



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Fourth Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, April 3, 2018

Day 10

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta**  
**The 29th Legislature**

Fourth Session

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

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Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (NDP)  
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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, April 3, 2018

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Good afternoon.

Hon. members, ladies and gentlemen, we will now be led in the singing of our national anthem by Mr. R.J. Chambers. I would invite all to participate in the language of your choice.

**Hon. Members:**

O Canada, our home and native land!  
 True patriot love in all of us command.  
 Car ton bras sait porter l'épée,  
 Il sait porter la croix!  
 Ton histoire est une épopée  
 Des plus brillants exploits.  
 God keep our land glorious and free!  
 O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.  
 O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

**The Speaker:** Thank you. Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

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

**Loyola:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to all the members of the House I'm very pleased to stand today and introduce 38 students from the wonderful school of Meyokumin in Edmonton-Ellerslie. They're accompanied by their teachers, Brianna Orchin and Kristine Anderson, as well as their chaperone, Seema Saini. I would like them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

**Mrs. Littlewood:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you students and teachers and chaperones of Fort Saskatchewan elementary school. They're accompanied by Mrs. Alanna Lutz, Ms Bartsch, Mrs. Laura Simpson, Mrs. Carol Kaehn, and Miss C.J. Barnes. I would like to thank them for the opportunity to visit with them at school just a few short weeks ago. We talked a lot about provincial politics and, I'm sure to their most benefit, how to convince others – probably, namely, their teachers and parents – of your arguments. Thank you so much for joining us here at the Legislature. I would ask everyone to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Hon. members, are there any other school groups today?

Seeing and hearing none, the Minister of Children's Services.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my privilege to introduce to you today and through you to all members of this Assembly three constituents of mine who also happen to be good friends of my colleague the Minister of Environment and Parks: Erika, Katarina, and Matthew Holden. Matthew works for Community and Social Services and lives in Widewater, just outside of Slave Lake, on an acreage with his family. He's joined today by Erika, a grade 6 student who has a big role in her upcoming school play at E.G. Wahlstrom. Erika wants to be a vet, so she spends a lot of time caring for her family's animals. Matthew is also joined by Katarina, a grade 8 student at Roland Michener, who

travelled to Fort McMurray this winter to compete in the Alberta Games as a wrestler. Katarina is also active in her school's band and GSA. Like me and my family, the Holdens love spending their time enjoying the great outdoors, skiing and hiking around Lesser Slave Lake. I now ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

**Ms Miller:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Mr. Mark Jones. Mark has served Red Deer in so many ways. He recently retired from the Red Deer public school division after a 34-year career there. He was a board chair of city parks and rec, past VP of Red Deer Minor Hockey, is the current president of the Red Deer Tennis Club, and also sits on the Alberta Motor Association board. Mark is now the CEO of the Central Alberta Child Advocacy Centre, which works with many partners to support children, youth, and families impacted by sexual abuse, physical abuse, and neglect. I thank the Central Alberta Child Advocacy Centre for the critical work they do and ask Mr. Jones to now rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Health and Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize our province's oncology nurses and the specialized care that they provide to Albertans every day. Today is Oncology Nursing Day. These nurses are a critical part of our health care system, and we value the work they do to provide quality, person-centred care. I am grateful to the more than 1,000 registered nurses, including nurse practitioners, who work in oncology and cancer care units across this province for providing information, compassion, and care to Albertans when they need it most. I'd like to invite Linda Watson, president of the Canadian Association of Nurses in Oncology, along with Elysa, Janice, Jennifer, Nanette, Karina, Nicole, Bronwen, Anna, and Louise to please rise and receive our warm welcome and our appreciation.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Associate Minister of Health.

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you key members, partners, and volunteers of Autism Edmonton in recognition of world autism day. Thanks to organizations like Autism Edmonton, Albertans living with autism as well as their friends and family have a place to get vital information and resources to help them recognize and understand autism. Autism Edmonton also offers empathetic support and help to understand the unique and often complex situations faced by people affected by autism. I encourage all Albertans to educate themselves and those around them about autism so that we can accept and normalize autism in our communities. I would ask David Jardine, president, along with the other Autism Edmonton advocates to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Joining us today are leaders from Alberta's largest student advocacy groups, the Alberta Students' Executive Council and the Council of Alberta University

Students. I've had the pleasure of working with some of these folks for a couple of years now, achieving meaningful progress on issues like freezing tuition and student mental health funding, and I look forward to working with the incoming executive in the coming year. My guests are – and I will apologize in advance for any errors or omissions in the names – Ian Lee, Nicholas Newnes, Alex Dimopoulos, Rachel Moerschfelder, Doris Car, Naomi Pela, Alysson Torres-Gillett, Laura Hebert, Marlene Morin, Brenda Needham, Kayla Gale, Garrett Koehler, Daniel Caine, Reed Larsen, Conner Peta, Parvin Sedighi, Stephanie Nedoshytko, Marina Banister, Branden Cave, Puncham Judge, Shifrah Gadamsetti, Aria Burrell, and Hailey Babb. I ask that my guests please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Great. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I was just on my way to send you a note to ask you if I can rise and introduce two guests to you and through you to all members of the Assembly, two incredibly hard-working women who I'm very, very proud of. One is my sister Elysa Meeke, who is an oncology nurse, as well as my cousin Linda Watson, who is the president of the Canadian association. I'm thrilled to have them join us here today. I'd ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased today to introduce to you and through you to everybody in this Assembly two people that are very close to my heart, my son Christopher Carlier and his wife, Amanda McArthur, from Regina, Saskatchewan, where Christopher is a 10-year employee of GasBuddy and Mandy is a music teacher in the public school system. I'll ask them now to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Are there any other guests today, hon. members? The Member for Calgary-Klein.

1:40

**Mr. Coolahan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two Mount Royal University students dedicated to keeping GSAs, climate change, and a strong economic recovery on the provincial agenda. Olga Barceló is the president of the Mount Royal New Democrats, and Henry Wearmouth is the vice-president external of the Mount Royal New Democrats. I ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of the House a very active and ambitious and vocal person in the Grande Prairie-Wapiti constituency. I'd like to introduce to you Maurissa Hietland. If she could stand and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

### Members' Statements

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

### Central Alberta Child Advocacy Centre

**Ms Miller:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I am honoured to speak about the Central Alberta Child Advocacy Centre in Red Deer. The CACAC is a not-for-profit organization that works in partnership with the central region child services, Alberta Health Services, Alberta Justice, Alberta Education, and the RCMP to better serve children, youth, and families impacted by sexual abuse and the most serious and complex cases of physical abuse and neglect. Because CACAC works collaboratively with such partners, they are able to achieve greater results than anybody could on their own. They're able to combine expertise in investigation, treatment, prevention, education, and research to provide an integrated approach wrapping around children and always working in the best interest of the child.

The CACAC opened its doors November 29, 2017, and has since then triaged over 90 cases with their multidisciplinary team and completed 60 forensic child interviews. In a collaborative effort 28 criminal charges have been laid in 16 different files. In 60 per cent of the cases the primary type of abuse has been sexual abuse, 20 per cent physical abuse, and 20 per cent has been neglect, sexualized behaviours, drug endangerment, and sexual exploitation; 70 per cent of offenders are interfamilial or are related to the child. While the highest number of case files have been children in the 10- to 13-year range, the youngest victim has been a one-year-old child.

