



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, April 4, 2018

Day 11

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

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

Fourth Session

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

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Deputy Leader of the Official Opposition
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Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (UCP)
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (NDP)
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)
Bilous, Hon. Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)
Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (NDP)
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (NDP)
Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (NDP)
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Connolly, Michael R.D., Calgary-Hawthorn (NDP)
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Cooper, Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UCP)
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Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (NDP)
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Feehan, Hon. Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP),
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Fildebrandt, Derek Gerhard, Strathmore-Brooks (Ind)
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Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (AP)
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Official Opposition Deputy Whip
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Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)
Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)
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Hinkley, Bruce, Wetaskiwin-Camrose (NDP)
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Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (NDP)
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Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (UCP)
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (UCP)
Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (NDP)
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (UCP)
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (UCP)
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (NDP),
Deputy Government Whip
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (NDP)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)
Vacant, Fort McMurray-Conklin
Vacant, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake

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.

Wednesday, April 4, 2018

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Let us each reflect. Let us each work together to create a province where we produce food in a world where many walk in hunger, for hope in a world where many walk in fear, and for friends in a world where many walk alone.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's really my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly the students, 49 in the public gallery and 47 in the members' gallery, from Simons Valley school in Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill. I'd like them to rise, and I'd also like to read out the teachers and chaperones that are here today with them: Andrew Cull, Laurie Reeve, Colleen Nabata, Charlene Mudry, Vanessa Blyth, Charlene Buenting, Michelle Kenney, Jana Blake, Maria Pullen, Jenna Watts, Angela Shaw, Zoey Jachdeva, and Chad Watts. I've had the pleasure of visiting the school on a number of occasions. They always have lots of really great questions about the Legislature. I'd like us all to extend the warm welcome to our guests.

The Speaker: Hon. members, are there any other school groups?

Seeing and hearing none, the Minister of Labour and minister responsible for democratic renewal.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to stand and introduce to you and through you three active members of the Edmonton-Mill Woods constituency: Bhavna Ashta, Yogesh Ashta, and Yash Sharma. Mr. Sharma is well known for his strong community work within my constituency of Edmonton-Mill Woods and is a local business owner.

I'd also like to introduce Manjula Sachdev, who is the cousin of Mr. Sharma and is visiting from India. I wish you all a wonderful and, hopefully, warmer visit in our beautiful province of Alberta. Thank you for coming to visit us in the Legislature Building. I'd like to ask all my guests to stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly Ms Alison Poste. Alison is an emergency response professional who takes a very keen interest in yesterday's introduction of Bill 8. She's also very active in her community and very committed to the democratic process, having run in the last fall's municipal election in ward 4, as well as being co-organizer of the Edmonton's women's march. If I could ask Alison to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce the parents of one of my political staff, Pam and Rob Hoben. Pam and Rob are visiting Alberta all the way from Grand Bay-Westfield, New Brunswick. Pam is a nurse at the Saint John regional hospital, and Rob is retired. They're here visiting their son John, who works in my office as one of my ministerial assistants. During their visit they'll be travelling all over our beautiful province. Please join me in welcoming them to Alberta by giving them the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Mrs. Schreiner: Mr. Speaker, I have two sets of introductions this afternoon. It is my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all the members of the Assembly several guests today. Here representing the Central Alberta Economic Partnership are Executive Director Kim Worthington; Kim's son and chief of staff, Alex Worthington; and CAEP's administrative assistant, Vanessa Mariani. CAEP, now celebrating its 20th anniversary, supports regional collaboration and was a pilot project from which the regional economic development alliance grew. REDA serves in empowering member communities to advance sustainable regional economic development at the local level. They do important work all across our province. I ask my guests to now rise and receive the traditional welcome of the House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Please continue.

Mrs. Schreiner: Mr. Speaker, I wish to introduce my sister Cindy Bourk. Cindy has been my confidante and best friend and one of my greatest supporters. There is no greater strength than that of your family, and I'm so thankful and deeply indebted to her for her ability to always be in my corner. I ask the House to please give Cindy the traditional warm welcome of the House.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Dawson Rowe and Tania Denroche-Rowe. Dawson is a high school student from Airdrie who just completed the Ride of the Mustang, raising money for kids with cancer in and around our area. He is a staunch Conservative, here to witness the proceedings of the House today. Please greet them with the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the House the incoming student executives here on behalf of the Council of Alberta University Students. I had the pleasure of meeting with them yesterday to talk about various issues from affordability to student employment and mental health supports on campus. They're seated in the public gallery, and I'd ask them to rise when I call their name: Mount Royal University President-elect Andrew Nguyen and Vice-president external elect Amanda LeBlanc; from the University of Lethbridge Students' Union, President-elect Laura Bryan and VP external elect Victoria Schindler; from the University of Calgary Students' Union, President-elect Sagar Grewal; and finally, from the Students' Association of

MacEwan University, VP external elect Andrew Bieman. Let's give them the warm welcome of the Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Jenny Nguyen. She's a fourth-year accounting student at the U of A participating in the tri-level internship, where she interns with all three orders of government: federal, provincial, and municipal. She's completing her provincial internship with Economic Development and Trade's finance and admin branch. She plans to pursue her master's in accounting upon completion of her degree and expressed appreciation and enjoyment for her opportunity with my ministry. I'd ask her to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Health and Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you two incredibly strong women from the Kensington clinic in Calgary. I ask that they rise as I introduce them. They are Celia Posyniak and Jennifer Berard. Kensington clinic focuses on providing reproductive health services to women, trans, and nonbinary folks, including essential abortion services. Celia, the executive director, started that clinic almost 30 years ago and has dedicated her life to ensuring that women have choice and access to the medical services that they need. Jennifer is an administrative assistant, and her work focuses on ensuring that women feel supported and safe. Please join me, colleagues, in showing our support and gratitude and welcoming our guests.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The Associate Minister of Health.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce a group of advocates with the Canadian Cancer Society Alberta-Northwest Territories division. April is Daffodil Month, a time to focus attention on advocacy, life-saving research, education, and support for people living with cancer and to honour those who have passed away by wearing a daffodil. The daffodil has come to be seen as a symbol of strength and courage in the fight against cancer. The support and compassion of dedicated volunteers like our guests means so much not only to those affected by cancer but also their families and friends. I'd ask that Chelsea Draeger, executive director, along with Alexa, Haley, Charlotte, Maya, Palwasha, Chu Yang, Lorelee, Rhianna, Christine, Oksana, Pamela, Angeline, and Dr. Mercer please rise and receive the warm welcome and appreciation of this House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

1:40

Members' Statements

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

Grande Prairie Regional Agricultural and Exhibition Society

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In February Evergreen Park once again hosted the Growing the North Conference, the largest economic development convention in a region that also takes in northeastern B.C. The park is able to host the Growing the North because it is home to the Entrec Centre, the biggest full-

featured exhibition complex north of Edmonton. The centre is just one of many amenities at Evergreen Park, which also offers banquet halls, concert venues, agriculture and energy sector services, agriculture pavilions, equestrian amenities, a fairground, a casino, and one of the best race tracks in the country.

Mr. Speaker, many of my colleagues may be surprised to learn that this bustling cultural, recreational, and business hub is operated by our local agricultural society. The Grande Prairie Regional Agricultural and Exhibition Society was founded in 1910, and that year it held its first farm fair and rodeo. Since then, decades of volunteer boards have evolved Evergreen Park into a world-class venue which attracts half a million visitors a year while still retaining its traditional agricultural and community-based roots. The economic spinoffs to our region are immense, with a 2014 study estimating the park's financial impact at an amazing \$43 million a year.

Mr. Speaker, just like the rest of Alberta's 300 agricultural societies, Grande Prairie relies on provincial funding for a firm fiscal foundation from which to launch its operations. The society's only request is that the province continue providing the stable and predictable base funding it has long appreciated, and it will continue to spin it into much greater value for its community, the region, and Alberta.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Refugee Rights Day

Mr. Horne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. April 4 marks Refugee Rights Day in Canada. This day commemorates the historic 1985 Singh decision, which changed the fate of many refugees seeking asylum.

Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms protects everyone's right to justice when life, liberty, and security of the person are at stake. This entitles refugee claimants to an oral hearing in accordance with the principles of international law and fundamental justice.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to say that our country is and has long been a destination for refugees fleeing all sorts of injustice. Refugees have come to Canada fleeing religious and racial persecution, revolution, and war from Yugoslavia, Chile, Thailand, Syria, and many, many other countries. In our province wonderful groups like Refugee Alberta help newcomers to our country who land here. Recently Syrians fled their country, and many have settled here with great success, starting businesses, getting involved in the community, and enrolling their children in our schools. This is a record I'm sure all Canadians can be proud of.

However, I'm not so sure when it comes to the record of the leader of the Conservative Party. He tweeted about one refugee's "perfect, unaccented English" as if speaking with an accent is somehow shameful. He stripped refugee claimants' access to life-saving health care, creating an outcry from medical professionals across the country. Taken with concerns surrounding how the member handled the temporary foreign worker program, this is deeply concerning. The member opposite has a history of working to undo our country's great reputation.

Mr. Speaker, it is my hope that all Albertans will take this day to reflect on how we can be more welcoming to those fleeing injustice and how we can work to strengthen our just, caring society.

Thank you.

United Conservative Party

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, in less than a month Albertans from across the province will come to Red Deer to participate in the

founding convention of the United Conservative Party of Alberta. While many of the attendees are long-time politicals, there is a steadily growing number of political neophytes. Let's call them Average Albertan.

Since the NDP took power, Average Albertan has seen their income tax increased, their business tax increased, a carbon tax introduced and increased. They have seen red tape and bureaucratic interference increase exponentially, and they just don't feel as optimistic as they once did. Average Albertan is tired of seeing more and more businesses shuttered and their proprietors move across the border, where they're taxed less.

The Alberta advantage isn't what it used to be. Here's what Suncor said in February: we're having to look at Canada quite hard; the cumulative impact of regulation and higher taxation in other jurisdictions is making Canada a more difficult jurisdiction to allocate capital in. Here's what ATB Financial's chief economist said last month: people are making less money, and job prospects are still there, but they're at lower-paying opportunities.

When a guy in a blue pickup arrived in town talking about uniting common-sense and free-market Albertans, average Albertans found themselves more and more interested in what he had to say. Soon enough average Albertans bought a membership, were attending meetings, found themselves elected to their local CA board, and even submitted a couple of policy proposals on reducing red tape and bringing back the Alberta advantage, all of that to say that an unprecedented number of Albertans from all stripes and backgrounds will be gathering in Red Deer from May 4 to 6 and forging a new way forward, one where all Albertans can be successful and included.

We invite all Albertans to get involved, come to Red Deer, and share their ideas on building strong families and communities. Albertans everywhere want Alberta to be a leading partner in a Canada that works, a province that protects the financial future of the next generation, and an economy where all Albertans can succeed.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek.

Daffodil Month

Ms Woollard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first memory of Daffodil Month with the Canadian Cancer Society was many years ago when as a teenager I volunteered to distribute daffodils to shoppers in the old downtown farmers' market in Edmonton. I knew we were collecting money for a good cause, but I really had no understanding of cancer and its impact. It wasn't until a dearly loved uncle was diagnosed with and finally succumbed to lung cancer that I realized the terrible impact and damage cancer inflicts on people suffering from the disease and those near them. Since that time I've learned more about cancer prevention, treatment, and research and the Canadian Cancer Society.

After my uncle's death I learned that many cancers can be prevented, that early diagnosis can be a lifesaver, and that a diagnosis of cancer need not be a death sentence. The outlook for those diagnosed with cancer has improved because of a number of factors, the most important of which was the establishment of the Canadian Cancer Society in 1935. Over time support for cancer research through the Canadian Cancer Society has grown, and it now supports thousands of researchers through the administration of more than \$1 billion in cancer research funding.

Over the past 85 years incredible progress has been made in the fight for life. The Canadian Cancer Society is a national community-based organization whose mission is the eradication of cancer and the enhancement of the quality of life of people living

with the disease. Its vision is to create a world where no Canadian fears cancer. This organization has made an immense difference in many Canadians' lives, and their work through supporting research will continue to impact Canadians' lives into the future.

Daffodil Month is a time to remember what can be accomplished when people work together to achieve goals.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Partial Upgrading of Oil Sands Bitumen

Dr. Turner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Bill 1, the Energy Diversification Act, is based on the recommendations from the Energy Diversification Advisory Committee to expand Alberta's downstream oil and gas sector. Among them is a plan to increase partial upgrading of oil sands bitumen here in Alberta. Partial upgrading will increase the value of that bitumen being shipped through pipelines like the expanded Trans Mountain pipeline or in 60,000-barrel unit trains leaving from the oil-to-rail terminal near Bruderheim in Alberta's heartland. It's going to help Alberta's bitumen producers to get a better price for their products, and it's going to help Albertans to extract more value from the resources that we own through increased jobs, economic activity, and tax revenues to support important public services like health care and education.

Recently I toured the oil-to-rail terminal at Bruderheim and learned a lot about the potential to massively increase value for Albertans by applying made-in-Alberta technology to bitumen and other heavy oils before being loaded into the Kinder Morgan pipeline or onto unit trains. Partial upgrading will increase the capacity of the pipeline by at least a third and would markedly reduce the need for dilbit. In addition to lowering shipping and refinery costs, partial upgrading would also mitigate some of the environmental concerns that come with dilbit. It would remove insoluble substances in the bitumen such as asphaltenes, which lead to reduced flow in the pipeline and which complicate rail car filling and emptying. The asphaltenes can further be processed into paving material, shingles, and waterproof coatings, among others.

1:50

These are just some of the exciting Alberta technologies that the Energy Diversification Act will foster. Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud to be part of a government which promotes adding value to our resources here at home and creating good, family-supporting jobs for Albertans while doing everything possible to protect the environment and our future prosperity.

Oral Question Period

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

Government Spending

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The NDP MLA for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater said, "We dropped our 2018 budget last week. It's looking pretty balanced." He goes on to say that the NDP budget was "able to curb spending more or less." This is a budget that has seen a 16 per cent increase in spending under this NDP government, has an \$8.8 billion deficit in it, and is well on its way to a hundred billion dollars in debt. If this is curbing spending, I'd hate to see what's not. When are the Premier and the NDP ready to take spending seriously?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Our budget is focused on supporting families, it is focused on continuing to invest in our health care and our education system, and it's focused on continuing the good work that it has already achieved in terms of stimulating economic growth: over 90,000 jobs just last year, exports up, manufacturing up, retail sales up. These are things that happen when you invest in Albertans rather than making them pay for the mistakes of the past. We will not do that.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, what this budget is focused on is giving bankers money. Debt servicing this year alone will be \$1.921 billion, which is more than 19 government departments' total expenditures. Debt servicing between 2018 and 2024 will be \$17.63 billion. That could help a lot of families, a lot of constituents of mine and yours. Again, will the Premier stop dodging the question and stand up and tell us: how high? How up, up, up will she go? When will she get spending and debt in control in our province?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. One of the things I was very proud about with respect to the budget that we delivered was that we did something that no other government has ever done, which is that we actually mapped out a seven-year plan going forward. No other government has ever provided that much detail. That's in contrast to the Official Opposition, which also, unlike previous Official Oppositions, hasn't bothered to ever introduce a shadow budget or, in fact, describe to Albertans what they would do differently. In fact, we are moving forward with a reasonable, stable, thoughtful path to balance in 2023 while preserving those important services that Albertans rely on and continuing our work . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, proud of the NDP's budget? This NDP government projected that they would be in surplus right now. Now we find out that four years from now they're going to be a hundred billion dollars in debt. I certainly wouldn't be proud of that. The question, then, is this. It's going to be a 646 per cent increase to the debt under this NDP government. Are the Premier and the NDP proud of that?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What, as I said, we are proud of are the 20 new schools that were announced in this year's budget, moving to ensure that our kids are actually learning in safe and modern places; the continued investment in health care; the 1,400 new long-term care spaces; you know, investments in places like the area of the MLA for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, where we're seeing additional investments in health care, which, of course, the member opposite has long asked for. We're very proud . . .

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

Carbon Levy and Seniors

Mr. Nixon: Well, I'm glad the Premier brought up Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre. We have a seniors' centre inside Sundre, which has been discussed in this place many times, and the Premier's office told those seniors to go fund raise to pay for their

carbon tax, told those fixed-income seniors to raise their rates to be able to attend their seniors' centre. I have repeatedly asked her: is it the position of your government that seniors fund raise to pay for your carbon tax?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is the position of our government that we have invested in seniors' services quite significantly over the course of the last two and three years. We've moved forward on our election commitment to open more long-term care beds. We have provided grants through Energy Efficiency Alberta to nonprofit organizations. We have provided rebates through the climate leadership plan. Pretty much every senior is eligible for them, so many seniors actually come out ahead. At the same time, we are continuing to have the backs of Albertans as we move forward on a responsible path to balance.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, under this government we're now seeing carbon tax rebates being clawed back 30 per cent on seniors – 30 per cent – and then when asked about it, this government's minister for seniors says: that's okay; they still have 70 per cent. You've got the Premier's office telling my seniors to fund raise to pay for the carbon tax and now taking away 30 per cent of the rebate. Again, is it the position of your government that seniors should fund raise to pay for your carbon tax? Yes or no?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, as I've said, it's the position of our government that we need to continue to fund those services that support seniors, that support their health care, support their accommodations, and support the many services that they receive each and every day through the government of Alberta. Were we to embark upon the path that the members opposite suggest, where we give a \$700 million tax cut to the top 1 per cent, claim that we can balance the budget, and then mislead people about whether or not that would have any impact on front-line services, the people that would be among those hurt the most would be seniors. We won't let that happen.

Mr. Nixon: Well, let's talk about misleading. This NDP government misled Albertans. They campaigned without telling anybody about a carbon tax that they were going to bring in. They told Albertans that the carbon tax would not be used for general revenue and for operations. But what happened? We now know from the budget that it is. Misleading Albertans? It's pretty clear who's misleading Albertans. Again to the Premier: is it your position that seniors should fund raise to pay for the carbon tax? Yes or no? It's the third time we're asking it.

