I guess, but hopefully there are announcements in the budget that this government will announce more new schools in the future as well because there are still more to be built, Mr. Chair.

Thank you.

The Acting Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there other hon. members wishing to speak to Bill 3? Thank you. The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I rise to speak to Bill 3, Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2018. I thank the hon. Minister of Treasury Board and Finance for bringing Bill 3 forward.

Before I make formal comments on this Bill 3, it was interesting. I was following the back and forth between my hon. colleague from Grande Prairie-Wapiti and the Education minister. My colleague identified the issue of when people are taking credit for the work the other government did before but not even giving them due credit. Still, the member is very fair in giving credit to the Education minister where it is due for finishing the projects. I think we'll add value to the debate here if we actually be fair to each other.

On one hand the minister said: "Oh, we got the mandate. People spoke." But in this House, you know, they keep blaming the previous government, saying, "Oh, those are the ones who are responsible." You've had the mandate for three years now. You're into the mandate of the third year. What did you do to fix all those things? People in Calgary-Foothills sometimes ask me those questions. "Why do they keep blaming the previous government? Why don't they do their job?" I just wanted to make that point, Mr. Chair.

Also, coming back to Bill 3, the hon. Finance minister has exposed himself with respect to the government of Alberta's budgeting process by presenting Bill 3. The fact that we need an interim supply bill means that the Department of Finance is behind the eight ball by a month or two. The budgeting process is out of kilter and out of synchronization with the rest of the fiscal year, so we need to get it back on track.

3:20

The Legislative Assembly is being asked to approve billions in spending, and the government provided us with no information or context in the Committee of Supply. It just goes to show that the government is chronically underprepared. Being unprepared results in less transparency and accountability for Alberta's taxpayers, Mr. Chair, and we have that here. We don't have the details of the interim spending. We'll only see that when the main budget estimates are tabled with the main budget.

When we ask really good questions, like my colleague said before, that sought more specific information about where interim supply money was actually being spent, the Finance minister and the rest of Executive Council stonewalled those questions or outright failed to provide any specific information. I guess that's why they call it question period, not answer period, Mr. Chair. Albertans see that on television and streaming online, and they don't like it.

Albertans told the UCP Official Opposition that they didn't like the decorum, so we fixed that. Ever since we've had this new leader of our party, he asked us to maintain the decorum of the House. We heard that, and we implemented that. Now if we could just get the government to answer the questions with real answers, not stonewalling, or with a commitment to get back to members with real answers, we'd really appreciate that and Albertans will appreciate that.

It's unacceptable for the members to be told that they need to wait until the budget is announced on Thursday before they find out where the money is going. Again, like the Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti said, another contradiction in this House is that when we ask, they say, "Stay tuned till Thursday," and in the meantime, I mean, they go outside to make announcements about funding for some scheme or another scheme. We're the elected representatives

of Albertans, and I don't see why the government can't share the information with us in this House, in this temple of democracy.

Even then, when one gets into the budget estimates and all the fancy titles that program funding is hidden under, I think we can do better with the transparency. Wouldn't it be something if we had an interactive estimates online where one could click the estimates line item and drill down to lower levels to see what is in it and drill down all the way to the invoices and receipts level, Mr. Chair? That would be true transparency. We would be the most transparent of all.

Now, the interim estimates as presented are only supposed to be for about a two-month period. If the total spending in this two months is \$8.5 billion, the full 12 months is shaping up to be in the vicinity of \$51 billion. This would be down by \$5 billion from the third-quarter update on expenses of \$55,947,000,000. But for our purposes we are talking about \$7.717 billion roughly in expenses and \$559,244,000 in capital and \$160,211,000 in financial transactions in Bill 3. I suspect that the minister is front-loading some money here to get it out the door for grants and such, but at the end of the day the Legislature is being asked to provide this government with a cheque for 8 and a half billion dollars without knowing where any of that money is going to be spent.

In terms of revenue we only know that \$239,907,000 in funding from the lottery fund is being transferred to the general revenue fund, and we don't know where the rest of the revenue, which is approximately \$8.25 billion, is coming from for this other than it is coming from the general revenue fund.

With respect to the \$43,759,000 in expense for Alberta Energy, given that this represents 20.9 per cent of last year's entire budget, if this is for two months of operations, it looks like the minister is foreshadowing a 25.6 per cent increase in the overall expense budget for 2018-19, Mr. Chair.

Now, last week the government announced the coal community transition fund, supporting 12 projects in 17 communities across the province with about \$5 million. Is this money in Bill 3, or is it in Budget 2017-18, or is it contained in Bill 4? We don't know, Mr. Chair. What I do know is that the NDP is going to fund work to expand economic hubs, including agribusiness, transportation and high-tech industries, tourism development, strategic planning, and feasibility studies to help communities diversify and expand their local economies. Nor do we know how much of the expense will be used to cover the cost of selling oil and operating the Alberta Petroleum Marketing Commission.

Mr. Chair, we need a real budget, not an interim supply. I know we'll have to wait till Thursday, but I ask the Minister of Treasury Board and Finance to get his department's act together and use some common sense so that the budget can be presented and debated, examined, and scrutinized on time before the end of the fiscal year.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Acting Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 3? The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Why, thank you, Mr. Chair. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 3, Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2018, in Committee of the Whole. It's a pleasure to be here with you this afternoon. I hope that the minister understands that a bill that requests the approval of \$8.5 billion in spending is a rather difficult bill when the bill provides less detail than a family's weekly shopping list. At least with the list we would know how much of each thing to buy.

The truly unfortunate thing about this bill is that it's totally unnecessary. Had this government convened the Legislature as per

Standing Order 3(4)(a), which states, “for the Spring Sitting commencing on the second Tuesday in February and concluding no later than the first Thursday in June,” had the government just done the bare minimum that the standing orders require, we would have had plenty of time to debate the budget prior to the end of the fiscal year 2017-2018 on March 31, just a couple of weeks from today, eliminating the need for any sort of discussion around interim supply, be it supplementary or interim supply.

This government could have provided the maximum amount of transparency for the dollars it spends, but instead it took the option that allowed for the minimum level of transparency. I know that the government is getting very, very, very good at doing things that provide the minimum level of transparency. In fact, you’ll know, Mr. Chair, that we have seen at basically every turn the government providing the lowest level of transparency possible, whether it’s them impeding the ability of outside groups to present at committee, which would increase transparency; whether it’s utilizing tools like interim supply, that don’t provide the same robust transparency; whether it’s impeding important legislation that could go to committee as well.

3:30

We have seen time and time again this government have a lack of respect for transparency, particularly, Mr. Chair, you’ll know, around the area of access to information. This government is putting together a horrible track record on access to information. A horrible track record. In fact, there are three or four investigations currently at the Privacy Commissioner’s office. The use of this tool is a continuing and ongoing challenge that the government will have if it continues to not do what’s right and not provide the most fulsome forms of transparency possible.

As I just mentioned, the government is seeking the approval for billions of dollars in spending, and they provided members a full six pages of information on what programs the money is being spent on. In fact, the department-specific information, if you can call that specific, was only three pages. Now, I will concede – hooray – that members did get three hours last week in the Committee of Supply, when we had the opportunity to ask ministers and the rest of Executive Council questions about all of these monies and where they were being spent. Unfortunately, for all of the questions we asked, we didn’t get much in the way of answers from Executive Council members.

I thought the questions that members of the Official Opposition and some of my fellow colleagues on this side of the House asked were, in fact, good questions, questions that deserved substantive answers. When it was asked of the Finance minister if he had any idea how much of the interim supply was related to either collection of the carbon tax, payment of the carbon tax, or special grants through the climate leadership plan, he said: those types of specific questions can be answered at budget estimates. One of the challenges, Mr. Chair, that obviously you will observe, is that that same Finance minister was requesting the approval for billions of dollars and essentially asking the Official Opposition to: hold your questions and ask those later, but I’d like to spend the money now. I’m not sure if he’s aware or not, but that’s not how this process is supposed to work.

When my colleague for Cypress-Medicine Hat asked the Finance minister what his specific plans were for capital funding outlined in interim supply, what projects they were going to, and did the amount of money being asked for equate to 16 per cent of the yearly amount, the minister’s response was: the government is on track to spend \$9.2 billion on capital in 2017-18. To give the minister credit, that is at least a bit more specific an answer. Too bad it had nothing to do with the budget for 2018-2019, or, as I refer to it, the matter at hand.

When the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat asked the minister how much interest is going to the cost of servicing all the debt that he’s currently racking up and how much all that extra interest is going to cost the province over the next few years, the minister didn’t answer any of his questions. Instead, he attempted to convince members that increasing corporate taxes from 10 up to 12 per cent wasn’t the same as a 20 per cent increase in corporate taxes. In fact, he thunderously proclaimed that one of his proudest days as Finance minister was when he eliminated the flat tax and increased taxes on Albertans. There were so, so many questions that were not answered, or there wasn’t time to have them answered.

Alberta has the highest unemployment rate outside of Atlantic Canada, and tens of thousands of families across our province are struggling to make ends meet. Instead of having their backs, this NDP government focused on implementing ideological agendas and making the cost of everything more expensive. Not only is this NDP government saddling our children and grandchildren with massive debt, but do they think that the money will ever be paid back? These are the types of questions that ought to be asked.

We need to respect taxpayer dollars carefully and consider priorities, yet we see this government doing the exact opposite of that. How much of this money is being spent to cover the increase in the carbon tax specifically on fuel to the provincial government? Every layer of government is paying the carbon tax. How much exactly is it costing, and how is that reflected in their supply requests? These are the types of questions that should be answered, yet the government chooses and continually chooses to not do that. How much of the budget is for the collection of the carbon tax? Again, no answer from the Minister of Finance.

What is the current debt to GDP? It should be a very simple question to answer, yet unfortunately we did not receive that from this minister. Can the minister please provide a breakdown on how much of the interim supply budget is going towards risk management and insurance? I think that is a very, very, very reasonable question that he should provide a response for, and I hope that he will provide that response in writing in the very near future.

Mr. Chair, interim supply is allocating around \$900,000 towards capital investments and financial transactions. I’m hoping, through you to the minister, he can please provide some background on what exactly that money is being spent on specifically.

The Automobile Insurance Rate Board does a lot of important work in terms of regulating automobile insurance premiums for private vehicles. How much of the interim supply has been allocated to the AIRB?

I hope that the Minister of Finance will be able to provide the answers to those questions in the very, very near future.

Mr. Chair, it is a little bit frustrating to continually see this government move in the wrong direction with respect to supply requirements, with respect to interim requirements. It’s my hope that, moving forward, they will be much more respectful of the standing orders and provide more robust debate at the appropriate times in the future.

The Acting Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there other members wishing to speak to Bill 3? The Member for Calgary-Currie has the floor.

Mr. Malkinson: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. It is a pleasure to get up and chat on this interim supply. You know, interim supply, despite some characterizations to the contrary, is quite a common part of the Westminster system of parliament, and it is quite common here in the Legislature. By necessity, of course, it is just purely to allow the Ministry of Finance to keep paying our

doctors and nurses and our police and all of the other government services while we finish passing the budget. Of course, the spending that is going to be coming forward in the 2018-19 budget will be introduced on Thursday, where all members of this House will have ample opportunity to see where all that money is going forward.

You know, on suggestions that for our interim supply we need to be able to have an interactive website or app set up where we can drill down to descriptions, right down to the receipt level, as suggested a little while ago, I think perhaps it would be impractical although with technology anything is possible. Considering how much noise we get in regard to spending, I'm not sure if that is something that would be a worthwhile endeavour at this time.