The CACAC currently serves five zones, ranging from Clearwater county in the west to the Saskatchewan border and from as far north as Drayton Valley and Vermilion to down past Drumheller, serving a population of over 332,000 Alberta children. I would like to thank them . . .

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

The hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway.

### Conservative Government Achievements

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When the NDP speak in this House or in public, they like to point out the 44 years of Conservative governance as having done nothing for our province. It is unfortunate that they insist on making those comments because in doing so, they are disrespecting the legacies of fine Premiers like Ralph Klein and Peter Lougheed. Since the NDP insist on taking this tack, I would like to highlight some of the things that Conservatives have accomplished to make Alberta the envy of the world.

Hundreds of thousands of immigrants who come here from other parts of the world have benefited from the Conservative legacy. Let's start with the fact that Alberta still has no sales tax. That reality, Mr. Speaker, is thanks to 44 years of Conservative service to the people of Alberta.

Let's specifically look at the debt-free legacy left by Premier Klein and, on top of that, hundreds of billions of dollars contributed in equalization payments to Ottawa during that period.

We all remember when Premier Lougheed stood against the federal Liberal government for their attack on our resources, and now this NDP government has made the Trudeau Liberals their allies, when Justin Trudeau is not only sitting on his hands while B.C. attempts to block the Trans Mountain pipeline, Mr. Speaker; he destroyed Northern Gateway and Energy East.

Now, let's look at this NDP government, Alberta under this NDP government. In only three years they've imposed a carbon tax, the largest tax increase in the history of Alberta, without talking to Albertans; \$96 billion of debt; raised personal and corporate taxes; chased almost \$40 billion of investment out of this province; increased unemployment; disrespected our farmers, small-business

owners, job creators; and told Albertans to take the bus and eat less meat if they are not happy with their climate leadership plan.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.  
The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

### Easter

**Mr. Malkinson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to take a moment today to speak about Easter and what Easter means for many Albertans. As we know, in the Christian tradition Easter is the celebration of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. For many across Alberta, Easter brings the renewal of faith and hope as they celebrate the season according to their own particular beliefs and traditions.

I have fond memories of our family celebrating Easter egg hunts and visits with my grandparents in northwest Calgary, where we would break and then feast on traditional Ukrainian babka, or Easter bread. Like so many families in Alberta, my grandparents came from the culture where the beautiful pysanka was born, and they shared that tradition with me here in Canada.

This past weekend I had the opportunity to celebrate Easter in new ways, Mr. Speaker, with families across Calgary-Currie. All of these families were celebrating peace, friendship, and joy as well as the return of spring. Community associations across Currie, like the one in Richmond and Knob Hill, held an extravagant Easter egg hunt for Calgarians of all ages. Later this week the Bankview community gardeners will gather to swap seeds and to share stories about the glory of having their hands in the dirt, their heads in the sun, and their hearts filled with nature, assuming, of course, the snow melts by then.

While out speaking with Calgarians on Holy Thursday, Mr. Speaker, I met with a family who arrived from Syria not long ago, who, like my family years before, came to this place seeking opportunity. While I was unable to break Easter bread with them, they welcomed me into their home, shared with me their own traditions, and fed me some very delicious pastries, that I enjoyed very much.

Wherever you found yourself, I hope everyone had a healthy and happy Easter. As we say in my baba and gido's home, Christ is risen. Khrystos voskres

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Carbon Levy

**Mr. Cyr:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today on an issue of great concern for my constituents of Bonnyville-Cold Lake. In the budget recently introduced by the NDP government, we received confirmation of a NDP plan to follow the lead of the Trudeau Liberals and increase their already burdensome carbon tax from \$30 to \$50 per tonne. That's a 67 per cent increase, an admission of more punitive taxes coming from this NDP government.

From the beginning, since the NDP announced this job-killing tax, that wasn't mentioned anywhere in their 2015 election platform, they promised Albertans that it would not be just another revenue-generating tool. The NDP told Albertans that a hundred per cent of the revenue from the carbon tax would either go to rebates to Albertans or to the environmental initiatives, yet it seems like they forgot to mention a caveat on this. The fact is, Mr. Speaker, that with the release of the 2018 budget, it was revealed that future revenues generated by the carbon tax will be going to general revenues – that's truly shameful – to plug the out-of-control spending that led to a deficit currently sitting at \$8.8 billion.

What does that mean? It means no help for struggling Albertans. Seniors who live on fixed incomes will be among the hardest hit by this carbon tax. The NDP will be taking billions more out of the pockets of Alberta families, who are trying to make up for this fiscal mess that they, the NDP, have created. Mr. Speaker, Albertans cannot afford to bail out the NDP for the consequences of their reckless ideological agenda. It's time for the NDP to get onside with Alberta families, stand up to Justin Trudeau, and repeal the carbon tax.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The official Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

### Carbon Levy Rate

**Mr. Kenney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and Happy Easter to you. Two weeks ago I asked the Premier when she was going to raise the NDP carbon tax by 67 per cent, and she said: not until we get a pipeline. But in her budget she baked in the 67 per cent increase in the carbon tax. Why did she change her mind? Why is she proceeding with the 67 per cent hike in the carbon tax when times are tough and Albertans need tax relief, not higher taxes?

1:50

**Ms Notley:** Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, I think it's very interesting. Our budget, that we were very proud to introduce a couple of weeks ago, is focused on building a recovery to last. Now, the member opposite is out there telling Albertans that he can cut taxes, that he can balance the budget, and that he can do so without hurting front-line services. The member is lost in a storm of fairy dust. He is either deeply, deeply misinformed or purposely misinforming, and my question to the member opposite is really: which is it?

**Mr. Kenney:** For the record, Mr. Speaker, the NDP ran on a platform that did not mention a carbon tax. Five months later they introduced it, the biggest tax hike in the province's history. They then announced plans to raise it by 67 per cent because Justin Trudeau told them to, but then they said that they wouldn't without a pipeline. Now it's baked into the budget. Why can't they get their facts straight? Why are they going to proceed with a 67 per cent increase in the carbon tax even though they said that they wouldn't without a pipeline? There is no Trans Mountain pipeline. Why the 67 per cent increase in the carbon tax in this budget?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The fact of the matter is that notwithstanding how much the member opposite wished it wasn't so, that pipeline has been approved. You know what? Just a week and a half ago we won in court again. Fourteen cases out of 14 cases we have won in the courts. We are winning. We are going to win. We are not going to bet against Albertans, and the member opposite should stop doing that, too.

**Mr. Kenney:** This is remarkable, Mr. Speaker. The Premier can't make up her mind. At first it was a blank cheque for her ally Justin Trudeau to raise the carbon tax by 67 per cent. Then she said: well, only if a pipeline is approved. Then she said: only if construction begins. Then she said: only if construction is completed. Now all of those conditions are out the window. Could she point to the page in the budget speech, in the budget documents which says that there's

any condition on the 67 per cent increase? Why is she giving Justin Trudeau another blank cheque to raise taxes on ordinary Albertans?

**Ms Notley:** Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, I'm wondering if the member opposite could point to any page in his shadow budget. Oh, wait. No, he can't because the member opposite and the Official Opposition are the first ever to never introduce a shadow budget. But what we do know is that you can't have it all. You can't give a tax break to the rich. You can't balance the budget. You can't not affect front-line services that Albertans rely on. It can't be done, and sooner or later he's going to have to come clean to Albertans on what his plan actually is.