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the things that I think we do need to be very honest with Albertans about and that I think the members opposite should start doing, to go back to the point that I was just making, is that you cannot give a \$700 million tax cut to the top 1 per cent, cancel the carbon levy, balance the budget, and not impact front-line services. That is not true. They are not being clear with Albertans about the consequences of their ill-prepared plan that they won't actually come clean to Albertans about, and quite honestly it is time for them . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, what is clear is that this government told seniors in my community to fund raise to pay for the carbon tax. This government, this Premier's own office, said that and, in fact, told the seniors in that community that there was no money available for them and that maybe their centre would just have to shut. These are seniors in our community that won't be able to go to the centre. The Premier has not apologized for that statement. I'm assuming that maybe that's true. Is it the government's position that seniors should fund raise for the carbon tax? Are you going to continue to watch seniors' carbon tax rebates be clawed back under your watch? If you're willing to throw seniors under the bus, who else are you willing to throw under the bus?

The Speaker: Hon. member, I was in error. That was your third main question. I identified it as second supplemental.

The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On this side of the House, the government side, we stand up for everyday Albertans. That's why we are so proud to have a track record of investing in students when they show up to school, investing in health care where it's much needed. For example, we worked to ensure that long-term care beds were available in Sundre, and the mayor said: thank you for this shining example of how government should work with Albertans; this is a successful story for our community that I'm very proud of; I want you to be able to share in that pride because without you it wouldn't have been possible. That's because we have a government that's investing in the people of this province.

Mr. Nixon: Well, I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that the mayor of Sundre was extremely disappointed that this government told seniors in his town to fund raise for the carbon tax. While the Deputy Premier just rose in this House and tried to divert from the question, the question is very simple. Is it the NDP government's position that seniors should fund raise to pay for their carbon tax? Yes or no?

Ms Hoffman: No, Mr. Speaker. That's why we have a rebate that's sent out to Albertans who make less than a certain value in terms of income. That's why we made sure that about two-thirds of Alberta families get this rebate. Most seniors are eligible for it. We think it's important for them to have the ability to be able to live in their community, including lodges, and for those lodges to be in good working order. That's why we're also investing in lodge programs and other types of supportive living and community-based care options. We stand up for the people of this province. We're not pushing for deep, ideological cuts that would leave them out in the cold.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thanks for finally giving us an answer. Hopefully, the government will apologize to the seniors of Sundre for telling them to fund raise for their carbon tax.

Now, the Deputy Premier brings up the rebate. That's an interesting thing. Under this government's watch we now know that seniors in Alberta are having their rebates reduced by 30 per cent, and all the minister of seniors will say is: ah, it's okay; they've got another 70 per cent. Well, Mr. Speaker, it's not okay. When will this government start really standing up for seniors and stop playing games in this Assembly?

Ms Hoffman: We're incredibly proud to stand up for seniors every day in this government, Mr. Speaker. That's why we've made sure that if you have a certain level of income that is below a threshold, you're eligible for this rebate, and that's why two-thirds of Albertans

actually do receive this rebate. It's not a barrier to accessing supportive living types of accommodations. That's why we're incredibly proud that we continue to put this money in the pockets of Albertans. We also acknowledge that lodges do have some costs that they need to address and that they do take a portion to ensure that they can have efficient operations as well. We're proud of the fact that we're sending rebates to constituents throughout the province, including the town of Sundre.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

2:00

School Design and Construction

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. North-central Calgary has lacked robust middle and high school infrastructure for a while now, and that means thousands of students must travel outside of their communities for their education. Schools with integrated community centres, libraries, recreation and child care facilities represent sustainable investments to support vibrant communities now and in the future. To the Premier: how many of the schools that were recently announced will be designed with community and complementary activities in mind?

Ms Jansen: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, you know, one of the great things we have in our Infrastructure department is a wonderful group of people who design schools. I have a chance to work with them on a pretty regular basis, and they really are amazing people. They're creative, they're inclusive, and they spend a lot of time talking to educators about what should go into a successful school build. I'm very confident that when the opportunity comes for us to build a school, whether it is an elementary, a middle school, or a high school, we take into account the needs of the community, we're nimble about the design, and all the way through the process we take the community into . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

First supplemental.

Ms McPherson: Thank you. Evanston is one of the fastest growing communities in Calgary and has been for five years. Elementary schools like Kenneth D. Taylor are core schools for 300 students, with 300 more in portables, which can be moved to another school when they aren't needed any longer. The government's budget cuts funding for modular classrooms from \$50 million to \$25 million next year to zero for all of the following years. To the Premier: what's the plan to ensure that diverse and growing communities like Evanston continue to have flexibility as their populations change?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, you know, when we talk about the need for schools, we're talking about infrastructure, and when we talk about infrastructure, we're talking about something that you can't build based on buttons. You need money for it. It's amazing to me that the folks across the aisle consistently stand up and tell us to do some compassionate belt-tightening except when it comes to an infrastructure project in their area. Now, I'm absolutely willing to sit down and talk to anyone about an infrastructure project they want to talk about, but I'll tell you that it takes an investment. That's what we're doing right now in our budget.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Ms McPherson: Evanston has a Catholic elementary school and a CBE elementary school, which both opened in 2016 and still don't

have playgrounds. The community has long identified a need for a CBE middle school. This is at the top of the CBE priority list, yet the recently announced schools included an additional Catholic elementary school for the community. Can the Premier explain why this decision was made? It seems at odds with the community's demographics and needs.

Ms Jansen: Well, you know what, Mr. Speaker? I am delighted to have a sit-down with the hon. member and have a conversation about how she can support us in making sure that we show our public support for the infrastructure build in this province. In 2015 the Premier announced a capital plan that was almost \$30 billion. That's transformational infrastructure for this province. As we go forward, we're continuing to build that. But you know what? You have to support us in that build and not complain when you feel that the bill is too high. It doesn't work both ways.

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

Calgary Winter Olympics Bid

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Over the past few days out at the doors in Calgary-Currie or on the phone I've heard and spoken with constituents who are expressing concerns over the Olympics in Calgary. Whether they are for or against it, they have a shared opinion that there must be a plebiscite on the Olympics. If we do have a plebiscite – to the hon. Minister of Culture and Tourism: will you support an Olympic bid if Calgary does not have a plebiscite first?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Culture and Tourism.

Miranda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Our government committed \$10 million to explore a bid, but we have been very clear that any additional dollars above the \$10 million to submit an official bid must include meaningful public engagement, including a plebiscite to assess public support for an official bid.

Thank you.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that you've met with IOC officials, what have they told you about reusing our older infrastructure for a possible Olympics?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Miranda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I met with IOC and COC officials, and they have told me that their vision includes one where we use existing infrastructure in order to keep the costs down. We're going to continue having conversations with our partners, both in the federal government and the city, going forward.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: if a bid is not successful, what will happen to the current Olympic facilities that would have received an upgrade from a successful bid?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Miranda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Calgarians and Albertans are very fortunate to still have the use of infrastructure, facilities, the legacy of the '88 Games. In fact, 31 out of the 57 medals won in the

last Olympics were from athletes who trained here in the province. We want to ensure that Calgarians and Albertans still have use of and access to the facility, and that's why our government invested \$10 million to refurbish the sliding track at WinSport.

Thank you.

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

Hospital Emergency Room Wait Times

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The colossal waste of EMS time spent in the emergency room waiting to transfer their patients, roughly 650,000 hours out of service in 2016, will not be solved by more ambulances and more paramedics. This is a hospital ER problem, and Alberta Health Services' negligence is costing over \$20 million per year just in salaries. It puts patients and communities at risk. But hospitals now have a standard in the United Kingdom, a transfer time of 15 minutes, one-quarter of our median transfer time. To the minister: given that more ambulances and staff will not solve this risky and wasteful practice, what is AHS going to do to solve the ER wait for transfers?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The member is right about one thing, and that is that there is a problem with capacity in many of our hospitals. That's one of the reasons why we're working to expand the community and paramedicine program, so that paramedics don't always need to bring patients who don't need to be in a hospital to a hospital. That's why we're expanding the number of long-term care beds and other types of acute infrastructure, including the Calgary cancer hospital, in municipalities where we know that there is a backlog and that people are waiting in hospital rather than in the community in a more appropriate setting or in an acute-care setting. That's also why we are working to expand community-based health care and making sure that people can get care in places other than emergency rooms.

Dr. Swann: Mr. Speaker, the United Kingdom and Israel have solved the problem. In a few minutes they transfer patients, because they have staff there and they have space there, to the nurses on the wards to take care of, in the hallway if they need to be. Why do they have to stay in emergency rooms and depend on these EMS workers that should be out on the road serving other people?

Ms Hoffman: A fair question, Mr. Speaker, and one that I asked. The answer simply is that for years there was an infrastructure deficit in this province caused by the previous government that failed to build the adequate space, including long-term care, supportive living, and acute-care spaces, in various places throughout our province. I don't want to simply move people from one stretcher to another stretcher. We need to make sure that we have people in the appropriate places, that the folks who are in hospital in acute-care settings that shouldn't be there have somewhere safe to live that's appropriate, whether that be home-based care through home care that we've expanded or through long-term care. That certainly is one of the big areas of priority and a big area of action for this government.

Dr. Swann: Will the minister resolve to learn from these other countries' ER solutions and make sure that we end hallway waits within this year? Yes or no?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. If it was possible to cut them by a quarter within one year, we certainly would be very eager to do that. We have looked at those models in other jurisdictions. One of the big changes is that they've expanded community-based health care, which our government has taken as a very serious initiative. They've also got the appropriate number of spaces in other care facilities so that those beds that have acute-care patients in them that don't want to be there and that aren't supposed to be there have somewhere else to be. It takes time to build long-term care, supportive living, and expand home care, but those are certainly priorities and pillars of this government rather than deep cuts that are being proposed by the Official Opposition.

Carbon Levy Economic Impact

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, despite the government's own rhetoric, here is what Albertans have received in return for the \$96 billion in debt and a 67 per cent increase in the carbon tax. First, the percentage of unemployed Albertans who are out of work for over a year has doubled, going from 8 per cent to 16 per cent, and the average number of weeks Albertans were unemployed last year was the highest it has been since 1976. To the minister: instead of unprecedented levels of debt and making life more expensive with the carbon tax, why won't your government recognize the full, costly, and devastating impacts of the carbon tax and scrap it?

2:10

Mr. Ceci: You know, Mr. Speaker, the whole story is that the GDP in this province grew 4.5 per cent last year. It is poised to lead the nation again this year and the year after that. I don't know where the hon. member gets his information, but clearly jobs are up in this province, GDP growth is up, small-business confidence is up, wages are up, et cetera, et cetera, including the communities of Edmonton and Calgary. Calgary is the fastest growing, GDP-wise, prairie city this year and next year. Things are looking up.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Barnes: Just go talk to Albertans. Given that this government gives with one hand while taking even more with the other and given that when I speak with Alberta businesses and entrepreneurs, what they really want from this government isn't subsidies but is to scrap the carbon tax, reduce unnecessary regulations, balance the budget, and return the Alberta advantage and given that the Calgary Chamber of commerce reports that 73 per cent of businesses surveyed reported that their costs will increase due to the carbon tax, again to the minister: will you finally start listening to our province's job and wealth creators and scrap your economy-shrinking carbon tax?

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

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. In fact, Alberta led the country in GDP growth in 2017 and again in 2018, we have created 90,000 new full-time jobs, and certainly we have moved forward with pipeline approvals that have certainly laid the foundation for an economic recovery in our energy sector. Of course, we got those pipeline approvals because of the climate leadership plan. Certainly, we are moving forward. The economy is moving forward. We do not think that you go forward by looking in the rear-view mirror. That's an awfully dangerous way to drive down the road.

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, given that those numbers are from our own ATB and given that the government's priority is to diversify

the economy and given that the government is now 16 per cent more reliant on nonrenewable resource revenue than when they took office – this despite racking up \$96 billion in debt and costing \$3.7 billion in annual interest – to the minister: did your well-intentioned plan to diversify the economy fail, or was it just a hypocritical ploy to take more taxes from families, communities, and local Alberta businesses?

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

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know what? I'm proud of the tax credits that our government introduced to help diversify this economy, and I want to remind the members opposite that Bill 30 passed unanimously in this House a little over a year ago. Our capital investment tax credit has leveraged \$1.2 billion worth of investments in the province. But what I can't wait to hear is to see the member explain to his leader that he supports our plan and not his leader's plan, which calls for the end of these tax credits.

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

Environment and Parks Minister's Meetings

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to ask the minister responsible for climate change if she knows a gentleman called Mr. Dan Woynillowicz, if you know him, and if she met him during her recent visit to Vancouver.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order, please.

Hon. member, I'm not sure exactly where your question was going. Is it intended to address the government policy question rather than just the name of an individual that a member may or may not know?

Mr. Panda: It is, Mr. Speaker. Can you reset the time? I'll ask it again.

The Speaker: I'm not sure I will, no. Would you keep going?

Mr. Panda: Okay. My question is to the minister of climate change. A few weeks ago she met a gentleman called Dan Woynillowicz in Vancouver. My question is if she talked about . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member. You get two more supplementals. You get an opportunity to – Minister, anybody?

Ms Phillips: Well, that extended question-and-answer period led me to go through my mental Rolodex. I do believe that I have met such an individual in my life. I meet a lot of people, Mr. Speaker, and certainly I met a lot of people at Globe in Vancouver. It was a very productive time in terms of discussions with the Vancouver business community, the clean tech sector, and others.

The Speaker: First supplemental, hon. member.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will address her mental remembrance by submitting the evidence from her own Twitter account.

But my question is whether the minister knows that Mr. Woynillowicz was involved in an infamous 2008 Rockefeller Brothers Foundation project between wealthy U.S. foundations and Canadian activists to land lock Canada's oil sands?

The Speaker: Hon member, I'm going to let you go. Please be seated if I could ask. I listened to the question, and I'm trying to ask

if you have a question related to government policy rather than a name association process. If other ministers would like to respond to the question, please proceed, but I don't think, hon. members, that this is – again I remind you that it's addressing government policy that this issue is rather than name association.

Mr. Nixon: Point of order.

The Speaker: Point of order noted.

Ms Phillips: Okay. We're truly through the looking glass now, Mr. Speaker. I meet a lot of people in the run of a day. There are a lot of Canadians out there, and I have met many of them. I don't know where we're going with this, but it sounds like we're heading down the road of a ridiculous drive-by smear of an individual, and I'm just not going to dignify it.

The Speaker: Hon. member, I will give you one last opportunity to focus on policy if you could.

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, given the Government House Leader's defence of the issue surrounding the minister's meeting with the mayor of Rocky Mountain House – this would count as a meeting, whether she remembers mentally or not – and given the NDP's disastrous appointment of Karen Mahon and Tzeporah Berman and given her close association with Greenpeace, does the minister feel that it is appropriate to meet with individuals that helped conspire to sabotage our energy sector?

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Ms Phillips: Mr. Speaker, I believe that we are talking about a number of folks that I ran into and talked to at the Globe sustainable business forum, including the Vancouver board of trade, including the B.C. Chamber of Commerce, including a number of other individuals in the business community. I met with a number of companies as well, went to a women's luncheon. Perhaps that is objectionable to the hon. member. I met a lot of folks at Globe. I'm not going to apologize for that.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

School Construction Priorities

Ms. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Minister, the fiscal mismanagement of this government is well known, and it's led to some very, very difficult choices like who will get dollars to build schools, and, well, there has been zero accountability to my community. Given that Chestermere's existing schools will be at 107 per cent capacity by 2020 – the fact is that we're the second fastest growing city in the country – and given that the people of Chestermere are fully aware of this government's fiscal mismanagement and given that every dollar that these schools have is eroded by the carbon tax, could the minister please elaborate on the criteria that were used to pick the schools that have been given the go-ahead?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, it's perplexing that my friends across the aisle spend so much time talking about reducing spending while at the same time presenting me with a long list of infrastructure demands. It has actually already topped \$2

billion, billion with a "b." So I appreciate a conversation . . . [interjections]

Well, there's your new tone, Mr. Speaker.

2:20

The Speaker: The day started out so nicely. Every day is a surprise. I'm going to say to go to your first supplemental.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What's perplexing is that I actually wasn't asking about spending. I was asking about the criteria that allows infrastructure projects to go forward. There's a huge difference, just in case you're curious.

Given that we're heading towards a \$96 billion deficit and given that this government now has limited dollars and given that the government is spending \$2 billion a year in debt repayment service costs alone instead of building much-needed infrastructure, how can the minister justify spending billions of taxpayer dollars on debt repayment instead of much-needed schools?

Ms Jansen: Well, Mr. Speaker, I am curious, so I, in fact, would ask a question of the member. If you are so concerned about infrastructure in your community, sit down and work with me and support our infrastructure plan instead of complaining every time we want to build something. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Second supplemental.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you. Well, it would be helpful if the government could admit that it is their fiscal mismanagement that has actually left communities like mine without the needed schools and portables and expansions. And when you're on this side of the House, you can ask me all the questions that you want. I can't wait.

Given that Chestermere-Rocky View families have been directly impacted by this government's 67 per cent increase in carbon tax and \$2 billion a year in debt repayment – it's a whole lot of schools, Minister, and it's a whole lot of teachers – and given that these wasted dollars could be spent instead on needed infrastructure, what does the minister . . .

The Speaker: Thank you.

I would ask that the volume of responses stay lower. I am having difficulty hearing the question. I'm not exactly sure where it was.

Ms Jansen: Well, I'd like to thank the member for pointing out that I'm not on that side of the House, and you know why? I'm not on that side of the House because they're not too fond of progressives, people who actually want to build infrastructure. Now I'm on this side of the House, and that's what we get to do. So who's in the better position? I think it's me.