3:40

To the interim supply itself. You know, it's \$29 million for the Legislative Assembly; \$7.7 billion in expenses – and that amount is, of course, across all 21 departments – \$559 million in capital investments across all 18 departments; \$160 million in financial transaction amounts across 12 departments; and \$240 million for transfer from the lottery fund to general revenue.

You know, as had been mentioned previously by the Minister of Finance himself, certain ministries have expenses that go right out at the beginning of the year, so to look at these interim supply amounts and multiply them by the remainder of the year would not at all be accurate. It is purely to keep everything running for an additional two months.

Now, to say that we're here and haven't been able to answer questions in in-depth detail on our upcoming budget: of course, that opportunity will be just two days from now, on Thursday, March 22. Of course, several ministers throughout the course of debate have gotten up and spoken and answered specific questions. Our Minister of Education did that just recently, a couple of minutes ago.

You know, it's been a very interesting day for debate in general. I find it interesting that this, I think, is one of the first days that I've ever been accused of not standing up for Albertans but somehow being a shill for big business, which, of course, I take exception to because this interim supply contains measures to help those Albertans, which we are all here to do, things like keeping our \$25-a-day daycare program moving along, things like providing money for policing in this province, something that I know is very important to many Albertans in this province and, as well, very important to many members opposite, things like making sure that schools have the teachers they need during that time. So to say that we're not standing up for Albertans who are struggling at the moment is something I take exception to.

Also included in interim supply, through the Ministry of Community and Social Services, of course, there would be monies to help those Albertans who are at this point still out there looking for jobs. And things are looking up, of course. There are 90,000 new jobs, manufacturing is up, unemployment is down, and new car sales are up. All those measures that one would say are, you know, an example of the economy improving I am onboard with.

It is interesting. We often, you know, hear from the opposition that there's not enough detail. Well, I note that for Bill 4 the opposition actually had a chance to vote for more officers to help fight rural crime, had a chance to vote for sexual assault centres but chose at that time to not do that. Of course, again, our budget, when it comes out on Thursday, will fully explain all of our various initiatives that we have coming forward for the next year. It's interesting that when there's even just a little bit of detail in supplementary estimates, they chose to vote against those things that I had been hearing often about in the news in January and February and chose to vote against them at the earliest possible

opportunity, which is something that doesn't make sense to me. I find it so odd, going back to what the Member for Airdrie was saying previously, that on one day I am in the pocket of big business and the next day not doing enough to support them. That is something that is, of course, quite interesting.

When it comes to schools, I remember, being in Public Accounts, that there's an Auditor General's report – the exact month I don't have off the top of my head – where it actually specifically talked about how the previous government announced previous schools. The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti was quite correct that there were many schools announced, but the Auditor General found that there was no plan to fund them at all. Of course, the Auditor General specializes in getting to the root of process in these sorts of things. I would trust his opinion in that.

We have been clear as a government that we will fund the new schools and the modernization of schools that Albertans need so that an Albertan who's got children that need an education have a place for their children to go in the public school system. I know that right around my riding of Calgary-Currie I have gone to a brand new school opening, personally, I've gone to a school modernization, and I've also gone to the opening of a charter school, actually, around my riding.

What's that doing? You know, someone may ask: why am I talking about schools that aren't built in my riding? Well, my riding is a much older area of Calgary, so it has a large amount of schools that were built in the '50s and '60s. Many of those schools are overcrowded precisely because, really, there have been no schools in the area built since then. As Calgary has expanded out and my riding went from being on the outskirts of Calgary to, you know, arguably inner city, all those students from those outer areas were having to come into the schools in my area. By having these new schools and modernizations built around my riding, that is relieving pressure on the schools in my riding.

I've already seen it from tours of the schools that I did in February, that the population in those schools is going down. Libraries are no longer being used for classrooms. Libraries are being used for their intended purpose, as libraries. The same thing goes for music rooms, which are being used for music as opposed to a permanent classroom, which allows schools, I think, to function better and, you know, allows for a better educational experience for our children.

In closing, I want to mention that I am fully in support of interim supply. It is a very common practice in the Legislature just to get us through to when we pass the budget. Of course, we will have ample opportunity to duly explore all of the programs and all of the ministries when we do estimates in our various committees.

In fact, I am quite looking forward to that. I think Albertans will be very impressed with what they see in the upcoming budget and, in particular, on our path to balance numbers because that is something that I do get asked about at the door. The residents of Calgary-Currie are always very excited to hear about the work we are doing to keep our costs under control. Albertans do remember the wild cost swings. When oil prices were high and the economy was growing, previous governments continued to run deficits even at \$90-a-barrel oil. Mr. Chair, at \$90-a-barrel oil they couldn't balance the budget.

Between 2010 and 2014, for example, oil prices averaged \$90 a barrel, the economy grew by more than 5 per cent per year, royalty revenues averaged \$9.3 billion a year. Yet during this time the previous government ran deficits in all but one year. Since then, of course, due to the dramatic drop in the price of oil, we had a choice. We could either dramatically cut back on the services that Albertans depend on, or we could take the advice of leading economists like David Dodge and invest in Albertans.

Let me go back to those schools. Those schools and modernizations that we chose to actually fund and make sure they got built, each one of those schools was providing much-needed jobs during the downturn for tradespeople all across this province. That expands out into the economy because that means the individual who is supplying the doors, supplying the electrical components, the lights, the roofing, the cement for the foundation, the operators of the excavators: all of that is good, much-needed jobs in a downturn. You know, economists agree that the choices we made are allowing us to come out of this recession stronger and sooner than we otherwise would have if we hadn't made those choices.

3:50

This interim supply is just a very small part of that, to get us through to when we can talk about our budget on March 22, where we will show our path to balance, which I think Albertans will be quite impressed with, to see that we have been keeping costs under control while focusing on the things that make life better for Albertans: things like \$25-a-day daycare, things like funding for sexual assault centres, things like police, things like investment in our oil and gas industry as well as helping to diversify our economy and, of course, in education, to make sure that if there is a student entering Alberta's education system, the full funding that that student needs is there. The funding that that student gets shouldn't depend on whatever the price of oil happens to be that quarter. That's not something we believe in, that's not something I believe in, and I don't think that's something Albertans believe in.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Acting Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate you recognizing me and giving me this opportunity to talk on Bill 3. You know, there are lots of things to be concerned about with this, but I'm going to ever so briefly take us back to the basics.

If you look at our Standing Orders on page 2 – you know, if some members of the House are like me, sometimes if you're reading a book before you go to sleep, you fall asleep. Your head hits the book, and you wake up with your face in the book, without having read much of it. But even if that happened to the government, I would have hoped they would have gotten to page 2 before their head hit the book. This is one of the things that it says on page 2 – it says a lot of things – under (4)(a): “the Spring Sitting commencing on the second Tuesday in February and concluding no later than the first Thursday in June.” Now, it also says: unless the government decides differently. Clearly, the government decided differently.

My point is not that the government did something wrong. My point is that under the normal fashion of operating this place and a normal government, which I don't really think we've had for the last three years, had they started on the second Tuesday in February, then they would have been in this House a lot sooner, perhaps been working on their budget a lot sooner, perhaps knew what the heck they were doing a lot sooner, perhaps be able to explain it to Albertans a lot more fully, having done the work over the Christmas break that they should have been doing.

I think it demonstrated very clearly what they weren't doing. They demonstrated it, to start with, by starting to meet in this important Chamber at such a late date, which I think is a pretty strong indication that the government didn't have their act together and did not know what they were doing and were in no position to explain it decently to Albertans. Of course, that extends to what actually happens in the Chamber. Again, as some of my colleagues

have said here, the government is basically asking for an \$8.5 billion blank cheque from Albertans, and they think it's just fine to not give them any information.

Now, I was here for three hours of estimates on that, and it was three hours of my life I'll never get back. To be clear, Mr. Chair, I think the work we do in this Chamber is extremely important and can be extremely valuable to Albertans. Albertans are owed a good performance by all of us in this House. But I'll tell you what we did not get from the Finance minister was a good performance. We had members from the opposition asking very reasonable questions, “What are you going to do with the 8 and a half billion dollars?” He didn't give any information. He kept making inane responses, “Well, you can't multiply it by four.” Okay. Good. We got that. Nobody is asking you to multiply it by four.

I mean, I'll tell you what. I recall what I did. I heard several of my colleagues asking the minister very reasonable questions about health care, education, social services, transportation, infrastructure and getting nowhere. I even went to the extent of saying to the minister: “Well, let's just pick a ministry. What are you going to do more or less than last year?” He said, “Well, I can't say.” Well, can't say or won't say, I'm not sure. But he didn't say. So I remember that I said, “Minister, I'm going to make this as easy on you as I possibly can.” I said to the Finance minister, “You're the person in charge of \$54 billion, \$55 billion, \$59 billion, whatever.”

I don't know if they're sure what they are going to put in the budget at the end of this week. We'll find out Thursday. But if you're the person in charge of 50-odd billion dollars, perhaps you should have a clue of where one or two of those 50-odd billion dollars are going. Right, Mr. Chair? It seems reasonable, wouldn't you say? I thought so. The Finance minister and President of Treasury Board was unable to articulate a single thing that a single dollar out of the 8 and a half billion dollars was going to go to.

With all due respect, Mr. Chair, it's okay – you know what? – if the minister wants to disrespect me. He shouldn't disrespect anybody, but if he wants to disrespect the opposition, that's one thing. But the fact is that he's not getting the 8 and a half billion dollars from the opposition. He's getting it from Albertans, which means he's disrespecting Albertans. This government is disrespecting Albertans. To waltz in here several weeks late, compared to the standing orders, not prepared, ask for 8 and a half billion dollars to get started on the next year, and be able to give next to zero details about what they're going to do with it: that is as disrespectful to the 4.3 million, 4.4 million Albertans as anything that I can think of.

Now, Mr. Chair, I don't know what your household is like, but in my home if I was going to say to my wife, “I want to take out of our bank account a quarter of the money that we're going to spend this next year,” she might say, “What are you going to spend it on?” You know what? I think that would be a reasonable question for her to ask. I think I would rightly and properly owe her an answer. And if I were to say, “Well, none of your business; just trust me, it's going to be good,” I'm pretty sure I wouldn't get anywhere near any bank card, bank machine, chequebook, anything where I could spend a quarter of our family's annual income without an explanation of what I was going to spend it on.

Yet that is what this government is demanding that 4.3 million, 4.4 million Albertans do. They take a quarter of the year's budget and say: “Give it to me. Trust us. We're really good people. You know, you don't need to trouble yourself with the dirty little topic of money.” That's what this government has said to Albertans. The problem is that it's not the government's money. There's no such thing as government money. It's Albertans' money.

So when you think of that, that is as disrespectful, as arrogant, as thoughtless – I don't know – with an air of superiority that is really hard to imagine. Now, I get it. Listen, this is not the first or the last government to have supplementary supply. That in itself, on its own, is not necessarily the biggest problem in the world. The biggest problem in the world is that they want a blank cheque for 8 and a half billion dollars, and they're completely disrespecting all Albertans that are actually paying that money. I can't imagine anything much less respectful than that or much more disrespectful than that, if you prefer, Mr. Chair. Yet that is what this government boldly went forth and did, and it is boldly going forth and still doing that today.