**The Speaker:** The hon. leader.

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, she'll have plenty of chances to ask questions a little over a year from now, but now I'd recommend that the Premier try to answer them.

### Budget 2018

**Mr. Kenney:** Here's another question Albertans want to know. This Premier said that every penny raised by the carbon tax would be rebated back to Albertans or put back to work in our economy in new economic initiatives, but now the government has admitted that that's no longer true. For every incremental penny raised by their 67 per cent hike in the carbon tax, one hundred per cent will go into the NDP slush fund to spend on whatever they want, with no rebates, no fake green spending. Why did the Premier break her word to Albertans?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, what I have always been very clear on is the climate leadership plan which our government brought in. The additional levy that comes from the federal government will be reinvested to support Albertans. It will support our hospitals. It will support our schools. It will support our justice system. It will support making life better for Albertans while we adopt a reasonable path to balance which, at the end of the day, will make sure that Alberta moves forward in a progressive way.

**Mr. Kenney:** There you have it, Mr. Speaker. They said all along that every penny would go back into rebates and for so-called green initiatives. Now the government is admitting that it's just going into the general revenue fund. They're admitting – won't the Premier just stand up and be honest with Albertans? – that it's just another tax. It's a sales tax by another name. It's a tax on every bit of energy that Albertans consume in a cold and modern economy. Why won't the Premier just admit that this 67 per cent hike in the carbon tax is needed just to prevent the deficit and debt from going even higher?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What I will say to Albertans is that when we reach our path to balance in 2023, when we reach balance, we will still enjoy an \$11 billion per capita tax advantage over the next lowest taxed province in the country, so we are absolutely protecting that. At the same time, we are continuing to invest in hospitals, we are continuing to invest in schools, and we are continuing to ensure that Albertans have a government that has their backs, not a government that's jumping on their backs, trying to make them the . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, I have here the platform on which the NDP ran in the last election. It committed to three deficits and a

balanced budget – in fact, a surplus – this year. Altogether they promised Albertans \$11 billion in new borrowing and then surpluses. Instead, they are delivering \$83 billion in additional borrowing, headed for a debt of nearly \$100 billion. Why did the NDP so catastrophically break their word to Albertans? Why are they planning to increase debt by \$83 billion more than they promised?

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

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, I'm not going to take fiscal management lessons from the member opposite. When they were in Ottawa, they introduced six straight deficit budgets. One year their deficit was \$56 billion – \$56 billion – and they added \$145 billion to the national debt before they left office. You know what? The fact of the matter is that we are charting a responsible course to balance while supporting Albertans, while supporting our hospitals, while supporting our schools, while supporting our kids and our seniors, and we won't stop.

**The Speaker:** Please proceed.

### Provincial Debt

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, after over a century of history Alberta had an accumulated debt of \$13 billion when the NDP came to office. It's now \$56 billion, and it's headed towards \$100 billion. I'm only asking the government to hold themselves to their own standard, not someone else's standard. Their standard this year was a \$25 million surplus. Instead, we've got a \$9 billion deficit. Their standard was \$11 billion in new debt. Instead, we've got \$83 billion in new debt. Will the Premier just admit that they've made a mess of the province's finances?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, what I will admit is that we took over this province from a government that had left the province unprepared to deal with the devastating drop in the price of oil, one that went far lower than people were projecting in April 2015.

The other thing is that by 2023 we will still have the best balance sheet in the country, and to get there, we will not have laid off the 3,600 or so teachers that the member opposite suggested just this morning that he would like to lay off. By the way, that's exactly what would happen if we had to freeze our finances the way he suggested.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.

**Mr. Kenney:** Well, here we go, Mr. Speaker. The Premier's communications director said last week that we would have to, quote, blow up every school and hospital in the province to balance the budget. This is from the government that said that they were going to have compassionate belt-tightening. Instead, we continue to have the most inefficient provincial government in Canada. My question is this. Is the Premier proud of the fact that her government is now spending more on interest payments to bankers and bondholders than in 19 of the 23 Alberta government departments?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, here's what I'm proud of. You know, this morning the member opposite said that what we should have done was freeze spending in 2015. What I'm telling the members opposite is that that would mean there would be 3,600 fewer teachers and teachers' assistants in the province of Alberta today. I am very, very proud that those 3,600 teachers and teachers' assistants are in our schools today teaching our kids and giving



them the opportunities that they need to build a strong future. Those are the kinds of choices our government is making.

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, the NDP's choice is to encumber those kids with \$100 billion of debt that they're going to have to pay off with higher taxes in the future, in the meanwhile enriching bankers and bondholders as we're now spending \$2 billion on interest. Under their plan, that's going up to \$3.7 billion, more than we spend on 19 of 23 departments. Is this what the NDP dreamed of, enriching bankers and bondholders with tax dollars rather than investing in public services?

2:00

**Ms Notley:** What I don't dream of, Mr. Speaker, is giving the richest 1 per cent of Albertans a \$700 million tax gift. I'm absolutely not planning on doing that, not planning on taking 3,600 teachers out of our schools, not planning on cancelling the Tom Baker centre, not planning on cancelling the green line because – you know what? – we have Albertans' backs. We are moving forward, and that's exactly what we are going to do.

### Pharmacy Funding Framework

**Mr. Fraser:** Mr. Speaker, I've said many times in this House that we need to address the rising health care costs if we're ever going to get the budget to balance. When I raise these concerns in the House, the government is quick to point the finger and accuses us of wanting to cut funding for front-line services. It appears as if the government is trying to divert attention away from the fact that their own fiscal plan is beginning to have a direct impact on front-line services. The most recent budget saw this government cut funding to Alberta pharmacists by \$150 million. Would the minister agree that this is a direct cut to front-line services, or does she not consider the work of pharmacists a crucial front-line service?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. I find it very rich that the member opposite, when they have their own shadow budget proposing a billion dollars' worth of cuts, proposing increases in fees and user costs – it sounds like the rejected health care levy that was proposed by his leader when he was the Health minister in the last election. At the same time what we're doing is that we are increasing pharmacy by a reasonable rate of increase, which is 4.3 per cent, to cover the fact that there is inflation, to cover the fact that there are new people going on new medications. We've got balance on this side. On that side all they've got are old, recycled ideas of deep cuts from the 1990s.

**Mr. Fraser:** One thing we often suggest to the government is that instead of cutting funding for the front line, as the minister has done, savings can be found through efficiencies. The government likes to laugh at that, but the issue is that the pharmacists provide a good example of what we're referring to. One service that the government is cutting funding for is paying pharmacists to provide flu shots. Lowering the incentive for pharmacists to provide flu shots means that more shots will be given by doctors, and a flu shot given by a doctor is about four times more expensive. To the same minister: how does paying doctors more money to deliver the same number of flu shots save the province money at all?

**Ms Hoffman:** Well, my question to the member opposite and, rather, his leader, Mr. Mandel, who was the Health minister, is: how does it make sense that we pay 50 per cent higher than the next-highest jurisdiction? I don't think that's fair. We sat down with

pharmacists, and we said: we want a fair plan that ensures that patients still have good access. We're still going to be paying the highest in the country. We're just going to be tied instead of being 50 per cent higher than the next highest in the country, Mr. Speaker. I think that's fair and reasonable. I have to say that cutting a billion dollars from the front-line workers of health care or, at a time when fentanyl was on the rise, your leader turning down \$1.4 million of funding, no strings attached, from the federal government to address the fentanyl crisis: that is irresponsible.