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

Calgary Southwest Ring Road Construction Concerns

Mr. Sucha: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Spring is here – well, sort of – and we're about to enter the thick of construction season and further development of the Calgary southwest ring road. After attending the most recent open house about this project, I have some questions I would like to ask, that came from some stakeholders in my area. Now, I know the Member for Calgary-Bow has been a strong advocate for mitigating the impacts of dust from the project to neighbouring residents by bringing these issues to the minister's attention. To follow up, to the Minister of Transportation: what is being done to ensure that the air quality in the summer is safe and

not disruptive for the quality of life of people living near the project?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

Ms Jansen: Why, thank you. It's nice to stand up again in the House. We've applied strict controls on our contractor who is operating the gravel operation in that area, including the installation of tarps, sprinklers, dust suppressants to the crushing operation. We've had some wonderful advocacy in that area on this particular issue. Construction is a nuisance. We find that all the time in Infrastructure and in Transportation. The result can be noise and dust issues. However, all efforts are being made to minimize the construction-related impacts to the work that's being undertaken right now in the transportation utility corridor.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that another issue is around light pollution – the astronomy community has indicated that certain filters can block out specific light temperatures while others cannot – to the same minister: what is being done to ensure that light pollution from the street lights is not an issue and that the kelvin level is set so that the colour can be filtered out using telescopes for recreational or scientific purposes?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, there's a lot of thought that's been put into this. In fact, lower temperature LED lights are being used to minimize the amount of blue light in the area. Light is going to be directed downward on the highway from 15-metre poles. Those are going to be used to minimize the spread of the light. Cut-off fixtures are going to be used to minimize light spillage and reduce glare, and there's no high-mast lighting along highway 22X. That's going to help us avoid light flooding.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that concerns are being raised around the interaction with wildlife, to the same minister: what is being done to reduce the impacts on wildlife to ensure the park areas around the road are at their most pristine conditions?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Jansen: I thank the member. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the section of the southwest Calgary ring road where the road crosses the park area, the bridges have been designed with wildlife passages. That was really important in that area. We have a substantial amount of wildlife, and I'm glad the member is concerned about that. Wildlife fencing is being installed to guide the wildlife to these crossings. No recreational pathway is going to be completed in that area, further separating the wildlife from human interaction. Along the wildlife crossing our contractors are installing native trees, grasses, shrubs, providing cover for animals who are crossing the road. And Alberta Environment and Parks compliance . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The Member for Airdrie.

Carbon Levy Rebate and Seniors' Expenses

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier is on the record saying that every penny raised by the carbon levy will be rebated back to Albertans. However, we know that seniors in Alberta will

have to fork over 30 per cent of their carbon tax rebates just to pay their rent. Given that the minister is fine with it because they still have 70 per cent left over, how much of the carbon tax rebates can be taken from our seniors before this minister thinks it's a problem?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Our government is very proud of the work that we have been doing to support seniors in this province, everything from our affordable housing strategies to continuing to make investments, including making sure that our seniors are able to be part of the 60 per cent of Albertans who get a carbon levy rebate, making sure that we are able to take action on climate change and rebate to 60 per cent of Albertans an amount that helps them cover those costs and move forward our province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Pitt: Well, Mr. Speaker, only 70 per cent of the carbon tax rebates given by this government are being left in seniors' pockets while 30 per cent is leaving them, and this government doesn't care. My question is: has this government done an impact assessment of the 67 per cent increase in the carbon tax rebate on our senior citizens?

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

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Approximately 260,000 seniors are eligible to receive up to \$300 annually from the carbon levy rebate. We also protected the seniors' benefit so that seniors have up to \$280 a month when they really need it. Of course, the Conservatives would cut the seniors' benefit, making life harder for low-income seniors.

We continue to work for seniors. We protected more than \$800 million in seniors' benefits over the last two years. We're very proud of that, Mr. Speaker, and we will continue to work with seniors to make life more affordable.

Mrs. Pitt: Mr. Speaker, this government can pretend to care about seniors and social programs all day long, but Bernice Westfall, an AISH recipient from Edmonton, says, and I quote: what are we supposed to do; we're not going to be eating very healthy; I'll tell you that much; I don't think the government thought this through properly. Will this government at the very least admit that their carbon tax is punishing seniors in our province?

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

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are also investing in energy efficiency audits for housing management bodies. We're strengthening public services that seniors count on. We're ensuring that AISH benefits are there for those who need it. We're working to make life better for everyday families. Contrast that with the folks across the way who would give tax cuts to their wealthy friends and make low-income seniors pay for it.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Highwood.

Health Services Procurement Process

Mr. W. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For democracy and government institutions to function, there must be trust, trust from those who are elected to serve and trust from those who assist in delivering public services. Alberta Health Services – and I quote from their website – “is Canada's first and largest provincially, fully-integrated health system.” A big part of delivering those services is achieved by securing high-quality suppliers through a

public procurement process. My question is to the Minister of Health. Can she explain to the House Alberta Health Services' legal and policy obligations as to how it ensures that 22 billion of public dollars is managed to the highest standards of fairness, openness, transparency, and accountability?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. I'd be very happy to table AHS's legal frameworks that they have in that regard, and I will do that either later on today or tomorrow.

But I do want to say that on this side of the House we absolutely believe in public health care. We want to ensure that it's here for this generation and for future generations. We know that the Conservatives have attempted it before, and a month from now we'll hear about their new plans to privatize health care. On this side of the House we're making sure that we have efficient, effective public delivery. We'll just wait and see, Mr. Speaker. I have a feeling they're going to be pushing big cuts and big privatization.

2:30

Mr. W. Anderson: My second question is to the Minister of Health given that she has the authority to overturn a procurement award either through the application of policy or otherwise made by Alberta Health Services. If not, how was she able to stop the DynaLife award in its tracks?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. There were certainly opinions that were done. I think the member is asking about a lab process that was under way when government changed. We were very clear in the platform that we were going to end experiments in privatization, that we were going to work to protect and promote public health care. I'm incredibly proud that we did that and that we've moved forward with plans and that a site has been secured for a new public lab right here in the city of Edmonton.

Mr. W. Anderson: Well, my third question is to the same minister. If established Alberta Health Services had breached its policies by running a procurement which did not meet those standards, what would she do about it?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud of the fact that we have a good, collaborative working relationship and that we are continuing to develop effective ways to invest in and protect public health care. Again, I'll be happy to table those guiding documents. I'm confident that they're on their website, but I'll be very happy to present them in this House to all members. If the member has a specific concern he'd like to raise, I'd welcome him to do so. In question period we try really hard not to deal with hypotheticals. We talk about government policy, and I'll tell you that I know the opposition's policy on health care. It's deep cuts. They've proven it in the past. They'll be arguing for it again at their convention, and they argue for these deep cuts and privatization every day in this House.

Physician Locum Services in Rural Alberta

Mr. Schneider: Mr. Speaker, in the town of Vulcan there are currently just five doctors that are practising at the local clinic. Only three are available to provide full, on-call coverage for the emergency room on weekends. One of them only covers ER during the week, and the other, who lives 50 miles away, doesn't cover those shifts

at all. The community has requested several times for locum coverage due to the lack of ER coverage. Minister, the community would like to know if the criteria for locum services can be based on the number of physicians available to be on call rather than simply based on how many physicians practise in that community.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I do work with AHS to ensure that they have the appropriate coverage for their hospitals, but I'll be happy to raise that question yet again on behalf of the member. We do certainly welcome people to work throughout the province, including a variety of locum opportunities. One of the things that I love about rural health care is that most of the rural practitioners live in those communities, they're part of them, and they step up to the call to help one another, including covering times, whether it's a bake sale at the school or covering important emergency room times at the hospital. Again, if there's a specific question about this that you'd like to follow up on, I'd be happy to do that outside of this House.

Mr. Schneider: Well, given that on-call emergency coverage from a doctor 50 miles away is not a possible solution to this critical emergency coverage and given that three doctors cannot possibly provide the coverage on weekends, especially if any of them are on vacation or away for other reasons, and given that in this current situation a doctor taking a few days off has to pay a locum out of his pocket for coverage, Minister, will you consider a change in the criteria for locum services based on the availability of doctors that cover emergency services rather than how many doctors just practise at the community centre?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can tell you from my background, being trained as a teacher, that if teachers want to take time off that isn't part of the scheduled year, they do pay for their own substitutes. There isn't such a thing as being able to take additional time. I understand the question that's being asked and will certainly look into it.

Again, the previous question was about being prudent with spending. We do have a significant budget, and we're proud of the work that we do to protect public health care. Now you're asking me to spend more money. Your colleague was asking me to spend less. It would be really nice if you guys figured out what day of the week it was and what you were going to call on us to do in terms of government policy.

Mr. Schneider: I call that a cop-out, Mr. Speaker.

I guess I'll make this very clear. They have five doctors. One lives 50 miles away and doesn't cover emergency services. One doesn't cover emergency services on the weekend because he's over 55. Minister, why is this arbitrary cap on locum services so inflexible that common-sense solutions can't simply be dealt with by the government directing AHS and the AMA to work together with rural doctors so they will know how many shifts local doctors can and will cover in their local ERs, thus ensuring that the AMA will know with certainty how many locums, if any, are required?

Ms Hoffman: Well, Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House we're proud to provide stable, predictable funding to health care. That includes making sure that we have the right practitioners. We've worked with RPAP to expand their mandate so that it's looking at additional health practitioners in addition to physicians. We're going to keep doing this work with local communities to make sure

that we have the right care in the right place and by protecting the services that Albertans count on.

I can tell you that you can't cut your way out of having staffing shortfalls. The members opposite are constantly calling on us to have deep cuts, to go back to 2015 spending limits. The other parties are talking about billions of dollars of cuts as well. You can't do that and increase access.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Fish Populations in Northeastern Alberta

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Fishing is an integral part of the way of life in northern Alberta. In recent years many Alberta anglers have rightly become concerned about the closure and restrictions on our lakes and streams. For my constituents this is a serious issue. With the 2018 fishing regulations recently released, confirming the further expansion of closures and restrictions, to the minister of environment: will you commit today to directing your ministry to create a plan to fully reopen our lakes in northeastern Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member is quite right that fishing and angling opportunities both in tourism and for local economic development are very, very important to northern communities, as they are throughout the province. That is why we take a science-based approach to population numbers and study what the recommendations are going to be every year for a number of fish species and so on that may be subject to angling in any given year. We have seen a recovery in some walleye populations, and we have also seen an expansion of those . . .

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

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that one of the main concerns driving closures of our lakes and streams is the maintenance of healthy fish populations and given that the Cold Lake fish hatchery has been a source of fish stocks for lakes across Alberta since 1984, will the minister consider stocking our struggling northeast lakes with walleye from the Cold Lake fish hatchery?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we review our fishing regulations every year for opportunities just like the hon. member flags for us here, and we're certainly willing to take those suggestions onboard. There are a number of folks who have brought us suggestions around walleye populations. What I will say to the hon. member is that what we didn't do this year was close stream angling opportunities in about four or five different areas. Instead, we're going to focus on habitat restoration and recovery because we don't believe that anglers should have to pay for 40 years of mismanagement of the fisheries.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Second supplemental.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Instead of closing streams, you closed lakes.

Given, Mr. Speaker, that cormorants are devastating Alberta fish populations and given that over a thousand residents of Alberta have petitioned the government to address the cormorant problem

within northeastern Alberta and given that the province has engaged in targeted culling of cormorants in the past, will the minister deem the invasive species a pest to protect Alberta fisheries?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. What I will commit to doing is taking a science-based approach to our fisheries management. I will commit to ensuring that we have stable, predictable funding for our fish and wildlife officers, for our conservation officers, for our operations staff, for our local regional staff, who are out there every day doing the hard work of protecting the environment and making sure there is something to fish and something to hunt. Drastic ideological cuts will not help and, in fact, will hurt the communities that the hon. member purports to represent.

The Speaker: We are at Calgary-Hawkwood.

Correctional Worker Safety

Connolly: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A few months ago I had the eye-opening experience of visiting the Calgary Remand Centre with the Minister of Labour. When we asked corrections officers what their one ask of government would be, they exclaimed that they needed a full-body scanner. To the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General: is there any plan to expand the full-body scanner pilot program to include the Calgary Remand Centre in order to ensure the safety of my constituents?

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

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for raising this very important issue. We were proud to announce a pilot project to use a body scanner in the Edmonton Remand Centre and to determine how effective that scanner would be in contributing to overall safety. I don't want to speak before the results are announced, but it seems to be having a very good impact. We'll continue monitoring that closely and looking to see whether that's a tool that ought to be utilized in other places.

Thank you.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Connolly: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that I have heard from numerous constituents in my riding about the need to protect workers from potential exposure to opioids and given that this is especially true for front-line workers like corrections workers, to the same minister: what protections are in place for workers who may be exposed to dangerous opioids like fentanyl and carfentanyl?

2:40

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for another important question. One of our priorities across government is to ensure that all workers can go to work and return home safely. In correctional facilities AHS health care staff are on-site and equipped with naloxone. Corrections officers are also trained in detecting fentanyl and other illicit substances. They have a number of tools available to them, including thorough examination for weapons and other items that pose a safety risk as well as opiate drug screening, drug dogs, and searches. The health of those workers . . .

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

Connolly: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister.

Now to the Minister of Labour: what has been done to ensure that Alberta's correctional officers are supported in their workplaces and supported once they retire?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I enjoyed the opportunity to speak with correctional officers with the member asking the questions. Every Albertan has the right to go to work and come home healthy and safe at the end of the day. The safety of staff, inmates, and visitors is paramount in our correctional centres. Our government has always stood with our front-line workers, including peace officers, and we will continue to have their backs. That's why last session we passed legislation to ensure that we have safer workplaces, and we made sure correctional officers will have presumptive coverage for PTSD. Unlike the members opposite, we know that having their backs means investing in supports rather than making big cuts to front-line services.

Members' Statements

(continued)

The Speaker: Hon. members, I'll just apologize to the member. There was a disconnect in terms of the script.

The hon. Member for Highwood.

Okotoks Water Supply

Mr. W. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. An urgent issue affecting the residents of Okotoks, that has been brought up and postponed time and time again due to this government's inefficiency, is the challenge of a devastating water shortage in the community. Since 2015 municipal representatives and I have urged this government to collaborate to help fix the shortage of water that has only been precipitated by the rapid and dramatic growth in the community over the past decade.

We've sent letters and brought up critical issues in this House year after year. The prebudget water pipeline proposal that was required was sent to the Premier, the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Municipal Affairs, and the Minister of Transportation. This project has been shovel ready for almost three years now, but due to the inactivity and denial of this government our community is unable to move forward with critical infrastructure projects. An inability to attract investors or encourage and establish businesses is in essence stifling the growth of my community.

This government has been aware since 2002 that the town of Okotoks has taken very aggressive environmental action pertaining to conservation and the management of their water resources. They also know that due to their efforts, they've been recognized by various agencies and associations. Just recently Okotoks town received the prestigious FCM sustainable communities award, but it seems these environmental stewards have not been recognized for their efforts and have had repeated barriers presented to them each and every time from this government. This government is playing games by changing the rules and moving the goal posts. They haven't recognized this community for their efforts to comply with this government's wish list.

This government has received sufficient funding for exactly these types of water projects from their federal counterparts, yet these funds have not yet been allocated from the federal clean water and wastewater fund. This government is obligated to provide Okotoks with the resources they not only deserve but desperately need.

Mr. Speaker, I'm wondering if this government understands that water is still deemed a necessity to life.

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise, and on behalf of my colleague the hon. Minister of Health I would like to give oral notice of a bill for the Order Paper, that bill being Bill 9, Protecting Choice for Women Accessing Health Care Act.

Thank you.

Tabling Returns and Reports

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

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table a current story from the *Financial Post* that shows that renewable energy companies, despite supposedly favourable Canadian taxes, subsidies, and incentives, are divesting their Canadian investments and moving south of the border to invest in the U.S.A. due to tax reforms undertaken by that country. I have the required copies.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to table some petitions from pharmacists across the province petitioning the government to reinvest at least 50 per cent of savings anticipated from the generic drug cost reductions resulting from the five-year agreement recently negotiated between the Pan-Canadian Pharmaceutical Alliance and the Canadian Generic Pharmaceutical Association into front-line pharmacy services and programs to ensure the delivery of better health care for Albertans.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have three tablings. One of them is a tweet and photograph of the minister of environment taken on March 14, 2018, meeting with Dan Woynillowicz, one of the global conspirators against Alberta's pipelines and refineries, who has done his part to ensure Alberta's oil remains landlocked.

The second tabling, Mr. Speaker, is a document entitled The Tar Sands Campaign, produced by Michael Northrop, program officer of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, July 2008. On page 25 commences the slides of Dan Woynillowicz, who worked at the Pembina Institute in July 2008, calling to stop pipelines and refineries, and met with the Minister of Environment and Parks last month in Vancouver and conspired against Alberta's energy sector.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table five copies of a document outlining the brutal cuts made to staff, long-term care during the Klein years in response to the UCP members questioning this government's long-term care commitment.

Thank you.

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

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have an e-mail from a constituent that he asked me to pass on, and he has some advice for the government on how to deal with their current negotiations with British Columbia on trying to get the pipeline approved.

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

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table this petition that I received into my office. It's specifically asking the minister of environment to review the policy of using tags or shutting down lakes altogether. It's very disappointing to see that there is no apparent science-based approach being used to do that.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Calgary-Foothills, you have another?

Mr. Panda: Yeah. That is the third tabling, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the sections of the Government House Leader's defence of the minister of environment that pertain to the definition of what is a meeting, as taken from *Hansard* on March 21, 2018, in reference to a point of privilege over whether or not . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member, you don't have to read the whole thing. That matter has already been dealt with in this House. Please give it so that it can be distributed.

The hon. Member for Highwood.

Mr. W. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to table the requisite number of copies of the Alberta Health Services procurement policies regarding the DynaLife decision.

The Speaker: Are there any other tablings?

I believe we had at least three points of order. The deputy government – no; the Opposition House Leader.

Point of Order

Restrictions on Oral Questions

Mr. Nixon: Yeah, not the Government House Leader although very soon I hope we're on that side of the House so that we can get some better decorum. [interjections] I know, Mr. Speaker, it's disappointing. I think that's what we're going to talk about today.

The first point of order I rise on is 23(h), (j), and (i). It's in regard to an exchange that took place between the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills and the minister of environment, Mr. Speaker. The government at that time, I guess, appeared to have not liked the line of questioning that was being raised, like they are right now, the deputy whip. [interjection] I do have the floor. Thank you.

2:50

The Speaker: Yes, you do.

Mr. Nixon: Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

They began to try to shout down the member while you were trying to decide if the question was relevant to government policy.