That government and these ministers get asked very polite questions: "What are you going to do with the money, folks? You know, reality check. It's not actually your money. You're spending it on behalf of Albertans." The government boldly said, "None of your business." They just said, "We don't have to tell you, and we're not going to."

Now, I appreciate that the Finance minister shouldn't have to know where every nickel is going. I didn't ask him to know where every nickel is going, and I don't recall any other member of this House asking him to remember where every nickel is going. Somewhere in his ministry he has to have it written down. But, for goodness' sake, you would hope that he would have an idea where a few of the nickels were going.

For goodness' sake, you know, if the minister was the least bit respectful and caring about the feelings and how hard Albertans work to earn the money that the government takes from them, you would hope that he might have a few shining examples of bold new government initiatives that were going to be good for Albertans, something that he could brag about, something that he would hope Albertans would be proud of. But the minister didn't offer up even a crumb. We could make the assumption that there's not a single thing he's going to do that he could be proud of. We could make the assumption there's not a single thing that he's going to do that Albertans would like. I don't know.

4:00

I certainly don't believe that the government is going to do everything wrong. They've been a pretty poor government, but they haven't done everything wrong. The kids are getting educated and hospitals are open and social services are getting delivered, so they're doing some things right.

But this is an example of where they let their true feelings about Albertans show, where the cabinet, in particular, and all members on the government side should be ashamed of the fact that they're asking Albertans to write a blank cheque for 8 and half billion dollars, and they're not telling them hardly a single thing about what they're going to do with the money. That is something I just cannot get past, and I think there are a lot of Albertans that can't get past it. Now, we're going to find out Thursday what's in the budget, and I'm sure that we're going to hear a lot of talk about how great it is.

I'll tell you how disrespectful it is. The Finance minister went out today and put on some virtual reality glasses and trotted around and talked about things that he might do. Well, why didn't he actually tell us in this House about his virtual reality things that he talked about today? That would have been at least respectable. I don't know whether that's contempt of the House or not, when you know the answer to a question and you choose not to answer it, because whatever he said today, he obviously knew when he was asked questions about what you know you are going to do, and he chose not to even share that. Even the government's own party members should be offended by the fact that the minister wouldn't share with them in this House what he was going to do, though he shared it

outside of the House today, even though he's asking for an \$8.5 billion blank cheque. It's despicable, but there it is.

The government shouldn't be surprised if they don't get support from the opposition on this incredibly disrespectful, incredibly bold, incredibly late to the party, incredibly lack of details, incredibly rude, disrespectful request for an 8 and a half billion dollar blank cheque from Albertans. I'm sure they won't be surprised when they don't get my support for it, and I'm sure they won't be surprised when they don't get support from the opposition for it. Those Albertans watching at home: it's your money. They're asking you for 8 and half billion dollars, and they haven't told you anything about what they're going to spend it on. Disgraceful.

The Acting Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there other members wishing to speak? We have the hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane recognized.

Mr. Westhead: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just have a question for the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays. You know, I hear that he's disappointed with the approach that our government is taking in terms of the interim supply, but I just wonder if he could enlighten the House about how often, when he was in government, his party used the same tool.

Mr. McIver: Well, I thank the hon. member for the question. I would say that most years if not every year we had supplementary supply, and I said in my remarks, hon. member, that supplementary supply isn't the biggest crime in the world. It's not the biggest problem, and I stand by that. I'm not a big fan of it. When I was in government, we had supplementary supply. I wasn't a big fan of it then; I'm not a big fan of it now. But to answer your question directly, something that your minister never did for me, respectfully, we did it, too. It's a tool to get you by the year.

Now, you know what? I would say that if there was a time that previous governments didn't give any detail on it, then they deserve that criticism, too. I would think that we gave more. I don't actually – you know what? It's four years ago. I just flat don't remember, okay? But not giving details about billions of dollars, not any details – you know what? There are things the government could do. They could say . . .

An Hon. Member: How convenient.

Mr. McIver: No, it is convenient. The hon. member there, that doesn't have the floor, is chirping. He says, "How convenient." I say: yes, it is. How convenient. That's my complaint. The Finance minister chose something really convenient, really disrespectful towards Albertans. That is exactly the road he went down, and it was wrong. It was wrong, and it will always be wrong when that happens.

You know what? I'll try to help him out here for the next year that he comes forward with supplementary supply. He could say: well, there are some construction projects we want to get started on early because we don't know how long the construction season is. He could have said: the opposition have been complaining about lack of service in some area of health care, education, or social services, and we don't want to wait because we've talked about improving the service there, and we don't want people to wait for that. There are probably a thousand and one examples of things that the minister could have said, and he chose to say none of those things.

I hope I answered the question for the hon. member. I think it was a straight-up question. I tried to give you a straight-up answer. Again, I'm not a big fan of supplementary supply. I think it's always going to be around. I hope I'm never a fan of it. If we get where we

want to go in a year and a half and we end up being in government again, I wouldn't be surprised if there is supplementary supply. But you can hold me to the fact that if we ask for supplementary supply, should we be fortunate enough – I don't know whether we will or not because you don't know what Albertans will decide – ever to be in government, I would hope we give more respectful answers than the ones we received this week, full stop.

The Acting Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there other hon. members wishing to speak to Bill 3?
Hearing none, are you ready for the question?

[The clauses of Bill 3 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Acting Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Acting Chair: Opposed? Carried.
Let's move on.

Bill 4

Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2018

The Acting Chair: Are there members wishing to speak to Bill 4?
The hon. Member for Highwood.

Mr. W. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I rise today to speak to Bill 4, Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2018. This government is going to spend \$1.5 billion in the next two weeks to top up their already heavily loaded 2017-18 budget. I can't say that this surprises me. We've not seen this government even try to minimize their spending one iota. They want us just to sign off on a huge cheque without having to justify the big spend. Now, we know that some of this money is needed, and we would obviously agree with fire-related costs, emergency response, funding for sexual assault victims' services, and, of course, most obvious, additional police. However, they have lumped all of that together with us agreeing with their tax-and-spend policies, which we cannot justify, especially when there are no details to go along with the big ask.

Last week we spent over six hours in this House asking the government questions about what exactly they would be spending the money on. All we got was no answers. The government used the airtime to stonewall and deflect our questions. Instead of sounding like a government in charge, they deflect much of their answers.

With the amount of debt that this province is incurring, we will now be making over \$1 billion in payments annually, interest-only payments. Alberta's debt is projected to reach \$70 billion by 2019-2020. Yet this government wants us to sign away on the dotted line and give them an additional \$1.5 billion. We will have no hand in the economic destruction of this province. The Fraser Institute said, "Provincial debt service costs in Alberta are rising quickly every year, placing a bigger and bigger burden on Albertan taxpayers." We cannot support this.

4:10

Did you know, Mr. Chair, that in 2019-2020 debt-servicing costs will exceed \$500 per Albertan, more than double what they were in 2016-2017? That's just not right. In less than three years this government has increased Alberta's debt by \$45 billion. Alberta has had six credit downgrades since this government took office, and I truly hope we're not heading for another one. The taxpayers in this

province cannot afford it, and in a high-risk scenario accumulated deficits could be much higher than the predicted \$38 billion over the next three years, which is \$11.7 billion more than this government forecasted.

After last week spending several hours asking questions in this House, we know as much about supplementary supply today as we did before we even started asking our questions. This is truly due to this government's refusal to answer any of our questions. The government really could have reduced the need for this supplementary supply if they would have included the known costs in the annual budget, but that did not happen, so here we are today.

According to the Minister of Finance it was considered his proudest day as Finance minister when he raised taxes on Albertans. He said, "Frankly, it was one of the proudest days of my Finance minister career when we were able to eliminate the flat tax in this province because it didn't make sense." Really? Is it because it didn't bring in the revenue stream that would be needed when this government went into billions of dollars of debt?

Despite the massive increase in taxes since this government took office in 2015 and further increases to come, government revenue from income and corporate taxes are both lower than when this government took office. Doesn't this signal something to this government? Are they analyzing where their problems might be occurring, or are they just going to forge ahead with their disastrous economic ideology?

Well, without being able to take a peek at the financial books, I can tell you where the problem is. The problem is government spending. This government has a spending problem. If Albertans ran their household budgets like this government does theirs, they'd be in massive debt, and in quick order they'd lose their homes, cars, and credit. No one runs a budget this way. Yet the government wants us to sign off on something that should have been dealt with last year. We need to address the issue of this increasing debt and deficit.

Out of good consciousness I can't support this supply bill. Where is the compassion? Where's the belt-tightening this government has talked a lot about lately. Where is it? We need to do more than just talk the talk. We need to walk the walk. You need to walk the walk. Albertans know the difference. They do not see through this talk. Polls have shown that Albertans are losing their confidence in this government. It's what I've also been hearing in my constituency. UCP MLAs have been warning this government about their spending habits since day one. Unfortunately, the government has doubled down on their spending, with no plan to get the province's budgetary house in order. By the end of their term Albertans will be in debt over \$70 billion, with some estimating it could be closer to \$90 billion. How? How does a government spend that much money in such a short period of time? We can't and I can't support this. With no plan for dealing with the areas where we see a tremendous amount of spending, I won't and my colleagues won't support this.

The government raised the alarm when we didn't support them with our votes, but let's just take an issue such as rural crime. How is this a surprise to government? It wasn't a surprise to us. The UCP members have been raising this issue of rural crime for well over a year. Why didn't you address this in the budget last year? Why didn't you listen when we wanted an emergency debate? No, there has been no active listening coming from this government, only reactive spending. The United Conservatives have been talking about this issue for years, but this government denied there was even an issue. I find it ironic that this is the year they finally want to play catch-up. We have supported additional police officers in rural Alberta for years. You want more money? How about answering Albertans about when they can expect these officers that

they promised? Why are you refusing to answer questions from Albertans but expecting them to open up their wallets?

We all stand here in the House representing the constituents from all the different parts of the province. I have been a voice for my constituents and so have my colleagues. This government refuses to listen to the many voices of this province when they refuse to hear us.

UCP MLAs have been to many town halls filled with concerned and outraged citizens, real victims of crime. This government and the MLAs can't be bothered to come out and listen to any of these folks – the stories, the heartache, the loss – but you all stand there with your hands out. I feel sorry for any rural Albertan having to live through this ordeal and to know that it could take over a year for help to arrive. It's simply not good enough. It is true that it could be a minimum of 1.5 years at the earliest for additional officers to arrive. That's preposterous. These communities are under siege now. They need help today.

We can't cut the government a blank cheque when they refuse to answer our questions. That would be unwise of us given this government's history. I and my colleagues are opposed to adding more debt to taxpayers when they should have been taken care of a lot earlier.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Acting Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there other hon. members wishing to speak to Bill 4? The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you for recognizing me, Mr. Chair. I just want to start off by commenting on what we are really debating here. We're debating more than \$1.5 billion in spending that the NDP did not properly budget for, \$1.5 billion that they dropped on this Legislature a week ago, expecting a rubber-stamp, allocating only six hours of debate in Committee of Supply. That is one hour of legislative scrutiny for every quarter billion dollars of taxpayers' dollars, Alberta taxpayers' dollars, money that is on top of the multibillion-dollar deficit that this government already burdened Albertans with this fiscal year, all this with very little, limited information from the government and no substantive answers even given during the limited time allocated that we received.

Government ministers tell us not to worry, that we will have access to more information when we get to estimates in a few weeks. Simply, the government is asking us to just trust them. I'm sorry to say, Mr. Chair, but the government, especially when it comes to budgetary matters, has not earned that trust or that level of trust from the opposition, from constituents, or from Albertans at large.