**Mr. Fraser:** Mr. Speaker, pharmacists are well trained, highly educated medical professionals, and we rely on pharmacists to know all the effects of medications, to warn of the potential dangers of mixing drugs. They provide advice and consultation for people struggling with mental health, addictions, and the treatment of chronic conditions, and they are often the medical professional that people see the most often. Pharmacists are saying that the government's proposed cuts would put patients at risk by limiting their access to these types of services. To the same minister: why are you choosing to cut funding in these areas that will directly impact Albertans' health and well-being?

**Ms Hoffman:** Well, once again, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is dreaming in technicolour. We have a 4.3 per cent increase to that line item. It's important to us that that goes towards patients and ensuring that they can continue to access important services. We're proud that we've worked to reach an agreement, a collaborative agreement, at 4.3 per cent. Under the watch of that member's now leader, the former Health minister, we saw 12 per cent increases to that finance line item. That's irresponsible. That's not in the best interests of Albertans. Conservatives let things balloon, and then they pushed deep, drastic cuts, saying that they had to. On this side of the House we work with people to develop sustainable, reliable front-line care.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

### Business Link Support for Immigrant Entrepreneurs

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many new Canadians find that they face barriers in finding employment, so they opt to open their own businesses, but when they do, they often face challenges of language and culture in trying to navigate our systems. Business Link received funding in the past, but the previous government chose not to renew it. They received funding to develop and operate pilot programs to support immigrant entrepreneurs. One of these focused on creating multilingual guidebooks that offered plain-language information on starting a business, marketing, financing, and business planning. To the Minister of Economic Development and Trade: has your ministry given any thought to working with Business Link to update and make these documents available again?

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

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's small businesses have a bigger impact per capita than any business anywhere in Canada. In addition to providing hundreds of thousands of jobs to Albertans, they inject about a hundred billion dollars into our hometowns and our communities. Now, we are collaborating with Business Link to provide in-person access to business advisors along with phone, e-mail, and webinar materials. I can tell you that we're always looking at ways to support our

business community even more, and we want to ensure that new Canadians also have those supports.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, given that studies show that entrepreneurs that receive mentorship from those with more experience have greater success in attracting investment and expanding their businesses, increasing revenue and their employment impact, and given that Business Link also pioneered a successful pilot program which provided culturally sensitive mentorship for new Canadian entrepreneurs, to the same minister: has your ministry considered investing and providing those kinds of supports?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What I can tell the member – and I appreciate and thank him for his question – is that we doubled funding for a very popular tech development program through Alberta Innovates. There are a number of supports that we've rolled out to support businesses, including partnering with BDC, Business Development Bank of Canada, so that entrepreneurs can launch more start-ups and innovate and expand. What I can tell you is that the previous government ended the funding specific to the Business Link program that the member is talking about. Our government brought back the self-employment training for entrepreneurs that the previous government cut and that the current opposition would cut.

I can tell you that I commit to working with new Canadians as entrepreneurs.

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

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. I do appreciate the work that you've done. Given that after I met with representatives from Business Link and brought them to meet with your chief of staff, they submitted a proposal to your office to revive both of these programs that I mentioned at a cost of only \$150,000 per year, to the minister: are you willing to consider providing just this small investment to help new Canadian entrepreneurs truly thrive?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll thank the member for his advocacy on this. I can tell you that we know that the dollar amount may be fairly small, but it has a significant impact on businesses and helps them grow and become more successful. I can tell you and all members of the House that the proposal the member is referring to I find very interesting and very promising. I will be looking at it and going through it to see if there is an opportunity for our government to continue to support entrepreneurs, especially new Canadians, who, we know, are very, very innovative and want to get their businesses up off the ground.

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

### Pharmacy Funding Framework (continued)

**Dr. Starke:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last month Alberta Health pulled out its metaphorical mortar and pestle and proceeded to grind the pharmacy profession. Now, while this NDP government likes to brag about how it has preserved front-line public services, when it comes to community pharmacies, that boast rings hollow.

The recent pharmacy funding agreement includes cuts that will jeopardize the health of vulnerable inner-city residents, that were provided through the award-winning ACE, adherence and community engagement, program. To the minister: why have you approved a framework that will harm some of Alberta's most vulnerable citizens?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I certainly want to say that our government values the role that pharmacists play in supporting the health care needs of Albertans, and under this new framework Alberta pharmacists continue to be compensated at a rate higher than their counterparts in other provinces. We think that that's appropriate, and we think that the Alberta Pharmacists' Association stepped up to the plate, worked with us to find a way that we can see that 4.3 per cent increase go towards volume increases in the number of medications as well as population increases. That's where the increase should be going. We think that it's important to look at other jurisdictions and find ways to be efficient, and that's exactly what we did.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, Mr. Speaker, given that every decision made by government must be analyzed in terms of the full economic impact and given that Alberta Health's many highly capable bureaucrats must have projected and provided this minister an increased overall health care cost estimate caused by withdrawing these critical pharmacy services, to the minister: what was that number? How much will health care costs increase because of the cuts to front-line services caused by the new pharmacy funding framework?

**Ms Hoffman:** Again, I want to thank pharmacists for working with us to keep costs down and making sure that they're sustainable for future generations. The association recognizes the current fiscal environment in our province, the need to reduce the growth of the health care system spending, and that the 12 per cent increase, or in excess of that, that was reached under that member's former government was not fair or reasonable or sustainable in the long term. So what we did was that we sat down and said that we want to make costs more affordable for Albertans, which includes reducing the number of times they need to fill prescriptions so that over a thousand seniors in Alberta are going to be saving more than \$100 in their own pockets. That's because of work that this side of the table did.

2:10

**Dr. Starke:** Well, Mr. Speaker, given that the increase in overall pharmaceutical cost has much more to do with the increased cost of the drugs and not the druggists and given that award-winning programs like ACE cut ER visits by an estimated 60 per cent, saving countless dollars more than the small amount that this program costs, to the minister. I want to believe that you had no idea that the new framework would have this effect. Will you agree to meet with the ACE program pharmacists to discuss restoring funding to this vital community health program?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My Health officials have already met with ACE, and we will continue to work with them. We are, of course, keen to make sure that we find ways to continue to grow opportunities for people to receive care as close to home as possible.

**Dr. Starke:** You've given the same talking points for years.

**Ms Hoffman:** I respect the question. I wish the member asking it would respect the fact that I'm answering it appropriately and saying that we're going to continue to work with them and give them an opportunity to work with us. I will treat you with respect and would like you to do the same for all Albertans, including those who are accessing these services, Mr. Speaker.

**Provincial Debt**  
(continued)

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, this government's wild spending ways have resulted in the province racking up a debt topping \$55 billion this year, ballooning to a staggering \$96 billion by 2023. The cost of servicing the debt: \$3.7 billion a year. This year alone we will spend \$1.9 billion on interest. That is \$1.9 billion that could have been used for front-line services or left with families and their communities. Minister, when there are so many more important priorities, why is your government jeopardizing the future of our children in favour of lining the pockets of bankers and Bay Street?