Let's first talk about whether it's relevant to government policy. The individual whom the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills brought up in that question – he has now tabled the documents – certainly has extreme views towards the oil sands, which would fall definitely under government policy. But putting that aside, the question itself – and I have it in front of me, Mr. Speaker – talks about the oil sands, about policies in regard to land locking the oil sands, which the individual the Environment minister was meeting with has stated that he believes in. The next supplemental after that talked about Tzaporah Berman, Karen Mahon, who were appointed

to the oil sands advisory group by the NDP government, certainly something to do with government policy. So, one, I would contend that it was government policy, but, second, we continue to see that the government, particularly the further we go into this sitting – I don't know if it's the polling numbers; I don't know what it is – continues to try to shout down our members as they ask questions.

It's one thing for you to make a ruling, Mr. Speaker. See, that's an example right now of that happening. It's disappointing. You are making a ruling and interacting with the Member for Calgary-Foothills, and they're yelling things.

I'm going to give you a couple of examples. We're going to talk about this in another point of order shortly, too, the minister of postsecondary yelling at the Member for Calgary-Foothills: are you dumb, are you stupid, did you come to work prepared? It's not helpful, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. member, let's speak to the point of order.

Mr. Nixon: I'm speaking to the point of order. So my point of order is, Mr. Speaker, that, one, it was government policy unless the oil sands are not part of this province now and unless the NDP oil sands advisory group is not part of the government. Lastly, if you would have the government stop abusing and victimizing our members.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. [interjections]

The Speaker: Hon. members.

The Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm almost not really sure what to say in response to this one. Let's begin with the collateral attack on things said by the Minister of Advanced Education, which were, incidentally, not said. I have the benefit of sitting directly in front of the member. I don't know if they're talking about today or yesterday or sometime 17 years ago, but that's certainly not what's at issue. I'm not really sure what this game is that they're playing in terms of putting things on the record.

The hon. member was speaking just now, and someone may have shifted or coughed or something, and he's referring to it as shouting down our members, Mr. Speaker. He's trying to essentially take advantage of the fact that the microphones fail to pick up other things that are going on in the room by creating things that were never said. You know, I think the members are probably glad that the microphones don't pick up those matters because certainly some of the things they were saying . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member, to the point of order.

Ms Ganley: Well, I think, Mr. Speaker, that when they rise and launch a series of collateral attacks that have nothing to do with the point of order, I'm entitled to at least respond to those, and in this case this has been a persistent course of action on their part.

But to get to the point of order, essentially the member is asking whether the minister met someone. Well, possibly she did, Mr. Speaker. I was out door-knocking on Sunday. I met many people. I don't happen to remember every single one of their names off the top of my head, and it's not in any way relevant to government policy that I spoke with someone. In fact, I think it's probably a good thing that our ministers get out of this place and go out there into the province, into the country, especially at a time when we're trying to convince other members of the country to allow us to put a pipeline to tidewater because it's absolutely critical. I think it really behooves us to go out and meet with people, and I don't think that it has the first thing to do with government policy.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Hon. member, you have something substantive to the point of order additionally to mention?

Mr. Clark: I think it would be a welcome change to say that in fact I do, Mr. Speaker. I'd appreciate a few moments.

The Speaker: I will be waiting with bated breath. It must have some substance to it.

Mr. Clark: I do. I'm going to start where I think every good point of order should start with, and that's a citation from *Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules & Forms*, sixth edition, section 410(6). I'm going to argue, frankly, in favour of the point of order and the point I believe somewhere in there that I think the Opposition House Leader was trying to make. In talking about the conditions and precedents for Oral Question Period, section 410(6) says, "The greatest possible freedom should be given to Members consistent with the other rules and practices." I think in this case we then look at section 410(10), "The subject matter of questions must be within the collective responsibility of the Government or the individual responsibilities of Ministers."

Now, I think that, perhaps, is where the dispute arises on this one, as to whether or not a meeting the minister may or may not have had with a particular stakeholder in British Columbia is relevant to her portfolio. I would argue that it is given what I understand of the person the minister apparently met with, who has a very strong opinion about a matter that is important to this province, that is within the purview of her ministry of environment. I do think it is within the realm of public interest that Albertans know whether or not the minister met with that person, and perhaps Albertans could draw their own conclusions about what that means one way or the other.

I do think that in this case the question is relevant, and I would just supplement my point by referring to *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition. Page 507 really just repeats – I'll start with 508, actually, really just repeating the point that members should be given the greatest possible freedom in putting questions forward. Page 507, I suppose, is a good reminder to all of us that Oral Question Period is "often an intense time, [and members] should be on [their] best possible behaviour." I would suggest that that maybe extends to arguments around points of order on occasion. Mr. Speaker, I think in this case I believe the member's question was in order, and I would argue in favour of this point of order.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, let me just firstly read a copy of the Blues.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to ask the minister responsible for climate change if she knows a gentleman called Mr. Dan Woynilowicz, if you know him and if she met him during her recent visit to Vancouver.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker . . .
Order, please.

Hon. member, I'm not sure exactly where your question was going. Is it intended to address the government policy question rather than just the name of an individual that a member may or may not know?

I think that at that stage there were a number of exchanges, but let me just say that the record shows that the member was given a chance to explain. His two supplemental points, supplemental questions afterward allowed for the member and for that matter the government to respond to the question. I was having great difficulty with both the supplementals to determine whether or not the matter

was addressed to government policy. In that regard, the responses I heard – and I did give the opportunity. I don't believe in this instance it was a point of order. Therefore, I urge you, hon. member, when you are framing the question, I think you need to get it more focused on whether or not the policy matter is at stake rather than whom members met at a certain event.

I think we have a second point of order. The Opposition House Leader.

Point of Clarification

Mr. Nixon: I'd like to go on 13(2), Mr. Speaker, and ask: is a meeting with a minister and somebody related to government policy relevant to government policy?

3:00

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Sure, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to speak to this. Obviously, that would be dependent on the circumstances. [interjections] But I think that this time that we have in question period is a chance for all members to hold the government to account, and even though I am in government, I think that that's . . .

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, with all due respect . . .

Mr. Clark: This is 13(2).

Ms Ganley: Sorry. Did you want a response?

The Speaker: Please proceed.

Ms Ganley: Okay. I think the point is that this is a chance for members to hold the government to account in terms of their policies and procedures, not a chance to catch ministers out, to say that you were walking down the street or you went to an event and someone came up and said hi. That's not relevant to government policy, Mr. Speaker. The fact that our ministers are out in public is a good thing.

The Speaker: Is there new information that's going to be added to this very complex public policy matter that we are dealing with here?

Mr. McIver: Yes, Mr. Speaker. The new information is that the hon. Opposition House Leader made a question to you under 13(2), that the Speaker shall explain, and rather than the Speaker explaining, the Speaker had the Deputy Government House Leader explain. I guess that leads me to ask the question: why did you ask the Deputy Government House Leader to answer when it was your turn to answer?

The Speaker: Well, hon. member, I determined, maybe incorrectly, that the point that was being raised by the Opposition House Leader was, in fact, his second point of order, so that was a disconnect. I thought that's where you were going.

Notwithstanding that, hon. member, though, under 13(2), as I understand it and as we've discussed many times before, I answered your question on the first point of order, and that explanation stands. So there has been a ruling. I've made it. To have another one seems redundant.

Are we now at your second point of order?

Mr. Nixon: Sure.

The Speaker: Great.

Point of Order Remarks Off the Record

Mr. Nixon: I rise under 23(h), (i), and (j), particularly “uses abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder.” Now, Mr. Speaker, I would like to refer to two other pieces of *Hansard* that I think will help you with what I have to raise. They’re very brief.

The first is from November 8, 2017, page 1833, in which you say, Mr. Speaker:

On another related matter, I would like to remind members to give respect to all members by not just allowing questions to be asked but also to be responded to without interruption. Earlier this week there was an inordinate amount of heckling directed towards the Minister of Infrastructure. I reviewed the incident, and while I did not intervene at the time, I certainly will intervene in the future if that kind of behaviour persists and is continued.

The next day, Mr. Speaker, November 9, 2017, on page 1864 of *Hansard*, you did intervene, and I agreed with you. You said:

Hon. members, you may remember – I believe it was yesterday – that I reminded you that in any event where one single member in this House was victimized by a group and not treated with respect, I’m going to call and name some people. So please respect each other and just don’t as a massive group in any way detract them from their job

or not allow them to do what they are supposed to do in this place, whether they’re government or opposition. You said that, Mr. Speaker.

Now, when the hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View was asking her questions today, Mr. Speaker, the government, way overboard, was trying to yell her down. I’ll give you some specific examples.

The minister of postsecondary – and I want to stress, Mr. Speaker, that we’ve been here a few times on the minister of postsecondary, and the government in the past has just risen and said that that did not happen. I suspect that if that happens, you’re going to see member after member after member who watched this happen rise and say that. The minister, a minister of the Crown, said to the hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View: are you dumb, are you stupid, do you come to work prepared, and that is a dumb question. He got extremely aggressive, making hand gestures and those types of things. I don’t know what they meant, but it was inappropriate. The House then continued to try to yell her down as she tried to do her job in this place. It is totally inappropriate.

It’s certainly inappropriate for a minister of the Crown to continue to do this inside this Assembly. But, beyond that, Mr. Speaker, it’s disrupting this place, which is against the standing orders. It is time for the government to stop acting like this and to start acting appropriately in this Chamber. It’s embarrassing. It needs to stop, and the hon. member does not deserve it.

The Speaker: I’ve heard enough, hon. member. Please be seated.

Ms Ganley: Mr. Speaker, obviously, I’m not able to get information on this specific incident right now. Again, I would state that I would find it surprising that something could be heard across the House when I, sitting immediately in front of him, could not hear it. I also believe that the minister answering was the Minister of Infrastructure, which means that her microphone would have been directly beside the Minister of Advanced Education and presumably would have picked up such a thing.

Mr. Speaker, I mean, obviously, I’m not in a position to respond. I agree with the general principle that folks should be polite on both sides of the House. I do know that sometimes the temperature rises in this place. I didn’t hear the comment. I don’t know that the

comment was made. Their complaining that people are yelling things across the House while they’re yelling things across the House seems a little bit overboard. I didn’t hear it. I don’t know if you heard it. [interjections]

The Speaker: Hon. members, please.

Continue. I couldn’t hear. Did you have an additional point?

Ms Ganley: No, Mr. Speaker. I think my additional point is that we’ve been around this bend several times. Perhaps if the members would let us know what the issue is when we could still try to resolve it, that would be more helpful than just making things up after the fact.

Mr. Nixon: Whoa, whoa, whoa. Mr. Speaker, the minister just called me a liar in this Chamber. It’s inappropriate.

The Speaker: Hon. member, when all is said and done – and I’ve said it many times, many, many times – in this Chamber it’s the responsibility of individual members, firstly, and secondly it’s with respect that the House provides for the Speaker in this institution to make the decision as to whether or not business is going to be addressed and if we can move on.

In this instance I did not hear nor did I see the statement that you allege was made. That’s just the way it is, hon. member. I did not see it.

Hon. member, would you please be seated for just a moment? Thank you.

In this case I see no point of order as well.

Hon. Member for Airdrie, did you have an additional new piece of information?

Mrs. Pitt: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I would like to say that I witnessed the hon. minister insult . . .

The Speaker: Good. Hon. member, I didn’t realize that was the . . .

Mrs. Pitt: Mr. Speaker, may I . . .

The Speaker: Please be seated. Please be seated.

I made a ruling. The important part is that I didn’t hear it or see it. Decision closed. Done.

I would like to go back to the point made by the Opposition House Leader. It may well be wrapping up, but I’ll just tell you two things that I’ve noticed since we’ve returned. The first is that today there were a number of comments, either in debate or in Members’ Statements, that referred to individual members of this House, to the point that the Opposition House Leader addressed the November ruling. That still stands, as far as I’m concerned, and I think that you need to be looking at what you continue to do, making comments about individuals rather than policy matters.

There seems to be an escalation in the allegations and accusations about comments that are being made and that time may be being used to rehash, repeat, with some colourful language, in terms of the way and manner in which the allegation is made. I hope that that does not continue, and I would urge your side of the House to do the same.

I’m lost. Are we at point of order 3?

Point of Order Imputing Motives

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise under 23(h), (i), and (j) again, particularly under (i), “imputes false or unavowed motives to another Member,” as well as “makes allegations against another Member.” At the time I raised that point of order, the Minister of

Infrastructure, in response to the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View – this will definitely be in *Hansard* – said that the member provided a detailed list of infrastructure asks to the minister's office. That list was not asked for. That did not in fact take place, and by saying in question period to the member that they did something that they did not in fact do will certainly create disorder, certainly puts motives on that member that, quite frankly, just aren't true. It never happened, and I think the minister should withdraw and apologize for that comment.

3:10

The Speaker: Go ahead, hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't have the benefit of the Blues, but what I heard the minister say or what I recall the minister saying was that your side has submitted a list of asks, and that is true. Whether in question period, whether through meetings with ministers and municipal officials and members of the opposition, whether through letters written in, they have submitted a series of asks in terms of infrastructure projects. I think it's reasonable for the Minister of Infrastructure to point out that at the same time that they call for us to cut the Infrastructure budget, they also call for a number of projects, in this case I believe she said over \$2 billion worth. It was in reference to asks from all over that side of the House, and I think we can provide evidence of that if it's necessary.

The Speaker: I, too, have not had the opportunity of the Blues. I will read them, and I will make a ruling at a future time.

Orders of the Day

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 April 3: Mr. Westhead]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

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

Mr. Westhead: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's an incredible honour and a privilege to respond to Her Honour's Speech from the Throne. I'd like to begin by thanking Her Honour for the emphasis that was placed on working with indigenous peoples. When our government was first elected, we made a commitment to make sure that the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples was respected in all policy deliberations. The government and I have been working hard to keep that promise in the spirit of trust and respect.

A strong province is built on strong relationships, and I'm proud of the relationships that I've built with the Stoney Nakoda people. I was honoured to have Chief Wesley of the Wesley Nation, Chief Dixon of the Bearspaw Nation, and Chief Young of the Chiniki Nation accompany me at the Legislature on the occasion of the Speech from the Throne. Just recently I was invited to attend and take part in the inauguration ceremony for the newly elected and

incumbent chiefs and councils for the Chiniki Nation in Morley. The ceremony was beautiful and powerfully moving. The singing, dancing, and drumming were mesmerizing and resonated with deep cultural meaning.

The Stoney Nakoda chiefs and councils have expressed interest in initiatives that were discussed in the Speech from the Throne such as the climate leadership plan, the renewable energy program, the curriculum review, and work to better protect children in care. Indeed, the next phase of the renewable energy program focuses on partnerships with indigenous communities such as the Chiniki Nation, and Chief Young attended the press conference for this announcement to show his support for and interest in the project.

Another way that we are taking steps to respect UNDRIP is to take action in response to the recommendations of the Ministerial Panel on Child Intervention, which I was proud to serve on. We can do more and we must do more to help vulnerable children and to reduce the number of indigenous children in government care. The child intervention panel heard from and visited indigenous communities across the province. Many of the stories shared with the panel were heartbreaking, but we also heard stories of hope. There is much for us to learn, more work to do, and a long road ahead as we walk the path of reconciliation together. We do these things not because they are easy but because they are hard. This challenge is one that we are willing to accept and one that we are unwilling to postpone.

Another challenge being taken on in the constituency of Banff-Cochrane is that of enhancing human coexistence with wildlife. The Rocky Mountains are not just one of Canada's most iconic landscapes; they are also home to some of Canada's most iconic wildlife such as grizzly bear, wolf, and elk. The abundant recreational opportunities and sheer beauty of the Bow valley means that increasingly more and more people are coexisting on the landscape with wildlife, which can lead to conflict situations.

Residents and visitors alike have a deep appreciation and respect for wildlife and their habitat. We put our garbage in bear-proof bins, set aside dedicated movement corridors and habitat patches, build wildlife overpasses and underpasses, and make seasonal area closures to give animals the space that they need during certain times of the year.

The Bow valley is a critical link among connected landscapes that support wildlife movement. It is imperative that we maintain these connections in light of the increasing human pressures. Thankfully, the Bow valley has experts working together to ensure that we can continue living in harmony with wildlife, experts like Jay Honeyman, a human wildlife conflict biologist with Alberta Environment and Parks, and Bill Hunt, the resource manager for Banff national park. They are part of a larger technical working group and round-table looking for solutions and improved co-operation between the three levels of government that have neighbouring jurisdictions in the Bow valley.

Of course, there is much wisdom to be gained from First Nations, who have coexisted with wildlife on these landscapes for thousands of years. One such way of assessing environmental conditions and generating data that can be used to inform conservation plans is through cultural monitoring. Cultural monitoring offers a means of integrating traditional ecological knowledge into the identification of priority areas for conservation and restoration in a manner that recognizes various environmental factors while also considering local knowledge and perspectives.

While Banff-Cochrane is proud of its history and heritage, people here are also forward looking. The announcement in Her Honour's speech that the government will help support job creation in digital industries with a new digital industries tax credit was welcome news. Both the Bow Valley Chamber of Commerce and the town

of Cochrane are looking to support innovation and to attract knowledge and learning-based technology professionals. The digital industries tax credit act referred to in the Speech from the Throne would create thousands of new spaces in our postsecondary institutions dedicated to technology that will help the Bow Valley chamber and the town of Cochrane achieve their goals. I'm proud to support this proposed investment that will enable more Albertans to get the education and training that they need to secure good jobs in this growing sector that will also help our economy continue to diversify.

I'd like to begin concluding my response to the Speech from the Throne by applauding the commitment that was made to undertake major initiatives to help families keep property safe, especially in rural areas. Everyone deserves to feel safe in their homes and in their communities. This government has a track record of supporting police services. Each year, since our first budget in 2015, more than half a billion dollars have been invested into policing, including over 1,500 officers in rural Alberta. We maintained and even increased funding for policing during one of the province's worst recessions. In 2016 additional funding was provided to Alberta law enforcement response teams, also known as ALERT. ALERT is a key part of an integrated, province-wide team that crosses local and regional boundaries. They conduct joint investigations with local police services to help combat criminal activity and co-ordinate intelligence sharing, keeping local police informed about serious and emerging threats in communities.

More recently the commitment made in the Speech from the Throne to take further action to address rural crime was acted upon the following day when the Minister of Justice announced \$10 million towards hiring more RCMP officers, civilian staff, and Crown prosecutors. The announcement also included measures to ensure that police have the resources needed to address top priorities such as focusing on intelligence, sharing information to help police better identify and catch prolific offenders, and shifting some routine tasks to civilian workers so officers can spend more time patrolling and investigating in the community.