Mr. Chair, there is a reason why this supply bill is separate from the budget for the fiscal year. It deals with matters from the current fiscal year, matters which have not yet gained legislative consent and deserve their own independent scrutiny. This is an important debate. It is important to our province and important to its people. This is not something to be rubber-stamped. It is something to be debated wholeheartedly, as is consistent with the duties of this House and its members.

Mr. Chair, I would like to narrow it down to a few specific topics here and dig a little deeper into their spending. On revenue according to the Finance minister his proudest day as Finance minister was when he raised taxes on Albertans. I'm going to quote it. I know it was just quoted, but it's important that Albertans hear this because I don't think that they agree. The Minister of Finance says, "Frankly, it was one of the proudest days of my Finance minister career when we were able to eliminate the flat tax in this province because it didn't make sense." Despite taxes being raised,

government revenues from income and corporate taxes are both lower than when this government took office. The problem is that government has a spending problem, which supplementary supply completely fails to address.

On the debt this government fails to address the issue of increasing debt and deficit. This government is talking a lot about compassionate belt-tightening. It's interesting, though, Mr. Chair, that I didn't hear those words in the throne speech, so I'm not sure whether or not this is going to be a quick, compassionate belt-tightening or whether or not it's actually going to be for the remainder of the time that the government is in session. By the end of their term the debt is going to be anywhere between \$70 billion and \$94 billion for Albertans. What's interesting is that as UCP MLAs we've been warning this government about their spending habits since day one. Unfortunately, just to note, Mr. Chair, so have credit agencies.

4:20

Unfortunately, the government has doubled down on their spending with no plan to get the province's budgetary house in order. With no plan of dealing with the areas where we see a tremendous amount of spending, we prudently need to oppose supplementary supply.

Mr. Chair, I would also like to address the issue of rural crime in relation to this bill. I just want to say that I am glad that finally after months of ignorance and denial, this government has stopped denying the existence of the rural crime crisis. The opposition and Albertans have been trying to get this issue addressed for too long. For too long Albertans have been victimized at an alarming rate while their government buried its head in the sand.

That said, Mr. Chair, I was shocked at the audacity of the NDP to attack us on this issue. Let's be clear. We don't oppose measures to address rural crime. We oppose the reckless spending habits of this NDP government. Regardless, I want to lay out the facts on this issue. Rural crime should not have been a surprise to this government. We have been warning them for a long time. Opposition members have been raising the issue of rural crime for over a year. If the government was serious about addressing this issue of rural crime, they would have addressed it in last year's budget. United Conservatives have been calling for action for years while the NDP denied that the rural crime crisis even existed. It's clear that the NDP is now scrambling and playing catch-up on this issue.

Obviously, Mr. Chair, UCP supports additional police officers for rural Alberta. However, the NDP has repeatedly refused to answer when Albertans can expect these new officers in their communities. In fact, some have stated that it could be a minimum of 1.5 years, or one and a half years, at the very earliest before any officers arrive. This does little to help communities under the siege that they are under today.

The NDP should not expect the opposition to cut a blank cheque, and I don't think that they would be willing to cut a blank cheque if they were here in our seats. They shouldn't expect us to cut the blank cheque for their spending when they refuse to provide answers to legitimate questions. There's a reason why standing orders offer us the opportunity to be able to go into Committee of Supply, because this is a House of 87 members, and 87 members have the opportunity to be able to scrutinize and to vet the spending decisions, especially the spending decisions of any government. It's unfortunate that when we take a look at the interim supply estimates, we are given very little information that we can go on.

The NDP should not expect the opposition to sit back while we're dealing with Albertans' hard-earned money, especially during this time, Mr. Chair, when I've had the opportunity of being able to chat

with many people in my riding who say that it's just very difficult, that they're really struggling, that they just need a break. There have been a lot of things that have come down, a lot of changes that have been made by this government. I have no doubt from speaking with many of my colleagues in the NDP that the intentions were the best intentions. The problem is that the government is not – they'd get an A if it was for intentions, but it's outcomes that we have to be able to grade the government on, and unfortunately the outcomes that we see have been devastating to Albertans and to families, especially in Calgary, where we have some of the highest unemployment rates, especially amongst young people, who have a 13.1 per cent unemployment rate.

These numbers don't speak to the actual individuals, Mr. Chair. They don't talk about how many thousands of young people are out of work, and it's interesting because on this issue alone, I specifically as the Labour critic had the opportunity of sitting down with two separate Labour ministers and talking to them about the plethora of studies that have been done. This isn't the first time that we've gone down this idea of increasing minimum wage. It's been done in other places, and as I showed the ministers, actually let them see, both of them, what the outcomes in these other jurisdictions were, the answer that I was given – and it was very sad that I got this answer – was: "We're not going to do an economic impact study. We're going to assess as we go." The sad thing about that is that if you assess as you go, well, at some point you're going to find out what those numbers are. We now know that it's 13.1 per cent unemployment.

If that minimum wage goes up again, there is also going to be a material effect on young people. We're already seeing that the unemployment amongst young people is skyrocketing. How much higher does it have to go before the minister says: "We now have the evidence. We need to stop. We need to stop adding onto the burden for these young people." These are our future, Mr. Chair. These are the people who we rely on to provide a wonderful Alberta and to be able to give them the kind of Alberta that we had the privilege of growing up in.

I know that the NDP, the members opposite, often say that it's been disastrous over the last 44 years. Well, I can say as one Albertan that Alberta has been good to my family. It's been good to me. It's provided me with opportunities that I don't believe I could have received anywhere else. And I've had the opportunity to be able to talk to many people who have come to this province not from just other parts of Canada but from other places in the world. They've come here because there's opportunity. They've come here because there are opportunities to start a business, a small business. Remember that entrepreneurs are the lifeblood of any successful economy, so having the opportunity of being able to come here and potentially being able to start a business and being able to provide a phenomenal life for your children, for your wife, for your husband, these are the types of things that we should be striving for.

Yet, unfortunately, what we've seen with the policies, with the legislation that's come from this NDP government is anything but that. It's taken our once-prosperous Alberta to a place that most people are questioning whether they want to stay, and that's sad to hear when I talk to people. They talk about how they'd come here from Saskatchewan and tried to get rid of the NDP or they'd come here from B.C. to try to get away from the NDP, and then they come here and they say: I can't believe that we actually now have the NDP in Alberta. So these are the concerns that I have. These are kind of some of the macroconcerns that I have.

But in terms of this bill, Bill 4, we're in a situation where, Mr. Chair, in taking a look at this, I cannot in good conscience support a bill that is so lacking in detail and so lacking in the kind of

transparency that this government has said many times that they want to provide. I oppose this bill because Albertans expect fiscal responsibility. I oppose this bill because Albertans deserve legislative scrutiny. I oppose this bill because my constituents elected me to hold this government to account, not to rubber-stamp its ideological agenda and endless deficit spending.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Acting Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane has the floor.

Mr. Westhead: Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. I just have a question for the hon. member or perhaps any member from the opposition. The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner referred to his leader and his party's preference to return to a flat tax, a flat income tax structure, and I just wanted to perhaps point out and ask for a reaction that there have been studies showing that in Alberta under Conservative rule for the previous 40 years with the flat tax, or for a significant portion of those 40 years with the flat tax, Alberta's inequality level in terms of income inequality was the highest in Canada.

You know, places like the International Monetary Fund, which isn't traditionally known as being a progressively minded organization, point out that high income inequality is bad for economic growth and bad for GDP growth, so the IMF says to focus on the poor and the middle class for the highest growth. So I just wonder, you know, with a proposal to return to a flat tax, going against the advice of institutions like the International Monetary Fund, how the member might respond to that, also just keeping in mind that every single province in Canada has a progressive income tax structure, including the government of Canada, I just wonder what the member's response to those questions might be.

4:30

The Acting Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for . . .

Mr. Hunter: Cardston-Taber-Warner, Mr. Chair.

The Acting Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you for recognizing me. I appreciate the Member for Banff-Cochrane's question. However, I actually never said anything about the flat tax, so I'm not sure where he's actually coming up with that. I don't have the benefit of the Blues, but I can say that I actually did not say anything about the flat tax in my speech. I appreciate his question, but I'm not sure exactly how to answer that.

I will say, though, that we are in the process of having a policy debate in our party, and I look forward to a robust debate about the information. I think that it's important for Albertans to know. I appreciate his comments, but I think that he's going to have to wait, just as we have to wait until Thursday for the budget.

The Acting Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there other hon. members wishing to speak to Bill 4? I see and recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Loyola: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's always a pleasure to get up in this House and speak with you all. I wanted to address the supplementary supply. Perhaps just to get started here, I want to talk about transparency. You know, the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner was talking about how there's no transparency, but when you actually look at the supplementary supply estimates, it couldn't be there in more detail. For example, in Agriculture and Forestry: \$204,914,000 to go to wildfire disaster/emergency assistance to

provide for wildfire management; \$56 million and change for the department's grant to the Agriculture Financial Services Corporation for the provincial share of AgriStability indemnities and AgriInsurance premiums. It's all written right there.

I'll remind the House that the members across the way actually voted against every estimate as we were going through second reading. They actually voted against providing these monies. Some of the members are getting up and saying: "Well, we support this. We support this." Well, then why did you vote against it?

You know, there were amounts in there for the municipal sustainability initiative. I mentioned wildfire disaster recovery and emergency assistance; monies allocated for child intervention and childcare subsidies and supports; persons with disability and assured income for the severely handicapped; employment and income support; the provincial share of, as I already mentioned, AgriInsurance premiums and indemnities; compensation increase for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and justices of the peace; and rural crime. These members across the way actually voted against all of this in second reading.

Now, it's really important that we understand that this is so that we can provide services for Albertans. That's what all these programs here are for, to provide services for Albertans. That's our job as government. You know, I already mentioned how the members across the way, in their libertarian way, would much rather we not have government. Right? Less government, fewer regulations.

Going back to the flat tax, you know, that my hon. colleague here mentioned, the fact is that the flat tax was actually contributing to inequality here in the province of Alberta, less money in the hands of your average Albertan. Having greater inequality actually does not help business. It actually makes it worse in the province.

Now, so many times the members across the way talk about how the government is just asking for a blank cheque. A blank cheque. Well, I would venture to guess – well, I would state that it's not a blank cheque. It's all written right here exactly what that money is going to be used for, the services that are going to be provided to each and every Albertan. It's the exact opposite of a blank cheque.

What we don't know, though, are the contributions that were made to the campaign for leadership of the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition. That's what we don't know because he refuses to disclose those amounts that were contributed to that campaign. To this day we don't know. It's the exact opposite of what we're doing here, making sure that we're providing services for Albertans.

Now, so many times the members across the way like to remind us: this is not your money; it's Albertans' money. Exactly. It is Albertans' money. It's their tax dollars that are going to provide these very important services that they will benefit from. Whether that's Agriculture and Forestry or Children's Services or whether it be Culture and Tourism, whatever the case may be, it's all written right here. The exact opposite of a blank cheque.

You know, so many times the members from across the way talk about the public debt as if it were the personal debt of each and every Albertan. In my opinion, that's quite misleading because this is public debt, which is not the exact same thing as personal debt. When you go out there and you tell Albertans, "Oh, yeah, you're going to have \$5,000 of debt because of the decisions that are being made by this government," in my opinion, you're misleading them. Now, I want to ask you: how many people here . . .

Mr. Carson: Mortgages.