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

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, it was mentioned earlier that Alberta has the best balance sheet and the lowest net debt to GDP ratio in the country, and it will be that way when we balance in 2023. Just at the end of November I stood up and said that our deficit was being reduced by \$1.4 billion because of the hard work of this side in finding agreements that are better for our labour partners and us, finding people who want to continue to serve Albertans in the best possible way. We're doing it.

**Mr. Barnes:** Tripling that net debt ratio in just three years is nothing to be proud of.

Given that the minister is a prolific spender and is jeopardizing the future prosperity of the next generation and risking today's economy and given that this government's tax increases have actually produced less revenue and that our minister and our kids are now at the beck and call of bankers and bondholders and given that this government's borrowing not only crowds out private-sector investment in jobs but risks Alberta's future, Minister, when will you stop the reckless spending, stop handicapping our job creators, and focus on balancing the budget?

**Mr. Ceci:** Mr. Speaker, I'm incredibly proud of the work of this side of the Chamber. That side I'm not so sure about. I can tell you that we're carefully and prudently reducing the deficits. We're making sure that the reckless spending that was left for us by that side comes down. We have cut salaries and eliminated bonuses for the highest paid executives of agencies, boards, and commissions. That side wants to give a \$700 million tax break to the richest 1 per cent in this province. We're not going to let that happen. We're going to continue to prudently bring down . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, given that this government is on track to leave nothing but a legacy of debt, crippling interest payments, and lost opportunity, it is no wonder that Albertans are losing confidence and Alberta families are worried about our future. Given that the greatest legacy one can leave Alberta is to leave it better than they found it and given that the province's books are a catastrophic failure, turning \$13 billion of debt to \$55 billion, headed to \$96 billion before you balance, Minister, aren't you ashamed of your legacy?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, what that side refuses to look at is where the economy is now. Jobs are up in this province, 90,000 mostly in the private sector, as a result of the work of this side. Growth is up, and GDP growth is up by 4.5 per cent. I don't hear that from that side. They're wishing Alberta fails. We're going to continue to stand up for Albertans. Manufacturing is up, restaurant receipts are up, wages are up. I heard from the Leader of the Opposition that wages are abysmal in this province. We're leading the nation in average weekly wages, and we're going to continue to do so because of the work of this side.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Mr. Speaker, over the past week I listened to and spoke with many Albertans, and I can tell you that they are not happy with this NDP budget. In their platform the NDP promised a \$25 million surplus by this year. Instead, their five-year plan is to increase our province's debt by a massive 638 per cent of what it was when they formed government. This is shameful. We're talking \$96 billion in debt, and this government is proud of themselves. Minister, Albertans want to know how far in debt this province will go before you finally see it as an intolerable level of debt.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Budget 2018 has many things this province continues to need, and it's an economic recovery we're supporting to make sure it lasts. You know, if that side had its way, we would not have 20 new school projects scheduled to start this year. We would not have the 4,900 construction jobs that come with those school projects. We would have hospital and care facilities that would not get built, and our seniors and others would go wanting. We are doing things like the Calgary green line, the valley line LRT, the Edmonton and Calgary ring roads, and the Peace bridge . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Mr. Speaker, given that it's still years from now when this government finally plans to balance a budget and that that means spending \$3.7 million a year in interest payments to bondholders and foreign bankers – that's more than the budgets of most government departments, and how many schools is that? – and given that this NDP government's budget does not show an actual plan on how to pay down the debt, Minister, do you have any plan in place to start paying down the debt that will be saddling our children, my children, who deserve at least the same or better opportunities to succeed in life?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, we do have a Path to Balance section in this budget, and by 2023 we can do that without firing thousands of people that that side wants to put out of work. We're going to continue to clean up the Conservative waste and carefully find spending control. That side: some years it was 10 per cent operational spending year over year. We are working to get off the resource revenue roller coaster. That side wants to keep us on that by buying tickets on that roller coaster. You know, we have economic recovery going on in this province; that side does not want it to happen.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Mr. Speaker, given that this government wants to get off the resource roller coaster, yet their budget depends on the pipeline

actually getting built – Albertans deserve a government who can properly manage the province’s finances for years to come, and this NDP government is certainly not that – and given that this government’s policy choices have made things worse for Albertans and our economy, Minister, we surely hope that the Trans Mountain pipeline will get built, but if it doesn’t, how much more debt are you going to put our province into? Surely, please tell me you’ve considered this.

**Mr. Ceci:** Mr. Speaker, you know, our path to balance carefully considers everything, and it also considers bringing in 24-hour health care in Airdrie. It also considers new schools in the Airdrie region. We’re doing that because we don’t want to leave Albertans without health care and education, something that that side doesn’t really seem to care about because they want to keep budgets at zero per cent, which is a cut. Those things wouldn’t happen in Airdrie.

### Economic Competitiveness

**Mr. Gotfried:** Mr. Speaker, I’ve just spent the last 10 days diligently consulting my constituents. The message I heard over and over again is that Albertans aren’t buying the minister’s unbelievable up, up, up, and they are done, done, done with your burdensome and irresponsible debt, and they want you out, out, out along with your job-killing carbon tax. To the Finance minister: can you come clean and admit to Albertans that your debt-loading, tax-burdening policies and fiscal mismanagement are making us and them uncompetitive in the global economy?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, I disagree with the premise of the member’s question, that Alberta is uncompetitive. We’ve seen some historic investments in cities like Lethbridge with Cavendish Farms. We’ve attracted Amazon to the province. Google opened their first-ever AI lab outside of Europe here in Edmonton. There are an incredible number of great examples of companies that are moving here, relocating to Alberta. They know that we are the lowest taxed jurisdiction in Canada. We have the youngest, smartest workforce. We have incredible postsecondary institutions and a number of strengths to build on. Despite what the opposition says, I’m very proud of our province and the businesses that are here.

2:20

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Mr. Speaker, that bucket has too many holes in it, 34.8 billion, in fact.

Given that roughly 300,000 barrels of environmentally insensitive, foreign-conflict crude, exempt, no less, from upstream and downstream emissions, are coming into Canada per day and given the abject failure of your social licence in winning over hypocritical eco activists and politicians and even your friends and allies in B.C. and central Canada, to the Finance minister: when will you admit that your misguided social licence croquet and all economic pain, no environmental gain carbon tax has failed Albertans miserably?

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

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think the member is confusing our government with his own leader, who spent 20 years in Ottawa and got zero pipelines to tidewater. I’m very proud of the work that our Premier and our government have done. We’ve introduced a very strong climate leadership plan, that

has led to the approval of two pipelines, and we’ve heard the Premier say over and over again that our government will do whatever it takes to get the Trans Mountain pipeline built. Guess what, Mr. Speaker? Mark my words.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Mr. Speaker, we’ll leave the confusion and insults to the other side.

Given that the Premier and her environment minister’s social licence in concert with the tepid support from their federal Liberal friends has failed in both influencing their B.C. NDP comrades and in aggressively upholding the Constitution and given that Albertans were promised that the route to carbon salvation was social licence and the highly punitive and now de facto provincial sales tax, to the Premier: how will you explain to Albertans, Alberta businesses, their laid off employees, seniors and nonprofits that they have taken an economic hit for nought and that your costly ideological experiment has failed?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Energy.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, our government has done more in three years than the previous government did in 44. Line 3 is under construction, Keystone XL has its commercial arrangements done so they can proceed, and Trans Mountain is progressing. We’re battling a thousand right now in the courts, with 14 out of 14 court cases that we’ve won. We’re going to continue to fight for that pipeline, and as my colleague said, mark our words. That pipeline will be built.