With help from our valued partners in the RCMP, the government has developed a detailed plan to protect rural Albertans and their property. While there's no single easy solution to fix rural crime, the strategy put several important tools in the crime-fighting tool box. In addition to these measures, we've made changes that allow officers to spend more time on the streets fighting crime, like eliminating arrest warrants for unpaid fines for minor, noncriminal offences.

3:20

Madam Speaker, we are taking action on rural crime. We are taking action on pipelines. We are taking action on the environment. We are taking action to diversify our energy sector, and we are taking action to engage in reconciliation.

As we have from the start, we will continue to create jobs, diversify our economy, and protect the health and education services on which families rely. Our task is to make sure that this recovery keeps working for working people, and that's what we are committed to do.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

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

Seeing none, are there any members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure today to give my response to the throne speech. First of all,

I do want to point out a few things that I thought were great. Having the Speech from the Throne take place on International Women's Day gave an opportunity to celebrate the great women in Alberta. As I wander the Legislature, I'm always impressed with the display of the Famous Five, the five women that worked so hard to make sure that women were considered persons. As we look at society today, it's hard to believe that this was ever an issue. It's also hard to imagine that in some parts of the world women are still treated horrifically. Hard to imagine, but it's still happening. We have so many women that have done so many great things and continue to do great things. As was said in the throne speech, "Women's rights are human rights."

It was also nice to recognize our first responders, those that put their lives on the line for us, run to the fire instead of away, sacrifice so much for our safety and security, and also their families, who worry each time they leave the safety of their home. We salute all of our first responders.

Now, we do have to give credit that the Premier has started to talk a good game on pipelines. Unfortunately, it's a little hard to fully trust what this government is saying. Let me take you back to 2015. The NDP was just elected, and the Premier was answering questions in this Legislature on pipelines. Here's a quote from June 17, 2015. "If we're going to make progress, we're going to do it by finally creating a record that we can be proud of." You see, that's the problem, and we've seen this attitude rear its head over and over again: "finally creating a record to be proud of." It was that same attitude that had the Premier call Albertans embarrassing cousins. The fact that there was no pride and, in fact, open disdain for an industry that is the best in the world in safety and environmentally, taking place in a country that has a higher social conscience in human rights than their competitors should be enough to be proud of. But no; they felt that they couldn't be proud of it. This is an industry that they now say they support.

On June 17, 2015, the Premier said, "I identified what most people in the industry already understand and have in fact confirmed to me, that the likelihood of the Northern Gateway pipeline being approved in the near future is not great." So here we have a Premier matter-of-factly saying that one of the pipelines to tidewater is not likely to happen. I think what's most important is how she reacted. What did she do regarding this devastating news? Absolutely nothing.

Now, the other day the Government House Leader stood in this House and talked about the federal court's decision in this regard. He quoted, "It would have taken Canada little time and little organizational effort to engage in meaningful dialogue on these and other subjects of prime importance to Aboriginal peoples. But this did not happen." So would the NDP support the little time and organizational effort to engage in meaningful dialogue with aboriginal peoples to get Northern Gateway back on track? Nope. They said and did nothing. Previously there was no talk or action on pipelines; now lots of talk but still no action. If they actually cared about getting our product to the coast, they would have shown concern over this, but instead, crickets.

The Government House Leader went on to say, "the actual facts that it was the negligence and neglect of the federal government, of which he was a member, that resulted in the courts cancelling that project." In classic form this government blames everyone else for any problems, but what did they do to try to remedy the situation? Nothing. Just to be clear, it was the NDP's friend Prime Minister Trudeau that cancelled Northern Gateway. Remember the tanker ban? That was implemented by Trudeau before Northern Gateway was cancelled. Does that look like a Prime Minister that wanted to help get our products to the coast? Not at all.

This government even helped to pass my motion to urge the provincial government “to request that the federal government not implement the moratorium on crude oil tanker traffic along British Columbia’s north coast and that it swiftly approve pipelines such as the Energy East, Trans Mountain, and Northern Gateway.” That was a motion to have this NDP government request the federal government to cancel the tanker ban and approve pipelines, including Northern Gateway and Energy East. But even with that commitment does the NDP look like a government that truly wants to get our products to the coast? Well, if so, they have a funny way of showing it, absolutely no support for that pipeline to the coast or against the Prime Minister that has been focused on destroying our opportunities to exercise our constitutional rights of getting our products to market.

Further along in this vein is the Premier’s comment, also in 2015, when she said, “I’m also quite interested in pursuing Energy East and working with industry.” Now, the company trying to build Energy East walked away, citing NEB regulation changes brought on by the Trudeau government. That was regarding the inclusion of upstream and downstream emissions. What was this government’s reaction? The Energy minister sent a letter, a letter suggesting that downstream emissions shouldn’t be included. What about upstream? What about something more than a letter? One might send a letter to one’s grandmother that lives far away, but a multibillion-dollar loss of opportunity to your constituents may warrant a little bit more. Just a little bit. But nope, nothing. If Albertans aren’t quite buying the rhetoric that this government actually supports pipelines, it’s no wonder.

I want to cover a little bit more that has Albertans not quite buying the integrity of this government when it says that it supports pipelines. We can start with the NDP’s Leap Manifesto, that calls for an end to all new pipelines. This document was supported at an NDP conference that took place right here in Edmonton. At that time the Alberta NDP could have removed itself from the federal party, but alas they did not, so they remained one and the same with the federal Leap Manifesto-supporting NDP.

Let’s talk about some of the NDP ministers and MLAs and their actions and comments. Let’s start with the Minister of Education. There are YouTube videos available online where he states, repeatedly I might add, that there should be no new approvals for, quote, tar sands, unquote. That doesn’t sound like a champion of the oil and gas sector to me.

Then we can talk about the seniors minister. Now, she took a little holiday to southern B.C. to campaign in the last federal election for an NDP candidate. Who is this candidate, you might ask? None other than Jacqui Gingras. In an *Edmonton Sun* article it says, “Gingras is an environmental extremist. Last year, she helped organize an anti-pipeline rally on behalf of LeadNow . . . LeadNow is opposed to every pipeline project currently proposed in Canada.”

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

That’s who the minister was backing for parliament. I wonder if she’s given Gingras a call to see if she will support the minister in her new-found love of pipelines. Mind you, I don’t know that the minister has publicly supported pipelines yet anyways.

Now we can move on to the Energy minister. Her chief of staff was the executive director of Leadnow. Now, in fairness to her, she said that she never knew him and that he was chosen by the Premier’s office.

Mr. Westhead: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, we have a point of order.

Point of Order Allegations against a Member

Mr. Westhead: I rise under 23(h), (i), and (j) and reference a ruling that Mr. Speaker made not half an hour ago indicating that we shouldn’t be engaging in personal attacks in the Chamber. This is exactly what this member is doing. Considering that the caution was made not very long ago in this Chamber and I believe the member heard the ruling, I would think that we should stop from engaging in these kind of personal attacks.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It’s a pleasure to rise on the point of order. I’m not sure if you have the benefit of seeing the ruling or the comments that the Member for Banff-Cochrane has made with respect to the ruling, but I think that if we had the benefit of the Blues, we would see that the Speaker was specifically referring to the use of members’ statements in the Chamber.

As you know, Madam Speaker, there has been some significant latitude used with respect to members’ statements. The Speaker was reminding the House about a trend that he may have observed in members’ statements becoming more targeted on certain members of the House, in my interpretation of the ruling, in particular from the government members directed towards the opposition. He reminded all members of the Assembly that perhaps during members’ statements we might refrain from such activity.

I think that in the to and fro of debate there will be consistent discussion around members’ statements that members of this House have made, particularly statements that members of the government have made, be it current or in the past. I think what we have here is a matter of debate.

Having said that, I think it’s reasonable for us all to consider the debate that we engage in, but I think it is very reasonable for members on both sides of the Chamber to discuss positions that members of the government or members of the opposition have held.

3:30

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the point of order?

As you’ve correctly noted, I don’t have the benefit of the Blues, so I can’t reference exactly what ruling the Speaker might have made a short time ago. However, the rules around members’ statements are more for respect. Each member has that opportunity to speak about an issue, and you don’t disrupt that. The rules are the same for any kind of dialogue going on in this House. We avoid personal attacks. We avoid saying things that will cause disruption to the Assembly and the decorum. I would encourage all members to please continue to be aware of that.

I believe that the hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky was getting close to crossing the line, so I would caution him to be a little bit more careful about the difference between making a point based on policy and a point based on something that’s quite personal to a member.

Please continue.

Debate Continued

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Now, I was just talking about how the Premier had actually chosen the chief of staff for the Energy minister. I thought that maybe that wasn’t so surprising when we see pictures of the Premier at anti-oil and antitanker and antipipeline protests.

Now, I won't have time to get into the other anti-oil and antipipeline activists that this government has hired as senior staff, but how about the environment minister? She co-wrote the foreword to a radical environmental book called *An Action a Day Keeps Global Capitalism Away*.

Mr. Westhead: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, a point of order?

Point of Order

Allegations against a Member

Mr. Westhead: Yes. Madam Speaker, you just warned the member to be cautious. He seems to have a laundry list of personal attacks lined up here, so I wonder if the member might reconsider some of the things he's about to say in his speech.

Mr. Loewen: Obviously, the governing party here has a problem with facts being stated. I'm clearly stating facts. I think you could go on any given day in this House and look through the *Hansard* and find personal attacks on the Leader of the Official Opposition. I don't see what the problem is here. This is stuff that's been said in this House before. In fact, on this same quote that I used, there was a point of order called by the government side that they lost because it was a point of debate. That exact same statement.

So there's no point of order here. I should be able to continue on with my speech like I would like to do. They're obviously trying to run me out of time so that I can't say everything that I'd like to say, and that's appalling.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the point of order? The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm a little confused why the deputy whip for the government is now calling these types of points of order. If you look through even today the comments in members' speeches, almost all of them refer to the Member for Calgary-Lougheed, the Leader of the Opposition, in very personal ways.

The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky is a hundred per cent correct. This is a matter of debate. This has already been ruled on in this place, and the government lost that point of order at that time. Clearly, the government deputy whip is trying to deliberately stop the Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky from delivering his speech, and he should stop that.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the point of order?

I do have a reference here that I would like to refer to, *Beauchesne's* 481(f). Remarks about another member's integrity and honesty are never in order, so I would caution members to please be aware of the difference. It's one thing to reference a quote that's a reference of policy, but please be cautious that you are not moving into that line of questioning another member's honesty or integrity.

Please continue.

Debate Continued

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Now, I was talking about the environment minister, who co-wrote the foreword to a radical environmental book called *An Action a Day Keeps Global Capitalism Away*. What's interesting about this is that the Government House Leader called a point of order, that we just

referred to, on the Leader of the Opposition for merely mentioning this fact. A little sensitive about this, I guess.

Now, the minister claimed that she just helped with some grammar, but the author said this in the book: "It would not have been possible to put this book together without her. She pushed me to write it, edited my work, and contributed to its content . . . I owe her a heavy debt." There are two versions of a story there that I think we could kind of look at and come to our own decisions on.

This brings us to the Member for Calgary-East. Now, we've all see the picture of her with the sign that says: No More Dirty Oil. It was interesting to hear her comments on that situation just the other day. You'd think there would be an apology or some sort of regrets as this government tries to build the credibility of its pipeline support, but, no, no apology and no regrets. Now, that might be bizarre, but maybe even more bizarre is her excuse for doing it. She said, "A pipeline in 2011 would not have created the jobs." What? How does that even make sense? She goes on to talk about how poor the last government was and how great the present government is like it matters to the pipeline or to the jobs it creates or to the increased return for our products which government is in power. It's about what's best for Albertans no matter which government is in power.

She also said, "We need the ability to sell our oil now." Well, that's a really good point, but there's a problem. Because of anti-oil activists and obstructionists like her and her colleagues the pipeline didn't start being built in 2011. If it had, we would be selling our oil right now at a better rate than we are getting now. Let me say that again. If it hadn't been for the radical activists and obstructionists, you know, like the members on the government bench and their friends they campaigned for and their friends they hire with taxpayer money, we would have a pipeline now. We haven't started building it yet, and once we do, it'll take some time to get it done. I wish we could have had these people's support back then because, after all, we needed pipelines then. But just remember that these are the people that say that they support our oil and gas industry, unapologetic, anti-oil activists.

Now, this leads to the oil sands advisory group. The minister hand-picked two anti-oil activists to sit on the panel. Can you imagine choosing people that are extreme anti-oil activists "to provide advice on the implementation of the emissions limit as it relates to oil sands"? I can only imagine how much an anti-oil activist would like to be involved in capping our oil sands. Now that the advisory panel is finished, these activists are actively working at protesting the Trans Mountain pipeline as we speak. Sadly, three police officers were recently hurt at these protests. Come on, Premier. Albertans deserve better than that.

Now, the Premier said something interesting the other day when debating the pipeline motion. She said:

But the new B.C. government in coalition with the Green Party has now determined that it is willing to use any means necessary, including unconstitutional ones, to harass and delay the Trans Mountain pipeline.

Let's be clear. That's a change in their strategy.

Well, I'm not sure where the Premier has been for the last 10 months, but the B.C. NDP has been promising this all along. On May 4 the Canadian Press reported that Horgan will use "every tool in the toolbox," and, "There's a whole host of other legal remedies available to us and we'll be laying that out" to stop the pipeline.

On May 31 – that's after the election – CBC news reported that "B.C. Green Party leader Andrew Weaver and John Horgan of the NDP said their alliance dictates that once in government, they will immediately employ every tool to stop the expansion of the Kinder Morgan pipeline."

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?
The hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway.

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I want to say thank you to my hon. colleague from Grande Prairie-Smoky for giving an important response to the Speech from the Throne. I would ask him if he could continue and please finish his speech pertaining to the government Speech from the Throne.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you. I just read the quote from the leader of the Green Party and John Horgan of the NDP and their alliance about doing everything they can to stop the Kinder Morgan pipeline.

Then on August 10, 2017, the B.C. minister of environment and climate change put out on their government website: "During the election, we promised to use every tool in our toolkit to fight for BC against Kinder Morgan's proposed heavy oil pipeline and tanker expansion." Well, to me it sounds like the B.C. NDP government has been very clear about its intentions, but unfortunately the Premier of Alberta wasn't listening.

Now, the Premier really should have been listening to John Horgan when she sat down with him. Afterwards Horgan said that it was just a meeting of two old friends and, quote: I had no intentions of being persuaded, and she had no intentions of persuading, end quote, on the pipeline issue. I would have hoped that the Premier, who purports to be such a stalwart supporter of pipelines, might have tried to persuade Horgan on the importance of a pipeline, but, alas, no such luck.

Of course, recently the Premier has publicly stated that their support for the Trudeau carbon tax was linked to the construction of the Kinder Morgan pipeline. But in reviewing her past comments, we find out that it is just not true. On October 3 in a *Calgary Herald* article she is quoted in regard to the federal carbon tax as saying, "We can't be talking about the sort of prices that got rolled out today until we get a commitment from this federal government that they're going to move on this fundamentally important economic piece that Albertans need."

Then on November 29, 2016, just six weeks later, the *National Observer* had an article entitled, quote, smiling Alberta Premier open to Trudeau's carbon tax after pipeline approvals. In the article it says:

Moments earlier, she shook Justin Trudeau's hand and thanked him on behalf of all Albertans for his leadership and "demonstrated commitment" to building the economy . . .

[She] explained that her government was now "well positioned" to support Trudeau's efforts to ramp up a tax or price on carbon pollution to \$50 per tonne by 2022.

They additionally quote the Premier as saying, "Prime Minister Trudeau is showing some extraordinary leadership today."

So when the Premier says that she linked the federal increase in the carbon tax to pipelines under construction, it's just not true. She sold out Albertans on the federal carbon taxes more than a year ago. They have even included these funds in their budget forecast. Clearly, when Trudeau says, "Tax," the Premier asks: how high?

3:40

Another thing we hear the Premier say quite often is that the previous federal and provincial governments couldn't get a pipeline built. Well, that's not true. The Kinder Morgan anchor loop, the Enbridge Clipper, the TransCanada Keystone, and the Enbridge line 9B: that's four pipelines built, not just approved but built. They increased oil flow by over a million barrels a day.

Now, during the NDP's and Liberals' time in government there were two pipelines approved and two pipelines cancelled, one of which was approved under the Conservative governments, only to be cancelled by the Liberals, and so far none built.

Please remember this very important point. The Trans Mountain pipeline is an expansion. There's an existing pipeline there. It has been operating safely for decades. This should be a no-brainer to improve. It's not a whole new corridor; it's just more pipe for increased flow. Also, the Enbridge line 3 that was approved is a replacement of an older existing line, again not a whole new pipeline, just a replacement of an existing line that will transport a higher volume, another no-brainer. To listen to the NDP, you'd think that they changed the world to get an expansion and a replacement. This should have been simple.

Now, the NDP sold us that the carbon tax would give us social licence to get pipelines built. This clearly has not happened because there has not been one anti-oil group or individual that has moved their position from antipipeline to pro pipeline due to the carbon tax. Not one.

They claim that Trudeau approved the Kinder Morgan because of the NDP climate leadership plan. Well, I don't buy it. Trudeau was looking for a way to sell his carbon tax to Canadians, so he linked the approval to the climate leadership plan. Of course, he mentioned the oil sands emissions caps as one of the reasons he approved the pipeline. That makes sense because he wants to phase out oil sands. What's sad is that the NDP is willing to sell out Albertans to get a pipeline. That is just wrong. There is a process to get pipelines approved, and that process doesn't include taxes and caps that punish people, businesses, nonprofits, schools, and families.

Now, I do need to make clear that it is good to see the Premier and the NDP government finally following the lead of us in opposition and fighting for pipelines. We were pleased to see the wine ban, even though it didn't go far enough. It should have just been the first step. We were disappointed when the Premier dropped the ban prematurely. It's clear that the B.C. NDP has yet to reduce its hostility to pipelines, so why would we back off?

Clearly, if any pipelines get built, it won't be because of this government's support; it will be in spite of its lack of support.