Loyola: Exactly. You know exactly where I'm going, my friend.

How many people would actually have all the money in their hand, or let's just say in their bank account, to buy a home before they actually moved into it? Now, I don't know many Albertans, especially hard-working Albertans who, you know, maybe have two or even three jobs, who have all that money in the bank before they can actually buy a house and actually move into it. Thank goodness we have these financial instruments called mortgages.

Ms Renaud: That is radical.

Loyola: A radical, radical idea. Sounds like an ideological thing, yes, indeed.

Now, for those of you who aren't clear on this – no, I'm not going to go there. I know that each and every one of us in this House knows what a mortgage is, an incredibly important financial instrument that provides the citizens of this great land with the opportunity to be able to purchase a house and pay for that house as they go. Now, I don't know many people who have the \$300,000 or \$350,000 or even half a million dollars up front to actually buy a house right off the bat. I don't know many people like that. I don't think I've ever met someone like that in my life. Well, at least, I don't know. Maybe.

All I know is that I didn't have that kind of money when I got my house, and I'm still paying my mortgage. I've probably got another eight years to go on my mortgage, but at least I have a roof over my head the same way that other Albertans do that have taken advantage of this very important financial instrument so that they can actually live inside a house with a roof over their head, a place to call home, where they can raise their children and make sure that that family has the security that they need to be contributing citizens of this fine province.

4:40

That's what we're supposed to be here to do, help those individuals so that they can get the services that they need. Whether it be these children going to schools – you know, thanks to the Minister of Education for clearing up some of the misunderstandings from the Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

By the way, Mr. Chair, I happen to know that "wapiti" is a Cree word. It's a Cree word.

Ms Renaud: For flat tax.

Loyola: It doesn't stand for a flat tax. It's actually a Cree word that means white rump. You know, knowing the sense of humour of my Cree friends, I don't think that they were just talking about the four-legged animals.

You know, sometimes the members opposite like to get up and think that they're schooling us as if we don't know, as if we're not Albertans, as if we don't know what it's like to function in this economy. I'll remind all the members of this House, especially those on the other side, that for the first time in a very long time in the history of this province we have a pretty good diverse group of people on this side of the House. People were social workers, nurses, right? We have people who participated in unions, students, young people, seniors, older people. We've got a pretty good diverse crew over here on this side of the House . . .

The Acting Chair: Hon. member, if I may, I'll interject for a moment. I've exercised a fair bit of discretion. If you could relate your arguments back to Bill 4, come full circle, I'd appreciate that.

Loyola: I'm getting there, sir. I'm getting there, sir.

The Acting Chair: Thank you.

Loyola: I will come full circle.

The Acting Chair: Resume.

Loyola: The reason why I bring that up, Mr. Chair, is because this diverse group on this side of the House also have lived the experience of being a citizen of this province and participating in this economy. They also understand what it's like to actually participate and sometimes be on the giving side of some of the programs and services that are provided by the ministries of this fine government. For that reason, we understand that the amounts denoted here in supplementary supply estimates, which are clear as day, as transparent as can be, the exact opposite of a blank cheque, are going to provide services for the people of Alberta, Albertan taxpayer money dedicated to the services that Albertans need. The exact opposite of a blank cheque.

Again I want to remind all the members of this House that during second reading the members opposite actually voted against all of these things. I want to go through that list again because they're so important, Mr. Chair. The municipal sustainability initiative: they voted no. The wildfire disaster recovery and emergency assistance: they voted no. Child intervention, child care subsidy and supports: they voted no. Persons with disabilities and assured income for the severely handicapped: you guessed it; they voted no. Employment and income supports: they voted no. The provincial share of AgriInsurance premiums and indemnities: they voted no. I believe that those are going to help the rural constituents that many of them represent. Compensation increases for Royal Canadian Mounted Police and justices of the peace. They voted no, Mr. Chair. As well, Alberta production grants. And they voted no. It's hard for me to understand. They get up in this House, and they say: "Well, it's Alberta taxpayer dollars. It's not your money." So then why are they voting no for Albertans' money to go back to help Albertans?

Mr. Chair, I think it's time for all Albertans to really understand that government, unlike the members across, who would rather have less government and less regulation, which would lead to less safety . . . [interjection] Look at them laugh. They laugh when I say that it's going to lead to less safety because that's the way they look at it. That's their world view, their ideological view. They would prefer that there be less government. You know, they always lob across words onto this side of the House, saying that we're the ideological ones, that we make decisions based on ideology.

An Hon. Member: How much time left on the clock there?

Loyola: Don't worry. I've got enough time.

They like to claim that we're the ideological ones, but, Mr. Chair, I would say that they're the ideological ones, trying to put their ideological world view on all Albertans, when we know full well that the amounts being requested in the supplementary supply estimates are Alberta taxpayer dollars that are going back to help the Albertans that actually need it.

With that, I'll end, Mr. Chair. Thank you very much.

The Acting Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

I recognize the hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm not even really sure what that was, but back to supplementary supply, which the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie was attempting to discuss, I think. I think that's what he was trying to talk about. I'd like to explore the mortgage debt analogy that the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie spent a considerable portion of time discussing in the Chamber today. It was quite interesting, but I don't know where he was going

with it, to be honest. Let's talk about another little bit of economics. Let's talk about some debt. He seemed to indicate that nobody on this side of the House has ever had a mortgage. I don't know if that's true. I know I certainly had a mortgage.

Loyola: How is this relevant?

Mr. Nixon: How it's relevant is that I'm responding to the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, Mr. Chair, who you gave a tremendous amount of latitude as he spoke about the mortgage situation. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, if you'd like to rise again and speak, I'm sure we would listen with riveting attention again.

Mr. Chair, I would ask that the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie yield the floor. It's my turn now. I listened quietly while he presented. [interjections] I know the government is struggling to allow me to speak, Mr. Chair, but it's my right to speak in this Chamber on behalf of my constituents, and it's your responsibility to make sure that they allow me to speak.

The Acting Chair: Hon. members, the hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre has the floor.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Where I was going with this is that the mortgage analogy of borrowing money to be able to buy an asset, I think, is what the hon. member was referring to. He used a household analogy, which is fair. Actually, I think that the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays used a similar analogy earlier this afternoon. The problem with this point from the member is that he's forgetting about the incredible amount of debt and borrowing against my children's and my grandchildren's future that this government is undertaking.

4:50

Now, if you want to talk about household debt, if you have a mortgage for a few hundred thousand dollars for a family to purchase a home but then you continue to come home week after week, Mr. Chair, and you and your spouse or your partner determine that you're going to continue to borrow more money, hundreds of thousands of dollars every month over and over and over until it becomes millions or, in the case of this government, billions and eventually a hundred billion dollars, there are going to be significant consequences eventually to that because you're not going to be able to afford to make the payments. The interest is going to become a tremendous burden on your household. That's what's happening with this government.

We see it already happening right now. They're going to be between \$90 billion and a \$100 billion in debt in 2019, the next time that they go and face the boss, the people of Alberta, at the ballot box, and they're going to have to explain that level of debt. But the consequence of that debt is what generations of Albertans will be paying. Sadly, these members across the way will be long gone, and Albertans for generations will be paying the consequences as a result of these members' actions. They don't want to talk about that.

This was the point earlier from the Member for Calgary-Hays. They continue to come to this Chamber and ask for a blank cheque. Again, if you want to use a household mortgage example, if I come home every weekend from this place and my spouse is telling me, "Hey, we're going to continue to borrow more money and borrow more money and borrow more money," I certainly hope at some point she would say: "Whoa. What's going on here? We can't borrow money forever." You know, the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays did a great job talking about the blank cheque and the similar situation, which is what this government continues to ask for, with minimal details. They just say: "Hey. We'll bring in this. Give us this money. Just trust us. Everything is going to be okay."

What makes it worse, though, when you take it out of the personal analogy to somebody's house, as the member tried to do, is that this is about Albertans' money. It's not about his money. It's not about my money. It's not about the money of the people in this Chamber, though we are Albertans and do contribute through our tax base. It's about Albertans' money that they're spending. Not only are they going to be facing – unborn Albertans right now will be paying the consequences of this government's action. Albertans now are having their money spent.

The other issue that the hon. member raised is rural crime. What's interesting about the rural crime issue are a couple of things. The first is that this government for almost two years did absolutely nothing on the rural crime file while across the province people were being victimized and abused from every corner of this province, particularly in rural Alberta, particularly in central Alberta, where I'm from. Members have come and said over and over: "Hey. This has to get fixed. We have people who are being robbed. We have people that are being hurt and are scared in their homes, people whose acreages have been robbed four, five times, people – Mr. Chair, this is really interesting and sad – who have been robbed by the same person, even though that person has been convicted and then returned and robbed them.

Now, when I was Leader of the Opposition in this place, I brought forward an emergency debate motion that this government voted against or pushed so that it could not go to a vote, stood up against it. They didn't care about rural Alberta. The only time they started to care about rural Alberta, Mr. Chair, was when their poll numbers started to plummet, and now we see a government in mad panic. That's fine. I get it. They're trying to adjust the message, which is fine, but they have to be factual, which is that they have not stood up for Alberta on this issue for two years.

Now, the question is: can they do it now? I certainly hope that we will finally get to see this government start to make some improvements on that issue. The problem, though, is that nobody on that side of the aisle – nobody on that side of the aisle – has taken the time to come to town halls that are happening all across this province, to sit in those halls, to talk to constituents that are being robbed. I've had over a dozen with my Members of Parliament in my communities. At all those halls have been Members of Parliament, myself, municipal politicians, and local police officers, as well as senior police officers in the province of Alberta. What has been missing is government members. Not one government member at any of those halls, certainly not the minister, talking to the people that are being victimized right now.

If they had come to the hall, and this is why this is relevant to what we're discussing today, Mr. Chair, they would realize that one of the big issues – there are many issues when it comes to rural crime. It's not just a staffing issue. Staffing is part of it. One of the big issues, particularly when it comes to staffing, is that there are no officers coming out of the depot to fill these positions. There are no officers. Red Deer county, which I have the privilege of representing in this Chamber, and Lacombe county, which I also have the privilege of representing in this Chamber, have both been trying to spend their own money to buy officers. They went forward. They said that they've put it in their budget. They've earmarked some money for this issue. Two years have gone by: still no officers because there are no officers to fill it.

One of the great questions on this announcement is: where are those officers going to come from? Second, are they going to come from other areas of the province? Are we going to now make a situation worse in certain detachments because we have to pull those officers out and put them into a detachment? Very legitimate questions that should be asked, but this government won't go talk to the communities, so they're not able to ask.

The other thing they have not addressed at all when it comes to rural crime – I don't see anything in here about this emergency issue that we're seeing across rural Alberta – is this. Our police officers are being forced to play catch-and-release, which is fine when it comes to fishing. I'm an avid angler, Mr. Chair, as you know. Catch-and-release fishing is great, but it's not good when it comes to criminals. I've got officers all across rural Alberta, all across my communities right now who are catching criminals and bringing them to court. Those criminals are being convicted, and they're right back on the street revictimizing my community; 51 times is a story that I heard the other day, 51 times that somebody was convicted and back out robbing people in my communities.

The Justice minister has not picked up the phone once to call the federal Justice minister to say what is going on. This government has shown no plan on how to make property crime a serious issue in this province, how to stand up and make it a serious criminal issue with serious consequences if you're going to be robbing our farms. Instead, they want to stand up while debating interim supply and act like they're experts when it comes to a certain issue, and this is what concerns us, which is why we're asking questions about this interim supply that's in front of us. Clearly, from what they're saying, they have absolutely no clue. They have no clue.