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

### School Construction

**Mr. Hinkley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. After decades of neglect by the previous government, our government promised to actually build more than 200 badly needed schools across the province. The previous government announced the number of schools election after election but had no plan to build them. Our government did fund them and is building them. To the Minister of Education: how many of these 200 schools have been completed?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for the question. Certainly, I think it’s incumbent upon our society in general and even during an economic downturn to ensure that we build the infrastructure for children here in the province of Alberta, so we’ve done so since 2015. We have completed 144 projects across the province and certainly made sure that we had the financing in place to get the job done. For so long the previous government would put up a sign that said: future school. The sign would fall down: no school. We’ve built 144 so far.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Hinkley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Budget 2018 announced 20 schools, including Chester Ronning school in Camrose, and we had several hundred parents out for that announcement last week. To the same minister: how are these projects supporting communities and school boards across the province?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, it was great to be in Camrose last week for the announcement of the new Chester Ronning school. We can see that it’s not just going to be a

school with walls and bricks and mortar, but the spirit of the community was so evident. A lot of people came there. They went to school there themselves. Their kids were going there. They taught for a career there. Now right across the field there'll be a brand new, beautiful school, not just for learning but as a community centre and as a source of pride for the city of Camrose.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Hinkley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The new schools announced this year are a step in the right direction, but we realize there is still more work to be done. To the same minister: what plans are in place to ensure that we continue to build much-needed schools across the province?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you. Certainly, Mr. Speaker, the job isn't done by any means. We have a lot of catch-up in terms of building new schools, modernizations, and so forth. We have lots of enrolment pressures across the province that we need to address every step of the way. For those schools that perhaps are still on the drawing board or where they don't know what school boards are looking for, make sure that you bring the case forward to us, and we will entertain it. Ultimately, our children's future and their education are paramount to our government and to a prosperous future for all.

Thank you.

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

### **Budget 2018** (continued)

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past week I spent time door-knocking in my constituency, and I met a senior who had a very clear view of this government's budget. His name? His name was Rick Mercer, and he assures me that he is the original Rick Mercer. This Rick Mercer also had something to rant about. I asked him what he would like me to ask the government on his behalf. He told me: tell them to stop spending money they don't have. So on behalf of Mr. Mercer I ask the Minister of Finance: what do you have to say to him and all other Albertans who are justifiably upset with this budget and your lack of any effort to find any sort of savings anywhere in this government?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to Mr. Mercer through our member over there. You know, we have found savings. In this year, the 2017 budget, \$750 million were culled out of the budget, and we are not going to spend those monies again. I asked for discretionary spending back from all of the departments. I reduced the salaries of agencies, boards, and commissions' executives. I froze salaries of government employees that are management and non-union, and we're looking for practical agreements with our labour partners.

**Mr. Clark:** Well, Mr. Speaker, this budget is incredibly short on details, and the details we do have are based on some pretty optimistic assumptions. Given that no less an authority than noted economist Trevor Tombe said that the Alberta Party shadow budget was far more credible than this government's own plan to balance, my question, again, to the Minister of Finance: why should we believe you, and what happens if you're wrong?

**Mr. Ceci:** Mr. Speaker, you know, there are some additional validators that I'd like to just bring up for a second. Scotiabank, for instance, says that the deficit elimination detail and Alberta's efforts to slow its net financial debt accumulated are both encouraging. On the capital side, Trina Hurdman from the Calgary board of education says, "We are grateful for this funding to create these new learning spaces." Additionally, on the operation programs, Scott Nye of BioWare says: the budget levels the playing field for us. There are many validators here.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

**Mr. Clark:** Well, Mr. Speaker, look, while I sincerely hope the Kinder Morgan pipeline is built, there is absolutely no question that it is at risk, just like every single one of the assumptions this government has made on its plan to balance. Given that Enbridge's line 3 is not a sure thing and given that oil prices are nowhere near guaranteed to meet your estimates and given that corporate and personal taxes are not likely to grow 40 per cent and given that this budget relies on you actually sticking to your budget plans, unlike you have done through every budget so far – that is a lot of if – to the Minister of Finance: have you completed a detailed analysis of what happens if any one or, heaven forbid, all . . .

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

**Ms Hoffman:** The member opposite keeps hoping that Alberta will fail. On this side of the House we are using the results that have proven to be effective. The Minister of Energy has toured line 3; it is well under construction. She's right that the approvals are all in line for things going south, and going west, they're also in line, Mr. Speaker. We're going to use the best evidence we have to make the best decisions. The evidence all shows that Alberta wins a thousand per cent of the time on Kinder Morgan. We're going to win a thousand per cent of the time on getting that line built, and that's why it's in our budget. On this side of the House we use evidence and we bet on Alberta, and you can bet that we're going to get that pipeline built. [interjection]

**The Speaker:** Hon. member. You can almost hear the Easter Bunny sneaking around.

### **Electric Power Prices**

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, this morning my office called the Alberta electricity Market Surveillance Administrator. Will the Minister of Energy confirm or deny that there is an active investigation by the Market Surveillance Administrator against the NDP government due to the government's manipulation of electricity prices?

2:30

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Energy.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the hon. member across the way understands that when there's an active investigation going on in any matter, it would be inappropriate for us to comment.

**Mr. Panda:** Given, Mr. Speaker, that the Independent Power Producers Society of Alberta filed a complaint against the Balancing Pool in August because it believes that the Balancing Pool is in contravention of the Electric Utilities Act and is affecting the efficiency of the Alberta electricity market, can the minister confirm or deny that the NDP government is ordering the Balancing Pool to manipulate electricity prices?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Energy.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I've said many times that we're focused on the priorities of regular Albertans, like ensuring that electricity bills are affordable. That's why back almost a year ago we capped energy bills, to protect families and businesses from any spikes, something that we experienced for many years previous. We told Albertans that we have their backs. Since electricity prices were deregulated under the Conservatives, Albertans have been exposed to a price roller coaster, and that's something that we're working on.

**Mr. Panda:** Given that the NDP is planning for higher electricity prices with this \$74 million subsidy this year due to generating stations being mothballed and given that the Market Surveillance Administrator agrees with the industrial power consumers association that this action runs against the public interest, why does the NDP insist on playing a shell game with the ratepayers and taxpayers, who are the same people, about the real cost of the changes to the electricity system?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, the Conservatives all along have had the wrong priorities. They'd like to take us back to tax cuts for the rich and insider deals that cost Albertans hundreds of millions of dollars. The Conservatives again want to cut taxes; we want to make life affordable for everyday Albertans. They want to keep doing and standing up for insider deals. We've capped electricity energy bills to protect Albertans from those price spikes. Their deregulation policies caused the roller coaster that I mentioned. We're working on that to make bills stable, more affordable, and more predictable.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
The Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

### Long-term Care Beds

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Increasing numbers of seniors just waiting for long-term care now fill 18 per cent of acute-care hospital beds. For Q1 AHS reported 765 acute-care beds held seniors waiting 51-plus days for long-term care spaces. Such mismanagement means that acute-care beds are unavailable for those who really need them. When is this government going to free up hospital beds and save money by providing affordable alternate level of care options for seniors?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very proud of the fact that on this side of the House we're working to make sure that we have 2,000 public long-term care spaces available to the people of this province, ensuring that Albertans can make sure that they can access the care they need when they need it. In terms of freeing up hospital spaces, they talked last week about how great the '90s were. Well, I remember the '90s. You freed up a lot of spaces by blowing up hospitals. I don't think that that was the right move by the opposition, what they're proposing then. On this side of the House we're going to continue to make sure that we build appropriate supports for people throughout our province and take care of them instead of moving for drastic cuts that would result in things like blowing up hospitals.