Speaker's Ruling Question-and-comment Period

The Deputy Speaker: Before we continue with the next speaker, I would just like to remind all hon. members of a ruling that was made yesterday here in the House by the Acting Speaker regarding the use of Standing Order 29(2)(a). We've given a great deal of latitude on this particular standing order in the past to allow members to continue on with their statement, but members are quite aware that there are time limits for debate. They know going into that how much time they're going to have, and to be continually using 29(2)(a) to simply extend your debating time isn't really within the spirit of 29(2)(a).

I'll just reference some of the past rulings on page 359 of *Hansard* from yesterday, where the Acting Speaker ruled on this, that the spirit is to be questions and comments to kind of encourage healthy debate in the House. While we're certainly not intending to move away from the traditions of the House dramatically at this point, I would really encourage hon. members to move more towards a genuine debate in a question-and-answer format in the use of 29(2)(a).

Thank you.

Debate Continued

The Deputy Speaker: The next speaker on this issue, the hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Mrs. Schreiner: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is with great honour that I stand today and respond to Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor's speech during the Fourth Session of the 29th Legislature. I am proud to recognize how the priorities of our government have made life better for people in Red Deer-North and all across Alberta.

It is fitting that our session opened on International Women's Day since women are so well represented in this Chamber. Outside of my Legislature office is our province's tribute to Alberta's Famous Five, and I cannot express my appreciation for their conviction. They are a testament to the power of citizens working together and how formidable that impact can be. Because of that, we sit today with a woman Premier and a cabinet that is over half made up of women.

Recently I had the pleasure of celebrating our women of influence with the Member for Calgary-Varsity. Celebrating the first provincial ministry of women was a thoughtful and moving experience. I am proud to stand with my government as we break down barriers and build equity. That, Madam Speaker, is what doing the right thing looks like.

Since 2015 we have witnessed one of the worst economic downturns in our province's history. This, in addition to natural disasters, has made the past few years a difficult period indeed, but Albertans are known for their adaptability and resilience. Madam Speaker, that resilience will only become stronger with economic diversification. While my response focuses on Red Deer, Red Deer is a corridor to both of our province's major centres. As a result, what's good for Red Deer supports our government's mandate of making life better for all Albertans.

Though we all come to this Legislature as individuals, what we have in common is the respect for sound governance. In 2015 the people of Alberta recognized that the antiquated ways of a tired government were not going to get us where we needed to go or where Albertans wanted to be.

In March of 2017 our government announced its support of a Red Deer regional justice centre, recognizing that the current model could not provide the service that Red Deerians and central Albertans required. This investment shows that we are hearing what Albertans are saying. We are meeting their needs through investment in the services that give them timely access to the legal services they need. In addition to this justice centre, I am proud to hear of our government's initiative to take action against rural crime. Our government made the right choice to respond to the call for more funding, investing 10 million new dollars into policing, which includes 39 new officer positions, 40 civilian staff, and 10 Crown prosecutors in rural Alberta.

Strong communities are a cornerstone of Alberta. With this in mind I wish to respectfully acknowledge and applaud the Premier and the Minister of Advanced Education for their recent announcement in support of Red Deer College pursuing degree-granting status. For 25-plus years Red Deer College has requested this status. Access to advanced education enhances economic growth by supporting the knowledge and skills needed in the workforce. On March 1, 2018, Red Deer and central Alberta knew that government was listening. No longer do those who seek advanced knowledge need to move away and leave their homes. They need not incur additional economic hardship to achieve their dreams. Our future leaders and entrepreneurs can remain in their home communities to obtain university education. This serves to

support education, families, and communities, and that, Madam Speaker, is what right looks like. Knowledge is an invaluable asset, and when we couple this opportunity with current tuition freezes, we can see how the government is empowering opportunity to flourish. When we empower Albertans, we strengthen our communities. That, fellow members, is what right looks like.

Any modern society also has its problems. Fellow members, I am saddened by the opioid crisis. I wish to extend my sincere condolences to all Albertan families impacted by this. While we attempt to address this alarming situation, I am proud that this government recognizes that addiction has no bias. Our opioid crisis affects everyone. It calls on all of us to open our minds to the trauma that those who are vulnerable to addiction experience and to open our hearts with empathy to those in need of support.

3:50

I am proud to be part of a government that recognizes that our future must include consideration for those suffering from addictions and social disadvantages. Recently our government has increased funding to assist in combating the crisis. Doctors, nurse practitioners, and primary care providers will have increased access to opioid dependency treatment in community clinics as well as overdose prevention training and naloxone kits for front-line workers.

My community of Red Deer is privileged to have our Safe Harbour and our government's investment in 20 medically supported detox beds. Since its opening in 2017 it has provided treatment to 130 clients, with 89 clients actively receiving treatment. There is no wait-list, and treatment can generally be initiated the same day as the first consultation with the addiction physician. I have so much gratitude for and pride in the work that Safe Harbour does and for the heroes in my community that embrace those who need help.

Our government is responding in other ways as well. Recently the Associate Minister of Health announced a major expansion of community paramedic supports. Mobile community paramedics respond on-site to seniors and other Albertans with chronic conditions, reducing the use of ambulance transport, acute-care beds, and hospital resources. This solution reinforces the importance of providing in-home care and specialized supports.

Friends, I am aware of the importance of Red Deer regional hospital's call for expansion. I am forever thankful for the additional services that serve to accommodate central Albertans in the interim and incredibly proud that these needs are at the forefront of our government's thoughts. In this respect, Red Deer has been incredibly fortunate.

Better primary and secondary education is also coming to Red Deer. This current school year brought the opening of St. Joseph high school in Red Deer-North. I recently had the privilege of hosting the Minister of Culture and Tourism at our newest addition. Its diverse scholastic opportunities and its open learning concept are truly unique. Attached to the high school is the Red Deer Royals field house. In 2019 this renowned marching band will celebrate their 50th anniversary. They have received provincial, national, international, and world titles.

Also within Red Deer-North, Fairview elementary was one of the schools chosen to pilot our province's nutrition program. We all know children learn better when they have the resources to reach their potential, and I am proud to see our government respond to the well-being of our youngest citizens.

Madam Speaker and fellow members, everything our government does is for the future of Alberta, and this includes the recently introduced Energy Diversification Act. As contenders in a global market we know that when times are great, we flourish, and when global times are bad, we suffer. We need to recognize past

trends and implement a strategy that decreases our susceptibility to the historic cycle of boom and bust.

In November 2014 Alberta fell upon tough economic times. We could not continue to make the same mistakes if we were going to strengthen our competitive advantage. As a province we need to accept that diversification enables change, and change is necessary to secure recovery and conquer tough times. Diversification is critically important for building an economy for the future. Throughout our mandate we stand firm that no Albertan is left behind. While we fight for new pipelines and better oil prices, it is important to seize the opportunity to diversify. We need not cower at change but embrace its opportunities.

When we look to the future, we must also consider our environment. We are in a position to harness diversification while providing strong environmental stewardship. This, fellow members, reframes our economic development holistically. That is what right looks like. Technology, research, development, and diversification are components of an equation that delivers economic and environmental balance. Our mandate to support environmental stewardship through our climate leadership plan also aligns with our commitment to the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples. We cannot embrace our future without recognizing where we have been. Everyone deserves a clean environment. We are committed to engaging in dialogue and thoughtfulness for all stakeholders with shared consideration.

Madam Speaker and fellow members, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to respond to the mandate set out in our next session. I speak with firm conviction that our path is established clearly and with the best interests of all Albertans in mind.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Under Standing Order 29(2)(a), Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I want to thank the Member for Red Deer-North for her comments and for speaking so eloquently and kindly about Red Deer and the city that it is. I think back to my earlier memories of Red Deer, going there with the school band, actually. The provincial competition was always in Red Deer. I played trumpet in both the jazz band and the concert band, and we went there every year for competitions. It was always fun to go to Red Deer. Of course, who can forget Gasoline Alley, travelling through Red Deer and having to stop for gas or a snack in Gasoline Alley. A great city. Like I say, I was happy to hear the Member for Red Deer-North talk so kindly about that great city.

I did make a couple of notes here. She talked about the government making life better. She talked about the worst economic downturn. In particular, she talked about the boom-and-bust cycle, so I just wanted to ask a question on that. It seems like this government has been talking a lot about this oil and gas roller coaster. The Finance minister has talked about that on a couple of occasions. The Member for Calgary-Currie talked about the resource roller coaster. And even the MLA from West Yellowhead talked about this boom-and-bust economy.

The Member for Red Deer-North talked about this boom and bust, but what I find interesting is that when the budget came out – and I'm just going to take a couple of quotes from a couple of different news articles. March 20, Michelle Bellefontaine, *CBC News*: "Balanced Budget Tied to Trans Mountain Completion, Alberta Finance Minister Says. Looking for pipeline development to help balance the books." They quote the Finance minister: "We've built those into the budget in anticipation that Trans Mountain expansion and [Enbridge] Line 3 will be operational."

Even Dean Bennett from the Canadian Press said, "Alberta to Rely on Expected Trans Mountain Revenue to Balance Budget. Finance Minister . . . says Alberta is banking on anticipated revenue from an expansion of the Trans Mountain oil pipeline to balance the budget within five years." Again the Finance minister is quoted: "We've built (the revenue) into [the] budget because that's what everybody believes will happen."

We have this situation where the government talks about getting us off this boom-and-bust cycle and getting us off this resource roller coaster, but then they come out with a budget that completely relies on the oil and gas sector to get us out. I'm not sure how the government can kind of ride both sides of the fence on this one and is able to say that they're going to get us off this roller coaster but then rely on this roller coaster to balance the budget.

4:00

Of course, it is kind of a bit of a gamble that this government is taking on these pipelines because we don't know that they're going to get built. We sure hope they do. We would hope that the government would support all the pipelines in all different directions, but they seem to be fairly selective in the ones they support and don't support, and then sometimes their support doesn't seem quite as strong as what we would like to see.

Also as far as getting us off of this roller coaster of oil and gas revenue, you know, the Speech from the Throne didn't mention agriculture once. I couldn't find the word "agriculture" once in there. The closest they got was talking about rural crime. Of course, that's incredibly important. In fact, it was so important that last November we wanted to have an emergency debate on it. The government argued against it, and it didn't happen.

Another thing to get us off of this boom-and-bust cycle, this oil and gas roller coaster that they talk about, that was missing was forestry, another huge industry in Alberta that's been threatened by the caribou issue and that sort of thing.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, were you planning on allowing any opportunity for the Member for Red Deer-North to respond?

Mr. Loewen: Yes. For sure. I would like to ask the member about that in particular as far as how we can go from this government talking about the oil and gas roller coaster and the boom-and-bust cycle and then not mentioning anything about agriculture, depending on the oil and gas sector to bail us out of the deficits, these massive deficits they've been getting us into, and also, you know, not mentioning anything about forestry and how important that is to our industry here. I guess that's my question for the member, to kind of give us a bit of an idea how the government can balance that in their minds as far as, on one hand, expecting all this money from oil and gas revenue and, on the other hand, not talking about the other important industries that we have in our province and how that affects the economy of Alberta. I think there seems to be some disparity there. I'd hope that the member could kind of clear that up and maybe give us an idea how that kind of balance works with this government as far as having that oil and gas roller coaster and talking about it with such disdain and then relying on it, on the other hand, and then of course not mentioning anything about it in the budget.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure today to rise and respond to the government's Speech from the Throne. I would like to take a moment to thank our amazing Lieutenant

Governor for her grace and her hard work. It's always amazing to have her in here and be able to participate.

I'd like to respond to this speech, Madam Speaker, as an everyday person, not as an MLA but a regular Albertan, the person that the government speaks about in their throne speech. I am a regular, everyday person, a mother and a wife, a business owner, and a fierce advocate for special needs. As a regular Albertan I see the very real and consequential actions of government and government policies, their words and their actions and how they impact the very people that they're here to represent.

I'd like to highlight a couple of examples from the throne speech that I thought were extremely thoughtful. It was very nice to hear about these things. I would like to thank the government and the Premier for their continued work to end executive perks and insider access. Madam Speaker, Alberta belongs to all of us, and a true democracy means that you cannot buy your seat at the table. Our taxpayer dollars should be directed to providing world-class services for the citizens of Alberta.

I also want to commend this government for their support for the Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services and the amazing work that they have done to expand counselling support services. As we all know, Deb Tomlinson is an incredible human being. She's done so much to advocate on behalf of this particular group of people. I'm very proud to know her and the work that she's done and various groups that work with her. They all work so hard at these centres to provide for Albertans at their most vulnerable times and to offer preventative initiatives that they have developed. They're truly, truly remarkable human beings. I'm grateful to see that they will be better equipped to handle the influx of caseloads that we have. As we know, those have increased immensely in the last little while, especially with the economic downturn.

Sexual violence and harassment have absolutely no place in our society. It's important to say it in here, but it's an important statement to say wherever we go. The more that we say this statement, the more that it resonates, and the more that it matters. We all believe that, we all know that, but it's language that we just need to incorporate all the time. You wear it, and you live it, and you don't accept it. It's most important, I believe, that we continue to shine really bright lights into society and especially into these dark places so that society continues to understand how important it is.

Again, the government continually talks, and rightfully so, about the number of incredible women that they have on their side. We're a little bit smaller on our side but strong just as much. We very, very much appreciate the strong voice that comes from that and the importance of what that means and the impact it has on all of us and also the incredibly strong, wonderful men that we have surrounding us that support us through this and all people who have been impacted through sexual violence. Again, the more that the language is there, the more that it rolls off our tongues that we are not accepting of these things, the more that we lead by example. I'm very grateful for that.

These are important steps that will ensure a brighter future for all Albertans. Those highlights are truly important. Again, I'm extremely grateful.

But I do have to also point out some areas that I believe were not touched on or were touched on and I'm not quite sure I understand the government's point of view. One of those things and what is incredibly frustrating for me is for a government to tout that a recession is over. You know, I think every single person in this House has had people come through their offices with stories, unbelievably huge stories of pain and loss in various different aspects but especially with loss of jobs. You know, you can look at any smaller pieces of any larger puzzle independently and neglect to look at the overall picture, and you do not give a full story. That

is manipulative, blatantly manipulative. You have to be able to look at the full story.

It's not to say that there aren't things that can happen that are wonderful and that are helping the economy and all these things, but that is a pat on the back that Albertans deserve. That goes to the people of this province, those people that have been through the various roller coasters, the various things that happened in this province, whether that's fires or floods or a downturn in the economy or failures in crops or whatever it is that all of the people that we have the privilege of representing go through. That resiliency, Madam Speaker, goes to them. The policies that happen in this House have ripple effects and impact those people definitively.

You can't just say that a recession is over. I hear that all the time from this government, and I don't quite understand why that language is being used. I have constituents in my office, Madam Speaker, pretty consistently, desperately pleading for help, men and women that have been out of work for months, have applied for hundreds of jobs, and believe me; these are humble folks. They're looking for just about anything. They don't have EI, it's about to run out, and they're asking what they're supposed to do. If you could actually understand, Madam Speaker, the impact the words, "The recession is over," have on a group of people, thousands of people, that aren't there yet, that doesn't inspire that that change is going to be happening.

The Calgary Food Bank – and my husband is actually on the board of our food bank in Chestermere, and we've seen these numbers, too. The client numbers, I mean, have rarely been higher than in 2017, and the homeless shelter Inn from the Cold, in Calgary, said in November that they had been at capacity for nearly a year. Shelters and not-for-profits across Alberta are having to divert resources away from the vulnerable. Do you know why? Because of the carbon tax. Money that they would have had before, hundreds of thousands of dollars in some cases, is being diverted away from the help that they're able to give to vulnerable people. I mean, these folks are there to help these people. That's what they want to do, and money is being diverted away.

4:10

In fact, did you know, Madam Speaker, that these not-for-profits don't receive any rebates at all? So I'm curious. Are the homeless now supposed to start fundraising for the carbon tax as well? I'm curious because we have a group of people who are in desperate need. We have the people who are willing to provide that paying a carbon tax with zero exemptions and no rebates coming to these folks. These are the ones that help the people in this province. We can say from a government perspective all that we do, this side or the other. It's actually the people on the ground that do that work. They're the heroes of this story.

The interesting thing is that, you know, the government is touting jobs and job creation. There were 92,000 fewer payrolled jobs in Alberta at the end of 2017 than there were before the recession.

Mr. Nixon: Wow.

Mrs. Aheer: I know. It's really, actually, an unbelievable number. I mean, if you go into downtown – right? – it's really obvious. It's just empty. The whole concept of rush hour certainly doesn't exist the way that I understood it a few years ago. Then, 165,000-plus Albertans remain unemployed. That's 26,000 more people than when the NDP took office. So I really don't know how the government can in good conscience say that the recession is over, because as far as Albertans are concerned, we have a long way to go, Madam Speaker, a long way to go.

Really, this actually comes down to government policy, not government thinking that they know better than the average Albertan knows. Albertans are resilient. They know how to get through these things. They just need to have their government behind them.

The CEO of the Edmonton Chamber of Commerce had this to say on March 7, 2018: “Are the difficult times truly behind us? That’s not what I hear. Things on the ground appear to be still as much of a struggle as ever.” Literally, I can take that statement almost verbatim and implant that into my office, and even more so, not even just at my office, everywhere. All of us travel all over the province and meet people all the time. We’re all hearing this. There’s no way that I’m the only one that’s hearing this. We need to be very realistic about where we are, Madam Speaker, and have an honest discussion about how difficult it is for Albertans right now.

There’s something extremely gratifying about being in this position and being able to try and help people as much as possible, but the hardest days for me are when somebody comes through your doors and has these stories and you just don’t know what to do. It’s actually quite overwhelming.

There was another piece. I was a little shocked to realize that other than a brief reference to the PDD review, which has really been steeped in mystery – I mean, we don’t really know what’s happening with that – the government made absolutely no reference to people with disabilities. We are overspending by billions of dollars every year. We have a \$2 billion debt repayment every year, yet there’s simply no mention about providing opportunities for a very abled population. As a mother of a now young man, an amazingly able child – he’s driving, he’s working, he’s doing all of these incredible things. He deserves to have the opportunity in life that every other Albertan child and adult gets. He should be given the same access to postsecondary education, the workforce, but unfortunately organizations that facilitate these opportunities do not have the resources to do this.