Now, I resent it because we've seen it so much from this government. The communities that I represent in this place have seen it so much from this government. They come here and they act like they know what they're talking about. But they do not know what they're talking about. It started with Bill 6. How do we know that they know what they're talking about right now? That is why we come and we ask questions in this place. Instead, what we have is a government member standing up inside this place over and over and over talking about flat tax, which nobody has talked about. It's certainly not in interim supply. Talking about their ideological beliefs or what they believe that I believe, et cetera, is fine. It's interesting to listen to even though factually they're wrong more often than not. But how can we trust them when they're asking us to vote for this?

It is our responsibility – we're talking about billions of dollars, Mr. Chair – to come here and ask what is going on. When the government stands up and shows such a fundamental misunderstanding of something like rural crime and tries to act like they're experts on it despite the fact they haven't talked to anybody – they stay in Edmonton because they don't want to go out and talk to their constituents anymore. I don't know why. I suspect it's not pleasant. I don't know what's going on. Maybe Albertans are frustrated in their ridings like they are in mine. But to stand up in this House and act like you know what you're talking about when clearly you do not – how are you going to fill those officer positions? How is that going to happen? What are you doing about fixing the Criminal Code? What are you doing?

Ms McLean: That's federal.

Mr. Nixon: The hon. Minister of Service Alberta said that that's federal. You know what, Mr. Chair? The minister needs to get on the phone with the federal minister right now and say: our constituents are being victimized, and we need this changed. They shouldn't sit in this House and laugh about it. They should stand up and . . .

The Acting Chair: Hon. member, may I ask you to stay a little closer to the topic at hand, Bill 4. It goes both ways.

Mr. Nixon: Exactly, Mr. Chair. I think that's fair.

It's unfortunate that the government has participated in that. I am talking about the funding that is in this bill. The member across the

way who is presenting on behalf of the government has presented himself as knowing about the facts that are associated with this funding, but he does not know about what it is. He has just proven it. What he's saying is not true. I withdraw that, Mr. Chair. What he's saying is misrepresenting the facts or shows his misunderstanding of what is taking place. [interjection] You know, the Minister of Education is telling me to sit down. Again, Mr. Chair, I have the floor, not the minister.

Well, the minister may not want to or like to hear about what is going on or want to continue to make things up. That's disappointing. They've stood in this House repeatedly today and passed off that this document we're here to debate today has to do with these issues, but then when we stand up and we ask them questions, within minutes it falls apart. [interjections] Again, the Minister of Education is struggling because he wants us just to accept what they're saying, but it's not true.

An Hon. Member: That makes no sense.

Mr. Nixon: See, they say that it doesn't make sense. Well, Mr. Chair, if they took time to come and talk to some people in the community hall instead of sitting here in the Legislature underneath the dome, talk to real people that have been impacted, they'd find out very quickly that what they're saying is not the facts that are on the ground. They are not the facts. [interjection] The Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater is now upset. I was in his constituency on Saturday talking to people that have been robbed. They've been very clear that this is not true. I'm talking about the funding on this, which is what they were talking about. His constituents were extraordinarily clear how disappointed they are in this government and in him directly on how they've handled this issue. He does not understand this rural crime issue. He does not understand this rural crime issue. He does not.

5:00

Now, Mr. Chair, although they want to come and make this part of this debate, the funding – we keep asking: where is it? – it's not. You can't get officers in two years, so you're certainly not going to get them in the next few days before the budget is tabled. That's impossible. You would know that if you went out and talked to people. You would know that our detachments are operating under significant reduced percentages of officers already because so many are on leave for legitimate reasons – maternity, stress leave, et cetera – that is now compounding the issue of stress because they're short-handed. So we have a serious personnel problem.

The Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie wants to stand up and continue to attempt to say that he understands the rural crime issue. His facts are wrong. His facts are wrong. You can't get the officers in that time. He's not dealing with a revolving door inside the courts. No comment on how we're going to deal with the judiciary. No comment on how we're going to deal with large, spread-out detachments. No comment on how we're going to deal with the changing dynamic of the criminal element in our communities, which is now transient and working across our communities. It's not, you know, little . . .

Mr. Piquette: That's what the crime reduction units are for.

Mr. Nixon: I think the hon. member just heckled to me, "That's what harm reduction is for," but that's not what harm reduction is for. That's a different issue. I'll tell you what's harm reduction on this issue, Mr. Chair. It would be to have people that continue to rob our farms go to jail for stealing our property. That would be harm reduction.

The Acting Chair: Hon. member, we're rambling on a lot of different topics here. I wish we could stay on the central issue, Bill 4. This is the second time I've had to remind you.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Chair, fair. Back to Bill 4 and, specifically, what it may or may not fund.

The Acting Chair: So we'll stick to the matters at hand, and Bill 4 is the argument that we're speaking on.

Mr. Nixon: Well, what I'm speaking about, Mr. Chair, is directly on the comments that Edmonton-Ellerslie provided to us in regard to Bill 4, where he indicated all these crime issues that were being dealt with. I just listed a whole bunch of issues, and that's not being dealt with inside this bill. So the question is: what is being dealt with inside this bill if that's not what's being dealt with inside this bill? The hon. member should not stand up in this House and continue to say that those are the issues that are being dealt with in Bill 4 if they're not the issues that are being dealt with in Bill 4.

In closing, Mr. Chair, it's disappointing to continue to see a government bring forward a request for blank cheques repeatedly, not wanting to give out solid information on what's happening, taking issues from elsewhere and then trying to put them on the bill, but clearly, once you start to talk to them, they don't have a clue what they're talking about. They're just adding to it, pretending like they're champions with this bill, that this bill is now a champion for rural Alberta when it's not – this is about the bill – standing in this Chamber repeatedly talking about, you know, how they're going to deal with the rural crime issue though the bill has nothing to do with rural crime and they don't know how to deal with the issue. When we look at Bill 4, Mr. Chair, it has nothing to do with what the hon. member is referring to when we ask him questions.

Instead, what the government should do is stand up and actually talk about what Bill 4 actually has to do with, not continue to stand in this Chamber and tell us that it has to do with something that it does not. It's very counterproductive, very, very disappointing to continue to see the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie do that. I would also challenge him, Mr. Chair, to take some time to actually talk to some Albertans that are being impacted by rural crime and to talk to some police officers to see if their bill, Bill 4, actually will be addressing any of the issues.

Mr. Piquette: Have you talked to any RCMP officers?

Mr. Nixon: Again, I mean, I don't know why the hon. member from Athabasca is so upset. I've been in his constituency. They're worried about the same thing that I'm worried about. I gave a speech there on Saturday, and all the questions and answers were about confusion about what the government is doing on this file, that they have now presented to say that that's what they're dealing with here. If that's what they're dealing with here, how are you dealing with it? You say that you're dealing with rural crime in this bill. How are you dealing with it? How are you dealing with the RCMP officer shortages? How are you dealing with the problems we have with the judiciary? How are you dealing with the capacity issues that we have in courthouses? How are you dealing with the fact that property crime is not taken seriously in our communities? How are you dealing with the fact of the drug issues that we're seeing that are causing crime in our communities? And the list goes on and on.

So if that's what this bill is about, the question to the government is: how does this bill address all of those issues? At this point they've shown no evidence of that. They've shown no evidence of that in this bill.

Mrs. Littlewood: Harm reduction, health.

Mr. Nixon: The Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville just heckled at me that it's got, again, to do with harm reduction. In Nordegg, where the store is getting robbed every week, the harm reduction techniques this government is looking at in Calgary and Edmonton are not going to help the people in Nordegg.

That, again, shows me, Mr. Chair, that this government doesn't even know what this bill is. The members that are sitting here debating it don't even know what this bill is. They want to pass themselves off as experts and say that this bill is bringing in harm reduction – I don't see anywhere in here about harm reduction, but if that's their argument, then let's look at that – and that that will somehow address crime west of Rocky Mountain House or in Ponoka county. It's gotten so bad now in Lacombe county and Ponoka county that citizens have to work together to patrol around the clock to protect their properties and to protect their neighbours. Could you explain to me how that bill will deal with that issue between now and when the budget is tabled on Thursday?

It is a ridiculous argument that the hon. member keeps making. He can make it, but he should at least make sure that he understands the full rural crime issue. Police officers are just a start; they're one small part of it. There are no police officers in the depot to fill those positions. It's the RCMP that say that. It comes up at every town hall. I hope that the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie will come. I think there's another one coming up next week, during the constituency break, around Rocky Mountain House. He's welcome to come and visit us in Rocky Mountain House and hear from the people that are concerned about this issue. It would be enlightening for him, I'm sure, and would help him in the future when he's talking about bills to not bring something to a bill that has absolutely nothing to do with the bill.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

The Acting Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there other hon. members who wish to speak to Bill 4?

Are you ready for the question?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

[The clauses of Bill 4 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Acting Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Acting Chair: Opposed? Carried.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Chair. At this time I'd like to move that the committee rise and report.

The Acting Chair: Hon. member, did you mean to say to rise and report bills 3 and 4?

Ms Larivee: Yes, to rise and report bills 3 and 4.

The Acting Chair: Thank you.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Dach in the chair]

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

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bills: Bill 3 and Bill 4.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

5:10 **Consideration of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor's Speech**

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

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

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

[Adjourned debate March 13: Ms Ganley]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

Mr. Rosendahl: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to address my response to the Speech from the Throne. I'm honoured to rise today in the traditional territory of Treaty 6 peoples. I would also like to acknowledge that this land is important to the Métis nations of Alberta.

Along with other Albertans, elected members of this Legislature, and the members of my NDP caucus, I have been considering commitments made by our government in Thursday's Speech from the Throne. I was very pleased and impressed by pledges made to the women of this province and our government's decision to make choices that were in the best interests of families during the downturn. A century ago Alberta was the first province in Canada to elect women to its Legislature. Today we enjoy the most women in cabinet positions and in a provincial caucus in Canadian history. Our government continues to recognize the contributions that all women make to families and communities across Alberta. We are working hard to ensure that women feel safe at home and at work everywhere in this province. Our government takes this very seriously.

Our government faced very difficult challenges when we first came into office. Oil prices were at an all-time low. Schools, hospitals, seniors' facilities, roads, bridges had been neglected and allowed to fall into disrepair under the previous government. In response we expanded and upgraded the Grande Cache high school, which now has an enhanced trades training facility, which would have been left from the previous government. We also completed new facilities for high school and French immersion in Jasper, complete with solar panels on the roof to help with greening the economy and greening for the school.

We completed the new hospital and are building a new medical clinic and a new seniors' facility in Edson. AHS purchased the Mountain View seniors' home from the Good Samaritan Society and brought long-term care back to Hinton, which was missing for many, many years, the only community in West Yellowhead that didn't have it. We have built and renovated library facilities for Jasper and Grande Cache. Our government has funded upgrades to water treatment, sewage management systems in Grande Cache, Marlboro, Edson, Yellowhead county, Hinton, and Jasper.

Our commitment to developing and repairing infrastructure during the downturn was a very good idea because costs were lower than during the boom times. It was a great investment and proved very worth while in West Yellowhead. This work created and maintained employment and business income during a most challenging economic time, supporting families and communities dealing with unemployment and economic hardship. I can relate that to the community of Grande Cache. I am proud to be part of a government that put the needs of Alberta families first and successfully took on the task of prudently managing our economy and resources towards stable economic growth.