**Mr. Orr:** Blowing up anything is inappropriate language.

Since AHS is already developing an enhancing care in the community plan that will emphasize person-centred care and address gaps and opportunities in residential continuing care and given that small neighbourhood personal care homes already exist and fit this model perfectly, when will this government deliver on the plan for accommodation and alternate level of care delivery by local and neighbourhood seniors' homes?

**Ms Hoffman:** Well, what was wrong, Mr. Speaker, was actually blowing up a hospital. If you don't remember, it was the Calgary General, and there are definitely plumes of smoke videos that you can see. That was what was wrong.

On this side of the House we've protected important front-line acute-care services, and we're continuing to expand other care in other parts of the community, including a significant increase to home care to keep people home, safer in their own environments, and of course continuing to build much-needed long-term care and continuing care spaces, including in the former Leader of the Official Opposition's riding of Fort McMurray-Conklin. We think it's important for people to have opportunities to age in the communities they helped build.

**Mr. Orr:** Given that a constituent's father does not need 24-hour nursing but an alternate level of dementia care and given that D., a senior herself on limited income, spends a lot of money and time, an hour and a half driving several times a week, just to help care for her father because there are no suitable facilities locally, will this government incorporate small neighbourhood personal care homes into the plan for enhanced care in the community?

**Ms Hoffman:** Well, we certainly are continuing to build a number of dementia care spaces, including the one that will be opening soon in Red Deer county, not far off the highway, just to the west, as well as ones that we're opening in Bridgeland and other parts throughout the province. We think it's important to have the care that people need where and when they need it. That's why we've expanded home-care services, that's why we're expanding opportunities for long-term care and dementia care supports, as were mentioned, and that's why on this side of the House we presented a budget that will do that. We'll see what the members opposite do with that budget. I have a feeling that they're going to say one thing today and vote another thing tomorrow.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

### Deerfoot Trail

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The good people of Calgary-Hays and one-third of Albertans that live in Calgary depend on Deerfoot Trail to go to work and to shop and to go home after working and shopping every day. I appreciate – I do – that the Transportation minister has been working with the city of Calgary on a study to determine which improvements are needed for Deerfoot Trail. To the Transportation minister. The study, I believe, is due to be completed in 2019. Is it complete now, or at what date in the future – and I appreciate that it's not 2019 yet – can Calgaryans expect to see that final report?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. Mason:** Well, thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I will undertake on behalf of the member and his question to find out exactly when that study is going to be ready, and I'll let him and the House know. But I want to assure him and all Calgaryans that we are certainly

taking a serious look at the Deerfoot. We understand the congestion that's there, and we understand that it needs work, but we need to make sure that we have all of the information so that we can make good decisions on behalf of Calgarians and his constituents.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the short-term interim report includes five recommendations, which are out now, and given that there is reported to be no funding at this date to build these five improvements and will not be at least until the land needed to do so is identified and costed out, again to the Transportation minister: on what day do you plan to complete this costing out so that you can then start to decide which improvements are a priority for the government and which ones will have to wait? What date, please?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Mason:** Well, thanks, Mr. Speaker. It may come as no surprise to the hon. member that we haven't calculated the precise date on which we will have this information, but I will make sure that when we meet again, I have that information for the hon. member, and I can provide it to him and to the House.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm grateful for the first two answers.

Another little piece of information that the good folks of Calgary-Hays and the rest of Calgary would like is: given that there has been a plan to improve the Anderson Road to Southland Drive portion of Deerfoot Trail for some time now and given that that intersection is perhaps the least expensive to improve and will probably or possibly provide one of the largest benefits per dollar to Calgary commuters as a result of that improvement, can the minister commit to giving that intersection extra attention when he considers the future plans for Deerfoot Trail since it . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Mason:** Well, thank you very much for the question. I'm not quite sure how he defines extra attention. Does he mean, you know, just reading more carefully, or does he mean more money? But in seriousness, Mr. Speaker, it's important that when we have intersections between city roads, as he knows as a former minister, and provincial highways, it is a joint effort and that conversations need to take place with the city of Calgary and that we need to determine their priorities as well.

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

### Agricultural Society Funding

**Mrs. Littlewood:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta is home to almost 300 agricultural societies, being supported by more than 65,000 volunteers. Now, last year we heard loud and clear from ag societies, including in places like Lamont, Mundare, Bruderheim, that they didn't know when their government grants were coming or how much they would be for. Of course, part of this is due to the fact that previous governments never ensured that there was stable, predictable funding. To the minister of agriculture: how are you ensuring that ag societies have that stable, predictable funding into the future?

2:40

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

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Our government has supported the good work that agricultural societies do. While rural Alberta went through one of its most protracted recessions in years, we supported these community organizations. We know that through the hard work of their volunteers, they help to make rural Alberta the rich place that it is. Recognizing this, we are pleased to fund them through the agricultural societies program.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mrs. Littlewood:** Thank you. Given that ag societies, of course, provide support for critical infrastructure like curling rinks and hockey rinks and that, of course, it creates the support also for this committed group of great volunteers, can the same minister let us know how this longer term funding will allow societies to plan for the future so that they can do that good work and provide great places for people to live in rural Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. I was pleased to announce during the recent RMA annual meeting that our government will be providing three years of stable, predictable funding to ag societies. This is a departure from previous years of funding, where ag societies would have to wait to see what they received. For many smaller ag societies this waiting can be a hindrance to sustainable planning. This government values the hard work of our nonprofit organizations, and we do not believe in reckless cuts that would leave them vulnerable.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mrs. Littlewood:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that agricultural societies provide support for things like Alberta Open Farm Days, local food, and farm safety education, can we also find out from the minister how else you can support the sport and cultural activities that are also provided by agricultural societies in our communities?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Our ag societies are responsible for a wide variety of programming in their communities, from after school activities like skating and baseball to large events that bring neighbours together to celebrate rural Alberta's heritage. These activities are not only fun but help maintain the overall strength and welfare of rural communities. As mentioned previously, we as a government believe in policies and programs that put communities and families first.

### Members' Statements

(continued)

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

### Support for Immigrants

**Mr. Shepherd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Immigrants: they get the job done. That's a sentiment from *The Hamilton Mixtape* and one that I absolutely know to be true. In my time as an MLA it's been my honour to meet, connect, and work with so many communities of people who've come from around the world to build their lives here, just as my father and my mother's family did. They've helped make our province what it is today, and they'll be a driving force in shaping its future.