This isn’t a spend request, just in case that’s what’s going to come. This is about the fact that this government is overspending more than inflation and more than the economy can keep up. This is not an issue of revenue. This is an issue of overspending, and we have a responsibility to make sure that every single person in this province is able to live and breathe in a meaningful way and live an independent and as fulfilled life as they can.

Another highlight from the speech I’d like to touch on and that’s very close to my heart is regarding rural crime. I think it was one of the members that was talking about this from the government side. I mean, these stories just make you want to cry. I attended several meetings on rural crime. I had the privilege of being with my MP, Martin Shields, for one of the ones that we did, and the stories were just unbelievable. I mean, some of them just make you want to curl up. It’s quite terrifying, actually, what some of these families have been through.

I would like to talk about the truth about this and why I question if the government is actually going to be able to follow through with this investment. It’s an investment of half a billion dollars annually into police services across the province. Okay. To look at it on paper, that looks really decent, but the government knows – they know – that there are not enough RCMP. They know that. There are not enough. The government knows that these dollars will not produce more officers. You can pretend on paper as much as you want. You could put that you are going to put \$4 billion into it. There are not enough RCMP officers, Madam Speaker.

The truth is that we have a national shortage. But instead of inspiring communities, coming up with other solutions for now before more innocent people, Madam Speaker, are robbed or worse, the government has falsely promised my rural families that they care when they know that we are years and years away from boots

on the ground. There are not enough RCMP officers to go around, and the government knows that. I would love to know how that promise is going to be fulfilled. You can say whatever you want on paper, but we know, everybody in this House knows, that we do not have enough RCMP officers in Canada. It’s a national shortage.

I would love that explained to me, how in my community, where people are being robbed – we have families that leave their children with their grandparents and are being robbed four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, 10 times a year on the same properties, all of their things stolen. They have to claim insurance. Then they have to pay for the insurance and the replacement of those things. They’re sitting in their houses cowering as people are coming onto their properties, stealing their things. There is no way that the RCMP can get there in time because there are not enough. Our front-line workers are working like crazy to try and help as much as they can. In rural areas we’re talking about large distances.

Where is our public trust? The truth is that the government knows this, Madam Speaker, and is promising the people of our constituencies, the rural folks, that somehow they’re magically going to have boots on the ground. We know that this isn’t possible. I would love to have an answer to that question.

Now, in terms of the economy I understand why the government might feel that the tides have turned and sunny skies are here.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane under Standing Order 29(2)(a).

Mr. Westhead: Yes. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I was listening to the member talk about the rural crime issue, and I hear her. I’ve heard my constituents say – you know, we share a border, actually. I share a border with the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View, and a lot of my constituents are experiencing the same problems as hers are. I hear that she’s concerned about not having RCMP officers hired in a reasonable amount of time, and that’s not an unreasonable thing to be concerned about.

You know, I have the same questions. It’s great to put money towards hiring officers, but having them actually be on the ground and doing the work that we want them to do is another part of the solution. I suppose that some of the ways that we’re trying to address that in the short term is also by hiring civilian officers who can file reports so that trained officers can be released from behind their desks and get out into the community and do the patrolling, so that they’re not stuck writing reports. Those are some short-term solutions in terms of getting boots on the ground.

But, you know, the member is right, and she identifies concerns with rural crime. What we did is that we spoke to the RCMP and the Crown prosecutors and asked them: what resources do you need to help start addressing this problem? The answer they gave us was: we need additional funding for more officers and for trying to get officers out from behind their desks so that they can be in the community. So the approach we’ve taken to try to address this problem is speaking directly to the police and asking them what their solution is. The member is now saying that she disagrees with what the RCMP are telling us the solution is.

I agree with the member’s concerns, and she raises some valid points, but I’ve yet to hear any solutions that they would provide. So I’d like to give the member some opportunity to tell us solutions rather than complaints.

4:20

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, and thank you to the member. It’s interesting that you should bring that up because I’ve also spoken

with our local RCMP. The interesting thing is that those solutions that you're referring to, the ones that you're talking about, actually came from the RCMP. That was a long consultation because we actually did consult. That is part of the solution. The one that you spoke about is one that we actually came up with on our side. [laughter] In fact, it came up from our side because we actually consulted.

I find this interesting, Madam Speaker, that they laugh when not a single NDP member in this House attended any single rural crime meeting that we put together. Everybody was invited. Not one. In fact, we were at all of them. We talked about them at a federal level, at a provincial level.

The member actually brings up a very valid point about bringing in local people to work with officers. That is an RCMP idea and initiative, one that worked. When I was a young kid, we had parents on patrol, we had local community patrols. We had all of these kinds of things that worked together with the local police to help.

One of the solutions, in fact, to the member, is actually to inspire public trust, to be able to inspire people to help out their communities, to actually layer it back into the community, to not take this approach from a top-ended level that somehow the government knows better about what's going on in these communities. Reach out to your communities; that's a solution. Talk to the RCMP; that's a solution. Attend our town halls; that's a solution.

We have families all over the place in these rural communities that have absolutely no idea how to move forward. Even still, if they are inspired to have ideas of how to work together, to bring together community as opposed to a government that provides divisive behaviour versus bringing communities together, that would provide a ton of solutions. Instead, the government makes false promises to our rural folks that somehow they're going to get boots on the ground. That's what was in the Speech from the Throne, not about any other solutions.

I can give you a ton of solutions, and – you know what? – I'm not taking credit for any of them. They came from the people that I represent who live it, breathe it, feel it, and are impacted every single day by what is going on. It is not my place to come up with solutions for people. I didn't live what they went through. These people have the absolute – it's a crisis. And I find it absolutely appalling that members of the government would feel that they can laugh because they think that – they didn't attend any of our town halls or any of the ones that were put on by any of these rural people.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and respond to the throne speech. There's a lot of content in this throne speech, and unfortunately with the little bit of time that I have in front of the Chamber, I can't cover it all. I do miss my time in the fall, serving as Leader of the Opposition, when I'd have a full 90 minutes. I'm sure you miss it, too, Madam Speaker, listening to me go on for 90 minutes. Instead, I have my 15 minutes.

The first thing I'd like to talk about. You know, the hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View spoke about this a bit. In the throne speech it talks about how everything is okay now. Lots of optimism, and the problems are fixed, and we're all hunky-dory and moving forward. The problem, Madam Speaker, is that when I talk to my constituents, they certainly don't feel that way, and when I talk to your constituents and constituents of the members across the way, they don't feel that way. I was in Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater a few weeks ago having a speech. They were frustrated. They didn't feel like it was going that way. Vegreville, Viking: I dropped by there, and I've been to Red Deer. They don't feel that everything is okay.

Probably the reason they don't feel everything is okay is that there are some numbers that show it's not. First off, there are 165,300 unemployed Albertans right now in this province, 26,000 more than when this government took office. It doesn't feel that good. In January 10,500 full-time jobs were lost in Alberta, not fixed, and 43,000 unemployed youth are in this province right now. There were 92,000 fewer payrolled jobs in Alberta at the end of 2017. Calgary currently has the second-highest unemployment rate in the country, at 7.9 per cent, and Edmonton is currently tied for the third-highest unemployment rate of any large city in this country.

ATB Financial's chief economist, Todd Hirsch, says that people are making less money, that job prospects are still there, but they're at lower paying opportunities.

The Edmonton Chamber of Commerce says: "Are the difficult times truly behind us? That's not what I hear. Things on the ground appear to be still as much of a struggle as ever."

From the Calgary Chamber of Commerce: "73% of businesses surveyed reported that their costs will increase due to the carbon levy."

The Bank of Canada says that there will be about 60,000 fewer jobs by 2019 directly as a result of the minimum wage increases across this country.

The list goes on and on.

Our constituents certainly don't feel like it's okay. And when they read that from this government and they hear that from this government, they feel like this government doesn't hear them. A lot of that is because this government doesn't talk to them. As you know, Madam Speaker, this government spends most of their time talking to themselves or within a bubble of people that have the NDP world view.

The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View did a great job just a few moments ago in her speech talking about this in the context of rural crime, which is also in the throne speech. The rural crime issue has been a big issue in rural Alberta for two years. Particularly, last year it increased significantly. Communities that I represent, counties that I represent: some of them have seen increases of 400, 500 per cent in their property crime rates. That's an epidemic. The police have been saying it's an epidemic.

I've been coming to this Chamber and saying for a long time on behalf of my constituents that there's a serious problem with rural crime, and so have my colleagues. For most of that time this government was silent on that issue. Even their rural members who knew that and were hearing that from their constituents sat there very silently and never advocated on their behalf.

We filled the galleries, Madam Speaker, with hundreds of people from all across this province, all across central Alberta in particular. They were the ones who came up, who travelled here to say to this government: hey, we have a serious problem. I moved to have an emergency debate in this House about that serious problem, and the government spoke against that emergency debate, to not grant it to them.

Now, something happened with this government over Christmas and over the break, particularly the last few weeks. I suggest to you, Madam Speaker, that it was probably the election of the Member for Calgary-Lougheed as Leader of the Official Opposition and the uniting of the Conservative Party and the fact that the NDP are still stuck in the high 20s in the polls and can't seem to go any higher than that. All of a sudden they realized: "We've got a big problem. We do have some rural Alberta seats. We need to try to hold them."

I don't know if that's possible based on stuff like Bill 6 and rural crime. I don't know. You may know better than me, Madam Speaker. I would suggest probably not. Rural Albertans, of which I

am one, will not forget that easy how we have been treated by this government for the last three and a half years.

But that's what changed over Christmas. Then all of a sudden the government comes back, and they say, "We're going to solve the problem; we're going to solve the problem; we're going to put in \$11 million," I believe it was, Madam Speaker, "towards the employment of some new officers and some Crown prosecutors." One of the issues for sure is a shortage of law enforcement officers and a shortage of Crown prosecutors. I will point out that that announcement doesn't even get the Crown prosecutors back up to the level that they were at before they were reduced.

You know, it's a step in the right direction – good for the government for finally taking it – but the problem is that when you then go and look at the announcement, all of those officers are coming from detachments across rural Alberta. They're being removed from those detachments, and they're being put into these other spots.

I represent detachments that are already under extreme stress, under capacity already, things like maternity leave, stress leave, reasonable reasons why officers are on stress leave. They're not back because of those reasons, and now they're going to see their colleagues be removed. A great example is the staff sergeant at Rocky Mountain House, a dear friend of mine, Mark Groves, who has been bumped and promoted up to try to deal with this rural crime issue in central Alberta. He's a great person for that job, but now we don't have Mark doing the work in Rocky Mountain House, one of the busiest detachments in this province.

I can expect, possibly, that we are going to continue to see the capacity and the stress issues and people having to go on leave because now there is even less capacity for these officers that are dealing with that. Now, the number one reason for that is because there are not enough officers in the depot. The RCMP do not have enough officers to fill that.

If this government had taken the time to go talk to anybody in Red Deer county, Lacombe county – those are big counties. Maybe call up the reeve and say: "Hey, what's going on? Your crime rates have been up. What's been going on?" You know what they'd tell you? They've been trying to hire RCMP officers. The money is there from the county. They themselves have been trying to solve this problem for the provincial government. They can't get the officers. One, two, three years go by, and they can't get the officers because there is nobody there.

So then the government wants to tell the public – and this is what the hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View I think was so upset about, and rightly upset about – that they've solved this problem. But they're misleading Albertans. They haven't solved the problem, and they haven't taken the time to talk to anybody that's experiencing this problem.

Back home over the constituency break another elderly man out at Rocky Mountain House – I know him – was robbed at his place and beaten and put in the hospital. This is a real problem. This is a serious problem. It is an epidemic, like I said it was when I first came to this Chamber. It is a serious issue, not consulted. Then they want my constituents and this side of the House to trust them, to trust that they've got this fixed. Well, how can we when they keep misleading us, when the government keeps misleading us?

4:30

You know, the carbon tax was also talked about in this throne speech. This is a tax on my constituents and your constituents that this government never campaigned on. In fact, they hid it from Albertans during their campaign. They hid it from Albertans when they door-knocked. They hid it during the debates when their leader was in the debates. They hid that carbon tax from the people of

Alberta. Then they brought in the largest tax increase in Alberta. Not a lot of trust there.

Then they said: "This is going to be the amount. We won't raise it." Then their ally and their good friend Justin Trudeau called them up, and they flew down to Ottawa and said: "What do you want, Justin? We're in. Whatever you need." And they raised that tax. Another promise broken.

Then the Premier – the Premier – says:

Every penny raised by the carbon levy will be rebated back to Albertans or put back to work for our economy in new... initiatives.

She's referring to the carbon tax here.

This is not a situation where we're going to apply it against the deficit, for instance, to maintain current operations, or anything like that.

Then we sit in this Chamber, Madam Speaker, and we read the budget, and we find out that that's exactly what they're doing. They've brought in a backdoor PST because they knew that in this province you have to have a referendum if you want to bring in a PST, and they knew that Albertans disagreed with their carbon tax. They know that Albertans disagree with the PST, and they didn't want to go back to the boss and say: can we bring in this tax? So they snuck it in and misled Albertans and told Albertans: we won't use it for general revenue. Now they're doing it. Trust? I don't think you can trust that.

Rebates. Let's talk about rebates. You've got a 67 per cent increase in the carbon tax in this budget, that was hidden in the budget – we're starting to see a bit of a pattern here – but it's been admitted to now by the Finance minister's office. Of that 67 per cent tax increase, is any of that going to rebates? No. There's no increase in rebates, totally against the promise that the Premier has made.

Now we find out that seniors living on fixed incomes are being charged 30 per cent of their carbon tax rebates to pay the rent. Now, they still have to pay carbon tax on everything because this is a tax on everything, as we know. It's a tax on the seniors' centre that they go recreate at. It's a tax on the swimming pool they participate in. It's a tax on every grocery that they buy. It's a tax on everything because everything comes by train or car in our society, so everything goes on fuel. They've lost 30 per cent. Then when the seniors say, "Whoa, whoa, whoa; this isn't fair," the hon. minister of seniors says: "That's okay. They've got 70 per cent left." Seventy per cent? First, you said that they were going to get all the rebate; now you're letting people take 30 per cent of their rebates.

Here we go. You've got a tax you never campaigned on, never told Albertans about. You hid it, tricked them, brought it in. Now you've got it. Then you tell them that it's going to stay at \$40. Now it's up to \$50. Now you've got a 67 per cent increase in the tax in the budget. Now you've got the tax being used for general revenue. Now you've got seniors losing their rebates after this government told seniors in my community to fund raise for the carbon tax, one of the most ridiculous things that I think anybody could ever say to seniors in our communities, that have built them.

They want us to trust them. That's what they're asking with this throne speech, but given that history just on the carbon tax alone, plus the lack of consultation on things like crime, a pattern of this government – I know you know, Madam Speaker, that this government does not consult outside of their inner circle. Bill 6 was a great example of that, and the list goes on and on. But they want us to trust them, give them a blank cheque: "It's okay. It's okay." Well, we can't. We can't, especially when you look at the fact that at \$50 for the carbon tax, the average Albertan's heating bill will be up \$250. That's significant. I can tell you that I know for sure that the members across the way are hearing from constituents about

their heating and electricity bills, and I bet you their constituents won't be very happy about spending \$250 on natural gas because of this government's cash grab on them.

But the government's own tax adviser says that the only way that you could actually get an impact on the environment is to raise the carbon tax to \$200. Now, if you've got this pattern of misleading Albertans by this government since the very first day they took office, since before they took office – they misled them while they were campaigning – how are we supposed to trust that they're not now going to raise this carbon tax to \$200, jump up everybody's gas bills, you know, \$1,000 plus? I don't think we could take their word for it. I know the constituents that I represent wouldn't take their word for it. Instead, they want to come talk about this throne speech.

The other part of this speech that I find humorous, sadly, is that there's a section in it called Path Back to Balance. Then we see this government bring forward a budget. A budget. This year this government predicted that we would be in surplus. Now we find out that this government's numbers, something we said would happen, are \$96 billion in debt over the next four years. Ninety-six billion dollars in debt.

This government has an \$8.8 billion deficit. They have raised spending by 16 per cent since the PC government was in power. They love to stand in this Chamber and say: "Well, we do it differently than the PCs. It's the PCs' fault." Well, look, I come from the former Wildrose legacy party, and I can point out some things the PC Party did wrong. But what I can tell you is this. This government raised things 16 per cent since they took over. They put in an \$8.8 billion deficit, and they got our province on track for one of the largest intergenerational thefts against our children, \$96 billion. When the PCs left office, they were under \$13 billion in debt. This government is getting close to two-thirds of the way there just in this year's deficit.

They want us to trust them. They want to blame other governments. In 2018-2019 the debt has increased by 321 per cent under this government's watch. They can't blame anybody else for that. Under their own projections, if they're still in office in 2021 – I hope they're not – it'll be a 500 per cent increase. By 2019, when that \$96 billion in debt arrives, it'll be a 646 per cent increase. A path to balance inside your throne speech? It's crazy, Madam Speaker.

The MLA for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater said in the *Smoky Lake Signal* on April 3: we dropped our 2018 budget last week; it's looking pretty balanced. He goes on to say that the NDP budget was able to curb spending more or less. A member of this government wants to go to his newspaper and say that a 16 per cent increase in spending is getting spending under control, that an \$8.8 billion deficit is getting things back to balance, that putting a budget before this Chamber that will see us go to \$100 billion in debt and see my grandchildren still having to pay for the mess that this government has created is a path back to balance. Well, it's not, Madam Speaker. It's ridiculous to even assert that.

But if the fact is that this government thinks that that is a path back to balance and that that is getting spending back in control, then we are in a lot of trouble. This government has no plan to get our fiscal house back in order. They will continue, it appears, with their budget, despite what they say inside their throne speech, to destroy our economy. They will continue to put debt on our children and our children's children, and they don't want to talk about the consequences of that. You know, we're looking at, between 2018-2019 and 2023-2024, under this government's projections, about \$17.63 billion in interest payments alone.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane under 29(2)(a).

Mr. Westhead: Yes, under 29(2)(a). Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre said just near the end of his speech there that – he claims that there are certain things that the government doesn't want to talk about. You know, I guess I'd like to ask him the same question, if there are things that he doesn't want to talk about. I know that there are quite a few good things happening in his constituency.