As the Lieutenant Governor noted, things are continuing to look up. Several successful free-enterprise banks agree, and here's what they're saying. Regarding Alberta's economy, RBC's December 2017 economic outlook report states: "We expect key economic sectors such as energy and capital investment to reach a more sustainable 'cruising speed' after their initial post-recession blast-off in 2017." Great news. RBC also states: "We project slightly faster growth in employment in 2018 (1.2%) compared to 2017 (1.0%) as the recovery spreads to more [sections] of the economy."

TD Canada in their provincial economic report *Walking Tall into 2018* says, "Alberta is in the midst of a sharp rebound after contracting by 3.7% in each of the last two years." TD also stated: "Strength has been fairly widespread across industries, with manufacturing, retail, housing, and exports all gaining momentum."

Given these realities I'm very confused as to why the Leader of the Official Opposition continues to claim that our government is driving economic activity out of Alberta. I'm totally confused why they keep pushing that idea. I am happy that our government will continue to work to diversify our economy, especially in the energy sector, most notably by committing unequivocally to ensuring Canadian tidewater access for Alberta energy through the construction of the Kinder Morgan pipeline. Our Premier has stated that she will go as far as Peter Lougheed did when he faced a similar threat in the '80s. It's quite a commitment. The Kinder Morgan pipeline will be built.

This pipeline will pass through West Yellowhead and ensure unprecedented economic benefits for my constituents. Many construction jobs will be created. Businesses across West Yellowhead will enjoy the tremendous economic benefits. Moving our energy resources to tidewater will result in us receiving fairer prices for our products, putting more money into the pockets of Albertans, ensuring long-term economic viability for all communities. It will promote higher levels of investment by industry and support diversification of our energy sector, which has been ignored for many years. As the Lieutenant Governor noted, we will be forging a path to balanced budgets and a way forward that avoids our province's boom-and-bust history and wild swings in government spending that create so much uncertainty for Albertans.

I am proud that our government has worked and will continue to work to expand and diversify our economy on all fronts, including electricity, energy, manufacturing, tourism, technology, and many other sectors. I'll give you some examples in West Yellowhead: \$200 million worth of upgrades to highway 40, which is long overdue. What about the replacement of the blue bridge, which has been requested for years and ignored by the previous government? This bridge will improve access to Grande Cache and area for energy, forestry, and tourism industries. That old blue bridge has been there forever.

5:20

Coal transition funding assists workers and communities with expanding their economic options as we move towards a greener

economy. Turning Point Generation, a private, for-profit enterprise, for example, is spending \$20 million to build a green power storage facility near Hinton, a great economic benefit, a great issue for greening the economy because of this project.

Here's another one. The town of Hinton has partnered with the province and private, for-profit industry to develop a groundbreaking geothermal energy project in their area. This will utilize abandoned and orphaned oil wells to access thermal energy which lies close to the surface in the region and is expected to bring construction jobs, to save money to heat buildings, with the possibility of growing food, of greenhouses, and another possibility of producing electrical energy.

Loyola: And what's wrong with that?

Mr. Rosendahl: Yeah. What's wrong with that?

Our government is committed to diversification through expanding education and training, business development, and working to improve equality for all Albertans. We're supporting Grande Prairie Regional College with transitioning to university degree granting status and setting up a local campus in Grande Cache, which will help the people in Grande Cache to get degrees and other university training. Hinton will see a full social work degree program come to West Yellowhead in September 2019, which I've been pushing for with GPRC. I personally worked with Grande Prairie Regional College to bring a dual credit entry-level trades training program to Edson in 2017 and class 1 driver training in Grande Cache to help the residents up there when they got laid off from the mines so that they could seek additional training to look for other work.

To support the forest industry, we have committed extensive resources and are partnering with the town of Hinton to contain the mountain pine beetle, which is now in our area and which is a serious problem for our forestry sector.

We're also seeing the development of a new coal mine – oh, but we hate coal, right? – a brand new mine opening up east of Hinton, Cline energy. I just saw huge pieces of equipment that were taken up to the mine last week. But we don't like coal, really.

We're working hard also to promote tourism and other non energy related options; for example, developing access to the dinosaur tracks up in Grande Cache. How many people even know that we have dinosaur tracks up in Grande Cache? It's a huge tourism opportunity that we can be taking advantage of.

We have also made many commitments and contributions to nonprofit, community-supporting organizations across West Yellowhead.

We have been working hard to create a balance between protecting the environment, caribou populations, and the needs of industry. Jobs are important in our area, especially in the forestry sector and oil and gas, work in that area where the caribou are.

We have committed to make government work for Albertans. We continue to honour our commitments to all Albertans, including those who are marginalized and vulnerable. We have committed to protecting Albertans from crime, especially in rural areas. We know that we've got lots of work to do on that, but we continue to work on that.

Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Under 29(2)(a)?

Mr. Sucha: I think the Member for West Yellowhead has some other insightful comments that he would like to share about his constituency and some of the benefits that he's been seeing.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

Mr. Rosendahl: Well, thank you. I do have a few more, for sure. The other thing is that we continue to work with indigenous peoples and all Albertans, like we said, to address the inequality and combat also the opioid crisis that exists in our area. We've got to really work hard on this. We are committed to bringing a safe injection site to Edson, which the Leader of the Official Opposition disagrees with, but we're promoting this because it will help reduce crime and save lives. As the Lieutenant Governor said in the throne speech, "This recovery is proving things can be done differently and that good things happen when governments proudly stand [up] on the side of working Albertans." I am proud that our government is committed to working together and looking to the future with optimism.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

I'll recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway.

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was a wonderful speech.

Mr. Sucha: It's 29(2)(a).

Mr. Gill: Oh, is it 29(2)(a)? Sorry. I will sit down.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Under 29(2)(a), any hon. members wishing to speak?

All right. Other hon. members wishing to speak?

Now I'll recognize the Member for Calgary-Greenway.

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to provide a response to the Speech from the Throne. I would like to point out two statements from the Speech from the Throne and to specifically discuss these two points. "When government fails to work for people, inequality rises." The members on the other side of the Chamber may be surprised to learn that, actually, we also agree with that statement that when government fails to work for people, inequality rises. Yes, we do agree. However, I question how much the government agrees with this statement. This is their own.

Let me explain why I ask this. This government has taken an incredibly big step – it's a big one – to introduce a carbon tax. That is the opposite of the people's mandate. Two-thirds of Albertans do not want this carbon tax, so why do we still have that? If we go back to that quotation, it is clear that this unfair carbon tax creates inequality. As the UCP critic for Seniors and Housing I will point to some of the serious problems the carbon tax is creating for our seniors, the seniors who helped to build this province. Now those seniors are facing challenges because of this carbon tax imposed by this socialist government.

Here's an inexcusable example that relates to those rebates that this NDP government boasts about every time seniors and the carbon tax are mentioned together. Mr. Speaker, the minister of seniors signed a ministerial order in July that claws back a portion of rebates for seniors living in subsidized housing. How is that, like, fair to seniors? Is that creating equality or inequality? Maybe the government can answer that. The most vulnerable seniors are seeing that these rebates are being clawed back. These are the fine folks who helped build this awesome province. The clawback is occurring because seniors have to declare the rebate as income, and their rent is based on their income.

5:30

Mr. Speaker, when the NDP trumpet their carbon tax rebates, I believe it is important for Albertans to know that the government is

giving and taking at the same time. How is it creating equality? By the way, it is not just seniors facing this clawback. Other Albertans, like single mothers, have to declare income, too.

This move by the Minister of Seniors and Housing was done so quietly. No doubt the minister would have preferred not to shed light on this ministerial order she signed. They claim to shed light on every other single thing. Why not discuss this with Albertans when she signed this ministerial order to claw this back from seniors?

Interestingly, Mr. Speaker, this year's Speech from the Throne does not even mention the carbon levy – let me use the NDP word here; I'm sorry – the rebate, but last year's did. I'll quote: "All the while, carbon levy rebates will continue going right to the bank accounts of two-thirds of Alberta households." Rebates are going, quote, right back to the accounts of Albertans, unquote, but it's not staying in their accounts because the government is clawing it back. I don't understand. Like, what is this government trying to claim here? [interjections] Well, let's depart from that point now. I see the heckling started on the other side because it's a bit of a sensitive topic for the government side because they didn't campaign on the carbon tax in the 2015 election.

Let's depart from that point and look at the other inequalities created by the carbon tax that the government no longer wants to talk about. I'll just mention a couple, rural residents and small businesses. Our hon. House leader talked at great length today about the seriousness of crime in rural areas. Rural residents were told – and I still can't believe this – that if they want to avoid the effect of the carbon tax, they should simply take a bus. Like, seriously? Who would say something like this to a resident who's never seen transit on their gravel driveways, range roads? It was coming not from a backbencher, the usual hecklers; it was coming from the Premier herself. That is even more disturbing, disrespecting of rural residents. This statement still echoes in the ears of rural Albertans. Let me tell you that they will remember that whenever the next election is held. They will.

As for small business, no talk about it. They have been crushed by a cascade of legislation, costs associated with it. The carbon tax is one of many unfair impositions. Yet – I repeat – the carbon tax, which continues to resonate through our economy and hurts individuals, including seniors and rural residents, was not mentioned in this year's Speech from the Throne. Perhaps this NDP believes that if it stops acknowledging its presence, probably Albertans will forget about it. I don't think so. That's wrong.

Mr. Speaker, let them continue to think that way if they wish. We in the UCP will continue to address it in this Chamber and when we go to our constituents across this province. And in a little more than a year, when people have a mandate, they will address that issue. We will not stop fighting on behalf of them because this is not the right thing to do. Perhaps the tax isn't mentioned because the NDP realizes that really there's no need for it. It has damaged them politically, so now let's not talk about it. The Premier still hasn't answered the Leader of the Official Opposition on how high she wants to go, because we've all seen that it hasn't brought us any pipelines.

Every time in QP the government side stands up – and last session, like, we were almost getting tired of seeing two fingers and two pipelines. Every question has the answer, "We got two pipelines approved." We see that Tzeponah Berman and Karen Mahon, the same people this government appointed, are protesting in Burnaby. It has brought them no pipeline. This government wanted Albertans to think that the carbon tax equals pipelines, but that'll never happen. The environment foundation: it doesn't exist.

Mr. Speaker, I'm curious. The NDP mentioned the carbon tax in the last two throne speeches but not this one. I don't know. The

other one that didn't include a carbon tax plan and all the great things that it was going to do for Alberta was the first one, in June 2015. I wasn't here at that time. I don't remember that. It seems that we have come full circle now. This government is kind of, like, realizing how out of touch they are from average Albertans, that their socialist ideology, NDP world view is actually kind of, like, getting push-back, so maybe we need to stop hiding stuff. That's why the minister of seniors, when she signs a ministerial order to claw back from seniors, does not announce it to the public. That's why the Speech from the Throne this year does not have a carbon tax or levy, whatever you want to call it, sir.

We have one more Speech from the Throne from this government. Will it announce that it is going to be \$50 per tonne, the carbon tax? Is it going to go that high? I don't know. Why didn't the government disclose this in the throne speech?

Or will the government actually take advice from the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed, our leader, and then, you know, just scrap the tax? So far they have been following advice, when we talk about the wine ban and taking the repercussion approach. Our leader has said that if B.C. does not work with us, there will be serious consequences. At that time, the Premier said: this member wants to build a wall around Alberta, and hopefully he probably also wants B.C. to pay for it. That was her stand, but now she wants to talk about the same thing. Hopefully, the government and the Premier herself will listen to our leader and maybe cut the carbon tax, but that is a question for another time.