That's why I've been proud to join them in celebrating so many important moments for their communities at dozens of events with the African and Caribbean communities, celebrations for the Lunar New Year, Filipino and Greek independence days, Vaisakhi parades, Ramadan feasts, oplatek, Hanukkah, and many more. That's why I've been proud to stand by, support, and recognize the many organizations serving and supporting new Canadians in my constituency like Action for Healthy Communities, CANAVUA, the Somali Canadian Women and Children Association, the Africa Centre, OSCAR, IFSSA, SCERDO, the Fukienese Association of Alberta, the diversity centre, and the race and economic equality centre, to name only a few.

I'm also proud, Mr. Speaker, that our government has taken real action to support these communities. We've supported and multiplied their work by providing stable, predictable funding for public services, restoring STEP, and increasing funding for FCSS; funded 40 daycare spaces at the Africa Centre to support new Canadian families at \$25 per day; committed to building a permanent home for l'école À la Découverte, a francophone school that serves mainly new Canadian families; worked to improve diversity and representation on agencies, boards, and commissions; provided funding to support training and mentorship for new Canadian women to become community and political leaders. I've been personally advocating to secure funding to restore Business Link's immigrant entrepreneur support programs, which, though successful, were shuttered by the previous government.

Our commitment to Alberta's cultural communities goes beyond simply showing up to take a photo. We're taking concrete action to support, benefit, and empower them as residents of Alberta and members of their communities so that we can all work together to make life better for all Albertans.

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

### Rural Crime Prevention

**Mr. Ellis:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The verdict is in. This NDP government does not (a) recognize a crisis when it's occurring and (b) care to address it in a timely or meaningful manner. That's likely why they try to pretend everything is just fine until they can no longer ignore it.

Fentanyl was the first crisis and a deadly one. The NDP were told plenty of times that they needed to deal with it before it got out of control. Its first reaction was to ignore it. Then too many people were dying, so suddenly they reacted. What did they do? They distributed naloxone kits to pharmacies because the NDP had no clue how to help an addict.

Their initial reaction to the opioid crisis was purely reactionary, and now so is their response to rural crime. Mr. Speaker, this crisis did not creep up. There were plenty of stats that confirmed this. If the NDP members were in touch with rural Alberta, they would have known about it. But even when rural residents flooded into this Chamber last fall to plead for government action, the benches on that side were silent. So the epidemic raged on, and it grew.

Then three weeks ago we had a superficial announcement that was going to fix this crisis: 39 officers, which we now know are simply going to be posts from already understaffed detachments, and 10 Crown prosecutors, who don't even come close to replacing the 20 who have recently left. That is not just reactionary, Mr. Speaker; it is smoke and mirrors. Citizens of rural Alberta no longer feel safe in their homes, and this is unacceptable. Public safety and security should be first and foremost on the mind of any government.

Mr. Speaker, our UCP caucus has brought this issue to the forefront for one reason. We want to ensure rural residents can once

again sleep easily at night, and if this NDP government will not do it, then we will.

### Introduction of Bills

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. S. Anderson:** No. I have a bill.

**The Speaker:** Municipal Affairs. Sorry.

**Mr. S. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know that the Minister of Finance and I look very similar. I know it's tough sometimes. I'm a little younger though.

### Bill 8

#### Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2018

**Mr. S. Anderson:** Mr. Speaker, it's an honour to rise to table for first reading Bill 8, the Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2018.

In the past 10 years Alberta has seen an increasing number of severe natural disasters, which brought significant impacts on personal lives and property. Unfortunately, we expect this trend to continue, and we all need to be better prepared for these types of devastating disasters.

In the face of these challenges Albertans have consistently pulled together to respond. Our municipalities have shown incredible leadership, and our first responders have demonstrated expertise and bravery. We have learned from each of these disasters and recognized that there are changes to our legislation we can make to ensure we are all prepared for the disasters we will continue to face.

Mr. Speaker, I am tabling this bill today so that hon. members and stakeholders will have a chance to review the legislation. My ministry will be seeking feedback from municipalities, law enforcement agencies, first responders, First Nations, and Métis over the next few months on the bill and on development of a municipal regulation. The intent is to hold debate on this bill until we return to the Legislature in the fall session with any amendments needed to reflect this input and to debate the bill.

Our government is committed to making Albertans' lives better. Bill 8 will result in a safer, more prepared and resilient Alberta.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 8 read a first time]

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today on behalf of the Leader of the Opposition. The first tabling is in regard to a document he referred to in his speech this morning, which is the NDP's 2015 campaign document, which clearly shows that there was no carbon tax in it as well as that at this time we would be at a \$25 million surplus, not a \$9 billion deficit.

The second tabling, Mr. Speaker, is another document that the Leader of the Opposition referred to this morning in his speech, which was a *Globe and Mail* article from November 24, 2015, in which the Premier was quoted as saying that none of the carbon tax would be used for general revenue to pay down debt, which we now know is where the carbon tax went.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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



**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table five copies of the Automobile Insurance Rate Board's 2017 annual report for the year ended December 31, 2017.

The 2017 annual report of the Automobile Insurance Rate Board was prepared under the board's direction and must be tabled in accordance with the Insurance Act, Mr. Speaker. As an independent body the rate board regulates rating programs of automobile insurers doing business in Alberta, with the goal of ensuring that insurance for automobiles is fair, accessible, and affordable to Albertans. The annual report provides a concise description of the rate board, its roles and responsibilities, its accomplishments for the year, and five years of statistics.

2:50

This is the third full year that the rate board has operated under the Enhancing Consumer Protection in Auto Insurance Act, which came into force July 2014. This legislation expanded the rate board's responsibility from the regulation of basic automobile insurance coverage to include the regulation of additional automobile insurance coverage and the provision of consumer education.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Any other tablings?

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to table two news stories. The first story is from MarketWatch, that indicates the electric car company Tesla is just four months away from bankruptcy. The second story is from Zero Hedge, showing that bonds for Tesla are now rated riskier than investing in Ukraine.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I have one tabling this afternoon. I rise to table five copies of Perspectives on Climate Change Action in Canada: A Collaborative Report from Auditors General, March 2018.

## Tablings to the Clerk

**The Acting Clerk:** I wish to advise the Assembly that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of the hon. Ms Gray, Minister of Labour and minister responsible for democratic renewal, pursuant to the Land Surveyors Act the Alberta Land Surveyors' Association report of proceedings of the 108th annual general meeting, April 20 and 22, 2017, and proceedings of a special general meeting, September 27, 2017.

On behalf of the hon. Ms Hoffman, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health, pursuant to Standing Order 53(2), a letter, undated, from the hon. Ms Hoffman, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health, to Mr. Cyr, chair, Standing Committee on Public Accounts, responding to the report respecting Better Healthcare for Albertans, a report by the office of the Auditor General of Alberta, May 2017, 29th Legislature, Third Session, October 2017.

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

The legislative policy committees will convene this afternoon and tomorrow morning for consideration of the main estimates. This afternoon Resource Stewardship will consider the estimates for Indigenous Relations in the Parkland Room, and Families and Communities will consider the estimates for Justice and Solicitor General in the Rocky Mountain Room. Tomorrow morning Resource Stewardship will consider the estimates for Treasury Board and Finance in the Rocky Mountain Room, and Families and Communities will consider the estimates for Seniors and Housing in the Parkland Room.

The House stands adjourned.

[The Assembly adjourned at 2:53 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 59.01(5)(b)]



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