Thank you very much for this opportunity, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there other hon. members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?
The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

Mr. Westhead: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think I might have heard the hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway say that rural crime wasn't mentioned in the throne speech. I want to give him an opportunity to correct the record because it was actually mentioned in the throne speech, and I will read an excerpt just to refresh his memory. It says:

Across Alberta, from our rural communities to our urban centres, every Albertan deserves to feel safe. Today in Alberta, especially in rural areas, people are concerned for the safety of their homes, their property, and the well-being of those they love. That must change.

Your government invests more than half a billion dollars annually into police services across the province. Our police officers serve and protect Albertans with a bravery and dedication that is unmatched.

I just wanted to make sure that the member knew and give him an opportunity, if he wanted to, to correct his remarks.

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

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I did mention the impact of the carbon tax on rural Albertans. I didn't say that rural Albertans were not mentioned in the throne speech.

An Hon. Member: Rural crime.

5:40

Mr. Gill: Rural crime. No, no. I just meant the carbon tax impact on that and then how the Official Opposition House Leader talked about rural crime. That was the comment on that.

Again, my comment was on how the Premier wanted rural Albertans to take a bus, like, if you're being impacted by the carbon tax, just take a bus. That was what I was saying. And another: the environment minister said that if you want to contribute to lowering greenhouse gas emissions, maybe eat less meat. But I didn't talk

about that. I mean, like, we're talking about taking freedom away here. You know, Fortis et Liber, strong and free: Mr. Speaker, that is the coat of arms of our province. We're telling people to take the bus. We're telling Albertans who built this amazing province to eat less meat, take a bus. What kind of a province are we creating for our future generation?

Hopefully, I answered the hon. member's question. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Under 29(2)(a), are there other hon. members wishing to speak?

The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm actually going to respond to the Speech from the Throne, unlike the previous speaker. I cannot really figure out how the speech was a response to the throne speech. It was a rant against his favourite subject, which is the carbon levy. It really wasn't a response to the Speech from the Throne. It wasn't something that would really inspire me as an Albertan to figure out that things are happening in Alberta that are good for Albertans.

I am actually going to respond to the throne speech because I think it was a really good throne speech. The Lieutenant Governor read it and recognized the work that Albertans from all corners of the province are doing. We all know that the Lieutenant Governor is very dedicated to recognizing the volunteerism that makes our Alberta communities great and attractive to all parts of Canada and the world. The previous member who spoke and I share something in common. We actually chose to come to Canada and to make our home in Alberta because we know the values that Albertans have and what a great place Alberta is.

The work the government is doing, as highlighted by the Speech from the Throne, which is the real purpose of the Speech from the Throne, is to ensure Canadian tidewater access for Alberta's natural resources. That is very important to my constituency and to my fellow Industrial Heartland MLAs. Actually, I would hope that every single one of the 85 MLAs in this Assembly also thinks that access to tidewater for our oil and gas is very, very important. It is at the heart of our ability to ensure all the services that we enjoy, from the preschools to postsecondary education, the hospitals and community-based health care, the roads and bridges in all of our constituencies, the emergency services, support for Albertans who need income assistance, who need counselling and affordable housing.

The Trans Mountain pipeline is also crucial to those seniors which the hon. member mentioned. Without the Trans Mountain pipeline we cannot build the long-term care, the assisted living, or the lodges that our seniors need. The constituents that I have spoken to have really appreciated and supported the throne speech's strong language on defending all workers and remaining vigilant that there are no roadblocks to getting this pipeline built.

The government's support for diversification of the petrochemical industry has already borne fruit in the Industrial Heartland and in the area around Red Deer, and I'm hoping that it will bear fruit in the Grande Prairie area, too. We all know that Inter Pipeline has started to build its facility. The building of the Inter Pipeline facility will ensure that many workers are kept employed over the next few years and will, of course, also add value to our economy by processing the feedstock into value-added products.

Mr. Speaker, I personally find it so depressing when members of the opposition are constantly refusing to accept the factual information that the Alberta economy is doing much better and that we're on the path towards recovery. We know that the recovery is not affecting everyone equally, in the same way. But the

government's focus on economic diversification will mean that in the years to come a great variety of employment opportunities will be available to all Albertans and there will be opportunities for retraining.

One group of workers that I really admire is the oil and gas workers who have formed Iron and Earth. Knowing that they needed to explore employment in the renewable energy sector, they are creating new employment opportunities for themselves. If you don't know this organization, I would really urge you to find out more about them. This is one example of how Albertans are embracing the energy diversification opportunities available in the renewable energy sector.

The government's leadership on the need to diversify Alberta's economy is recognized world-wide. Provinces and countries which have not diversified their economy have stagnant GDPs and find it hard to find employment opportunities for all of their population. The government has recognized that diversification requires a diversity of tools, including the capital investment tax credit, job creation in new industries, and investment in postsecondary education for these industries. What I appreciate so much about the Speech from the Throne and the work of the government is that the government has realized it's not one simple solution, but it has to be a whole panel of solutions to be able to restart the economy and to ensure employment for everyone.

As parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Education I have been able to see first-hand how important the investment in schools and education is to rural and urban Albertans. Young people are the greatest resource to communities, and investment in their education and well-being is an investment in the future of our communities and the entire economy of Alberta. That's why the investment in infrastructure for schools has been so important to the future of the economy of Alberta.

Last month I visited Greenshields, near High Prairie. This small community worked hard to put together the resources to build a public separate school, community theatre, fitness, and ice arena together in one building with many multi-use spaces. This is the kind of infrastructure investment that will benefit students, seniors, families, and businesses in Greenshields and the surrounding areas for generations to come. The investment in education, infrastructure, and classroom improvement is and will continue to benefit Albertans. Mr. Speaker, this is the kind of investment that the Speech from the Throne speaks about.

The throne speech reminds us all of the work the government has done to put regular people first. Long-standing executive perks and insider excess has been eliminated. Salaries for executive and board members have been reduced, and this is an ongoing exercise, as the Minister of Advanced Education has been speaking about the excess salaries in universities. Unions and corporate donations have been eliminated from the political donation area, and the Lobbyists Act will be reformed in the coming session.

Mr. Speaker, I am so personally grateful for the work that the government is doing on the opioid crisis. Guided by the emergency response commission made up of a diverse group of Albertans, the government is continuing to initiate addiction programs, including the proposed safe injection sites. I am so thankful that the government chose to put an opioid treatment program in the Strathcona community hospital. Addictions affect all parts of Alberta, and the government has recognized the need in rural Alberta. I am dismayed when I hear members of the opposition speak against the harm reduction approach of the government and the innovative programs offered such as safe injection sites, needle exchanges, and the prescription of alcohol to treat alcohol addiction at the Royal Alex hospital.

We all come to our role as MLAs from various backgrounds. Mine has included working with communities to create programs to support these addictions, and I know that it's never easy to create the right programs in the right places to meet those with addictions. I just want to commend the government for taking this issue seriously and using a diversity of approaches in different communities. I hope not to hear any more negative comments from the opposition.

5:50

Mr. Speaker, I hope that all Albertans will read the Speech from the Throne and see the optimism in the economic recovery, opportunities for diversification and new jobs, investment in education, addressing of inequality, and unwavering commitment to the Trans Mountain pipeline. I think we as MLAs have to demonstrate to Albertans that we are optimistic, that we really believe in the work that the government is doing, that we believe in the work that our industries are doing, our nonprofits and so on. It's really our role to be optimistic and to try to work hard. It is not our role to be constantly putting things down and to be so depressing about what's happening in Alberta.

There are so many good things happening here. You can just come to my riding and see what's happening in the Industrial Heartland. Mr. Speaker, the pipeline we talk about every day is actually starting in Sherwood Park. Maybe some of you didn't know that. The Trans Mountain pipeline starts in my riding, so I have a lot at stake with it. It will actually pass close to my constituency office, in the utility corridor that runs by my office. For me, I am optimistic that I will look and see the construction from my office windows.

I urge every member of this House to be optimistic and to work hard to ensure that the program the government has proposed in the Speech from the Throne becomes a reality.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Any questions, comments under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Loyola: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I was so intrigued by the member's speech in response to the Speech from the Throne. I was so intrigued as well that she added that the new pipeline is actually going to start right in her riding. I'm hoping that she could comment on that, the importance of the fact that the pipeline is starting in her riding and what that means to the constituents of her fine riding. I'm also hoping that if she doesn't mind – I know that she has dedicated an enormous amount of time and effort to NGOs, working with several NGOs throughout her life. If she could comment on both those things, I would really appreciate it.

Thank you.

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, hon. member. Yeah, I actually would like to speak maybe a little bit more about the role that NGOs are playing around sustainability. Today I tabled documents from an organization in Calgary called Momentum. Momentum has been leading this work with nonprofit organizations in terms of ensuring that our nonprofit organizations are also becoming very sustainable, that they do not use a lot of paper, that they use renewable energy, that they source locally and so on. It's really a passion of mine.

I've heard too many negative comments from the members opposite about our nonprofit organizations. For me, nonprofit organizations are actually leaders in our community. I would like to really encourage everyone in this House to work with our nonprofits to ensure that they become sustainable not only in their environmental practices but also in their economic sustainability. I

do want to encourage you to read the information that I've tabled today from Momentum and to share that with your own nonprofits.

You know, I think we all know the area around Baseline. It's an area that I actually share with the Minister of Advanced Education. We can see the refineries. The Imperial refinery, which is in my riding, is actually one of the oldest urban refineries. Then we have the Suncor refinery. We probably have all seen the big tanks that contain the oil. We see a lot of not only the refineries but the shops that produce a lot of the material that is being used in the refineries. We actually also have in our riding AltaSteel, which is a company that takes the steel that has been used and melts it down and constructs new rebar.

I would urge all members to not only explore the riding but to also see the part that I love the best about Baseline Road, the pipeline bridge. I don't know how many of the members have seen the pipeline bridge, but I believe this is where the new Trans Mountain pipeline is going to go, from one side of Baseline to the other. That's why I'm so passionate and I'm so thankful for the work that the government is doing to ensure that our oil and gas get to tidewater.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Under 29(2)(a), any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Mr. Yao: Thank you so much. I would like a 29(2)(a) to the hon. Member for Sherwood Park. You mentioned that you like social profits and nonprofits. When I was the seniors critic a few years ago, I met with a large group of nonprofits that were specific to seniors, and they told me they met with a member from the government side. It was the Member for Sherwood Park that they actually met. The comment they made to me that was made by

possibly yourself, and I would like you to confirm these comments . . .

An Hon. Member: Does this have to do with the throne speech?

Mr. Yao: Well, it certainly has to do with her comments that she just made right now.

The comments made by these nonprofits were that they were told that this government does not like nonprofits because they take away union jobs. Yes. So I'd like you to confirm that for me. I got this information from the nonprofits, including some very established people. I would like to know that. I would like to understand why you would make such comments to such a group. They did confirm for me that it was the Member for Sherwood Park that said that. I would love to hear about your explanation that you gave these nonprofits, these groups that are focused on providing services to seniors.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Bilous: I appreciate the title, but I'm no longer the Deputy Government House Leader. The discussion on the Speech from the Throne responses have been very, very interesting, and I move that we adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

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

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At this time I'd like to move that we adjourn the House for the evening until 1:30 tomorrow afternoon.

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

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