I know that there's a pipeline, for example, under construction. It just really strikes me as odd that a member like him doesn't talk about the good things. I mean, certainly, it's within his rights as a member to talk about the things he's concerned about, but I would think that he would also want to talk about the good things that happen in his community. It just strikes me as odd that, you know, he accuses us of not talking about certain things. Meanwhile he neglects to talk about certain things, too, like the pipeline that's under construction.

There was an announcement that was made just a few days ago that I would wonder if he would want to talk about or perhaps answer a question I've got for him. There was \$1.9 million from the federal and provincial governments that had gone towards the Mountain Rose Women's Shelter in Rocky Mountain House. This is funding that builds on our government's commitment to protect and support women and children that are affected by family violence. We're going to stand with survivors of violence. The new shelter is going to ensure that families have a safe and supportive place to live.

You know, the member doesn't like to talk about certain things, and I wonder if the reason he doesn't want to talk about things like a women's shelter is because of his own past, firing someone who came forward with concerns about sexual violence or sexual harassment. The member needs to look at his own behaviour and answer questions in his own mind and solve his own cognitive dissonance and help us understand why there are things like that that he doesn't want to talk about.

4:40

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker, for the question. First off, the Mountain Rose Women's Shelter is a great organization in Rocky Mountain House. I do a lot of fundraising with the women's shelter. I have a program based out of my office where we do baskets of hope, actually, for the ladies that are in the shelter. Often only toys are donated to the shelter for kids, so we focus with the community primarily on trying to make sure that we have Christmas for ladies that are in the shelter. In fact, the shelter auctions off a fishing trip with me every year, to come fishing on my boat, with the proceeds going to the women's shelter. A very big fan of that organization and the hard work that they're doing. I'm working hard with them personally to help them build their new building, and I thank the hon. member for bringing that up.

As for his other assertions, you know, trying to compare an organizational decision of a company that I owned, which was a mistake that the company made – we have apologized for that, and that situation was over a decade old – is kind ridiculous when his government called constituents inside my constituency and told fixed-income seniors to fund raise for the carbon tax, something that this government has never apologized for; when this government has ignored the swimming pool in Sundre when they say, "Hey, we may have to shut our doors"; when this government has ignored the AISH recipients inside my constituency who are crying out for help because of the damage the carbon tax is doing

to them and the fact that this government has taken no concrete action on PDD. It's pretty rich for that member to do that.

What's even worse is that I share a border with that member. In fact, not too far away from my ranch, right on the other side of the road, is the member's riding. He's never spoken to any of those constituents. He's never come and talked to them about Bill 6. When the agriculture industry was being affected, he didn't care, never left his office. My office had to help service all those constituents. Now, fortunately for them and for me, they'll be my constituents after the next election because of the boundary redraw, and they're very happy about that.

It's disappointing that this government wants to talk about the past and not about their actions now and that they still have not stood up in this House and apologized to the seniors of Sundre that they told to fund raise to pay for your ridiculous carbon tax.

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

Seeing none, I will recognize the Associate Minister of Health.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and respond to Her Honour's Speech from the Throne. Over the last few years Alberta has experienced the longest and deepest recession in a generation. Our government had a choice: to slash programs and services that Albertans rely on and to follow through with the previous government's plans, which would have seen cuts to health care, schools without enough teachers to meet enrolment growth, the introduction of a hospital room waiting tax, and a continuation of a decades-long infrastructure deficit – our government chose a different path. We stabilized funding for education and health care, and we invested in infrastructure repairs and upgrades to ensure that our public infrastructure is around for generations to come. These are investments not just in our province's present but also in our future.

Nearly three years later the recovery is well under way, with 90,000 new jobs in 2017 and the fastest growing economy in the nation. As we've heard in this House, manufacturing is up, housing starts are up, exports are up, retail sales are up, and drilling activity is up. These are all good signs and good news for the people of Calgary-Acadia and indeed across Alberta. But we know that the recovery hasn't reached every household. We know that there is more work to be done.

Our government is committed to a recovery that is built to last and that focuses on all Albertans, one that supports the diversification of our economy and that builds on our strength and our ingenuity as Albertans, which is why I'm so very proud of our government's work to diversify and support new and growing industries in our province such as the digital industries tax credit and the creation of new seats in our postsecondary education system to support this program. By increasing access to digital media and tech education, Albertans will be able to train for great careers in this growing sector. It will also ensure that Alberta-based employers in this sector are able to grow their businesses with highly trained, talented people right here at home. Madam Speaker, this is a winning proposition all around.

Now, as a born-and-raised Albertan I know how much our oil and gas industry has contributed to our province's prosperity. Indeed, my family has benefited greatly from the industry as well. My father's career has been in oil and gas as an engineer. In fact, his career started in Calgary, when he and my mom moved here from Manitoba nearly 40 years ago. It's in fact their anniversary this spring, so I'd like to also take this moment to extend to my parents a happy 40th anniversary as Albertans. My youngest brother is also an engineer in the oil and gas sector, and I myself spent many years

in the industry. Throughout those years in the industry I learned a great deal not just about the industry but also specifically about pipelines and the importance of pipelines as a safe and efficient way to transport our product to the coast and indeed across our country.

These markets to the coast enable us to access markets around the world so that, truly, we can move away from selling our product to our greatest competitor. I would argue that one of the greatest challenges facing our economy is that we are selling our product at a discount to the United States. By not receiving the full value for our oil products, Albertans and indeed all Canadians are losing out. It's impacting resource royalty revenue. It's impacting job creators. It's having an impact on employment levels. Truly, this is something that impacts us not just here in Alberta but in communities in B.C., communities on our east coast, and across the country.

Madam Speaker, this land lock must end. The Trans Mountain pipeline has received the necessary approvals, and it is time that this pipeline be built, which is why I am proud to be part of the government that is working so hard to ensure that this pipeline is built. When necessary we even intervened in court, and we have won. We have stepped up when the B.C. government attempted to regulate something it had no right to regulate, and we will continue to do whatever it takes. We will not hesitate to invoke legislation to protect workers in our energy industry and the resources that we own, just as Premier Peter Lougheed did. Every option is on the table, and we will get this pipeline built.

Madam Speaker, I'd like to take a moment to speak about our government's work to address the opioid crisis. But before I begin, I want to start with a personal message to my fellow Albertans. To anyone who's listening, if you or a loved one is struggling with opioid abuse or opioid use, you are not alone. We have your back. Nearly two Albertans a day are dying from fentanyl-related overdoses. These are family members and friends from all corners of our province, from all walks of life. They leave behind grieving families and friends and deep holes in our communities. To all who have lost a loved one, know that we grieve with you. I am so deeply sorry for your loss. We will continue to do all that we can to save lives and prevent more overdoses.

To that end, we are investing in new primary care supports so that individuals and families can more easily access treatment and counselling in their home communities. A 9 and a half million dollar grant is increasing the ability of family physicians to respond to the opioid crisis. Making sure that we identify and open new treatment opportunities and harm reduction programs in all corners of our province is a priority. We've opened more opioid dependency treatment clinics, detox beds, and telehealth programs to reach all across our province and to serve an additional 3,500 patients each year. Receiving Suboxone or methadone treatment helps people to reach stability in their lives and to continue on their journey to recovery. It's been called the gold standard and a game changer for individuals living with a medical condition that is a substance-use disorder. We will be opening more clinics in other communities in Alberta in the weeks and months to come.

Nearly 50,000 naloxone kits have been distributed in communities across the province, and more than 3,300 overdose reversals have been voluntarily reported. Alberta's first supervised consumption services opened in Calgary in October. As of the end of February they've had close to 7,000 visits, and staff have reversed 119 overdoses. Alberta's harm reduction agency, ARCHES, opened its supervised consumption site in February, and staff there work with 90 to 100 clients every day. Supervised consumption services are now also open in Edmonton, including for in-patients at the Royal Alexandra hospital, a first in North America.

4:50

We worked closely with the Kainai First Nation to make sure that that community had the life-saving services provided by an overdose prevention site. We worked quickly to secure federal approval to deploy the trailer that had been used to provide temporary supervised consumption services at the Sheldon M. Chumir Health Centre in Calgary before the permanent service had opened there.

Our response has been and continues to be guided by the Minister's Opioid Emergency Response Commission, which includes public health leaders, law enforcement, community workers, and Albertans who've experienced this crisis first-hand. The Minister's Opioid Emergency Response Commission has made 26 recommendations as of February of 2018 and forms the basis of our co-ordinated response to this crisis. The first 12 of those recommendations were officially accepted by myself and publicly posted on the opioid website in late 2017, and the subsequent 14 recommendations have been accepted by myself and are expected to be publicly posted and released shortly, but all are in the process of being implemented.

Some of the successes over the past year include, as I noted, distributing over 50,000 naloxone kits, opening the first supervised consumption services in Calgary and gearing up for other locations in Edmonton and Lethbridge, and improving access to treatment by opening new clinics and programs in places like Grande Prairie, Fort McMurray, Sherwood Park, central Alberta, and via telehealth to all corners of our province. We've also enabled firefighters, police officers, and other emergency responders to inject naloxone. We've worked with First Nations and Métis partners to gather data, and we've established a new \$5 million grant program to fund indigenous communities to allow them to create and roll out opioid-related initiatives in their communities.

By the end of fiscal 2017 government had spent the total \$30 million allocated for recommendations made by the commission and approved by myself. While it will take time to see the number of deaths decrease, the commission is working closely with service providers and people with lived experience to save lives. We continue to work with the commission and our partners to build and strengthen actions to prevent opioid overdoses and provide appropriate supports and service options for those struggling with opioid use.

I often hear from members of the community about the importance of treatment and ensuring that the mental health supports that individuals need are available for them as they take steps forward in their recovery, which is why I was so proud to see the inclusion and the announcement of legislation that will be forthcoming from our government to ensure that there is safety and quality care in private treatment facilities. This is something that is long overdue, Madam Speaker, and I think really speaks to the former government's unwillingness to acknowledge that substance use is a medical health condition and requires a medical response.

In the months to come we'll continue to expand public treatment, continue to expand harm reduction, and continue to expand public education. By working together and treating this like the health crisis that it is, we can save lives and work to stop the devastation and the heartbreak that is caused by this crisis.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Under Standing Order 29(2)(a), the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I was very pleased to hear of the hon. member's efforts with respect to safe consumption sites. Certainly, in the community that I represent, in Lethbridge, there is one such site as a result of the business community in my

city as well as mayor and council, front-line workers, the fire and EMS chief, the police chief, and others throughout the community and many advocates asking for this to be so.

So it was with great dismay that we saw the Leader of the Opposition come into our city and lecture our police chief, our fire and EMS chief, our business community, our mayor and council, our front-line health care workers on how they ought to be responding to this crisis. This site was some months and years in the making and certainly as a result of community action and community coming forward. Certainly, in Lethbridge many people, Madam Speaker, found that to be an insult, and it was a grave mistake on the part of the Leader of the Official Opposition to be so strident and ideological in his condemnation of this site in my city.

Madam Speaker, I'm wondering if the member can talk a little bit about what has happened since that site opened, how many lives have been saved, and any other details that she's heard from the community, and share those details with the House because in my view this is a great legacy of this hon. member, these safe consumption sites. They have saved lives, and we ought to be very, very proud of the work that she has done in the public interest in this province.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. associate minister.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Madam Speaker and to the member for the very important question. I really need to take a moment to commend the city of Lethbridge, their leadership at the council level as well as police, other first responders, the mayor, and the community agencies such as ARCHES, which have really come together to find local solutions to the opioid crisis in their community, drawing on their experience of their community.

You know, when I spoke with the chief of police, one of the comments he made was that we can't enforce our way out of this problem. Ultimately, in order to address the opioid crisis, we need to provide the supports that individuals need so that they may make their way from drug use through treatment when they are ready.

I, too, was dismayed by the Leader of the Opposition's comments. The fact of the matter is that you can't get well after you've died. We have lost far too many Albertans by pretending that substance use is a personal choice, that it's something people just decide that they're going to do. No one chooses substance use. No one chooses to put their life at risk in that way. In so many ways I think that the shame and the stigma that was evidenced by the member opposite's comments really worsens the problem in many ways.

I have heard from so many family members who've lost a loved one who said that they didn't know what to do to help their child, they didn't know where to turn, they felt shame that their child was struggling, and because there was no one to turn to, they ended up losing their child. My heart breaks for those families, Madam Speaker, especially because we know better now. We know that this is a public health concern. We know that there are safe and effective treatments, medical treatments, available.

That is why, Madam Speaker, it is so important for us to be expanding access to these treatments through primary care networks, through family doctors, and working to address some of that stigma that can still exist in parts of our communities. Every person in our province struggling with substance use deserves dignity and respect and a chance to make a choice for treatment another day.

That is why I am so proud of the work of supervised consumption services to be able to support people. Since the ARCHES site has opened in Lethbridge, we've seen between 90 and 100 people coming each and every day. These are individuals that would have been at risk of overdose. One of the really fantastic things, in my opinion, about supervised consumption services is not just that

there are medically trained professionals to intervene at the first sign of overdose . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wish to speak to this matter? The hon. Member for Highwood.

Mr. W. Anderson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to respond to the throne speech that was given on the 8th of March. It's no doubt that members on the other side of the House have put a lot of effort into the preparation going into this session, and I want to acknowledge the hard work they've done. However, I'm still a little disappointed that many families in our province are still struggling under the weight of the recession and the added burdens this government has inflicted on them in recent years.

We were all relieved when we finally heard the measures the Premier and her caucus were going to make to get British Columbia to back away from their illegal point of their plan and effectively make sure that all Canadians knew their resolve. They stated in their Speech from the Throne that they "refuse to let anyone turn their backs on the thousands upon thousands of working people in our energy sector." They affirmed that they would "do whatever it takes" to get the pipeline built, but reality is that time is ticking, another year has gone by, and there's still no pipeline built.

5:00

Struggling families have not only been stifled with unemployment; they've been burdened with a huge tax that this government never campaigned on. I find it ironic that while they spoke about making sure that consumers have more predictable bills and that investors have more certainty, there's no mention of the huge carbon tax, that is hurting families, businesses, and investors, a tax they never campaigned on or spoke about in their throne speech, a tax that conveniently funnels more revenue to government coffers to spend on whatever government decides.

We've continually said over and over again that there is a scientific consensus that anthropogenic climate change is real, yet they try and shift the conversation and say that we're climate change deniers just because we do not believe in their tax. We're not pro carbon tax politicians, and the politicians on the other side of the House, who are, can't even tell us by how much the taxes will reduce emissions, nor did they dare to talk about it in their Speech from the Throne. As a matter of fact, in the recent budget the NDP admitted – and we knew that this was the case all along – that their carbon tax is simply about grabbing more tax revenue for the government.

It talked about how Albertans step up to defend one another and how, when they're down, we help each other. It sounds more like a pep talk to struggling families to step up to the plate and help each other out, without the devastating carbon tax. They have, after all, told our seniors to hold fundraisers to help pay for the carbon tax. They're worried that they will lose their recreational facilities due to the exorbitant costs.

They spoke about billions of dollars for schools, hospitals, and public services having actually evaporated and how thousands of good jobs have been tossed aside and how money that should be put in the pockets of working Canadians has been directed south of the border. These statements aren't inaccurate. They are. But where is this government to help keep the families and the struggling businesses? They've inflicted the economy with a huge so-called carbon tax, which is really a sales tax. If we're going to be honest, they've hurt the economy with their reckless and harmful policies and legislation.

Businesses have gone south of the border, and they've told us why. They've left due to huge increases that cut into their bottom line and have no choice but to move. Struggling businesses that

were hit recently by the recession don't need to be hit with a carbon tax. Minimum wage increases and new labour legislation are putting an unnecessary burden on businesses here in Alberta. The \$15-an-hour pledge for the minimum wage is not and was not addressing equality at all, like the NDP wants to portray, but instead increasing Albertans' wage so that the government gets more in the form of taxes. If that was what this government is really concerned about, they would increase the basic personal amount, which would help employers and employees alike without increasing everyone's tax.

Can I just emphasize right now that the new labour legislation that changed the Employment Standards Code affected small, medium, and large businesses in so many ways? Many of them already have implemented the carbon tax and the minimum wage increase, and they cannot make ends meet. The rules governing holiday pay, overtime, and vacation increased labour costs. These were drastic for some and, unfortunately, fatal for others. Employees that worked in restaurants and businesses that could not take another blow from the government ended up not only getting holiday, overtime, and vacation increases, but they've actually lost their jobs.

Layering small costs on top of small costs on top of small costs ends up being big costs that the businesses just can't keep up with. The government talks about how businesses have moved south of the border. Yes, they have, and for good reason. This province has lost billions of dollars in investment capital and will have, with that money moving south, a potential brain drain in the future.

The throne speech talks about choices that were made during the downturn and how the government did not rest idle or turn their backs on the day-to-day needs of people and families. Can I just say that if the people of Alberta truly felt in their hearts that this was the case, then the government should not have had to say that?

The speech spoke of a path back to balance and how once the budget was released, it would show this plan, but Albertans are having a hard time seeing any balance in the budget just dropped a few short days ago. The budget actually included more spending and included an \$8.8 billion deficit, that will lead to an overall \$93 billion deficit in five short years. I'm not sure how this budget will lead to a balanced budget in the future.

It's truly discouraging to hear that our province's debt load is currently at \$54.2 billion this year. In a province that was effectively debt free a short 14 years ago, this leaves us with interest payments on the debt of almost \$2 billion a year, and that number is supposed to climb to \$4 billion a year in the next few years. Let's hope we don't get another credit downgrade. This is unsustainable, and our children and grandchildren will not be afforded the lifestyle we are accustomed to if we leave this debt to them.

Also, saying that this government is committed to making sure taxes on people and businesses will remain the lowest in Canada is really not adequate. More needs to be done. Albertans will not be able to withstand the 67 per cent increase to the carbon tax that's coming and the sales tax in disguise. This government knows that. The budget does nothing to show the people of Alberta the NDP's commitment to that end.

Now, the throne speech talks about crime; to be exact, protecting Albertans from crime. Rural Albertans are concerned about their safety and protection of their homes. The speech says that this must change. And while I'm glad that the government has finally come to a conclusion after we've loudly raised the issue with them over the past few years, it's really bad in rural Alberta. This is where the change is needed. Let's not talk about this anymore; let's take some action. Let's see the initiatives you spoke about being implemented. This is not something that can wait any longer. Rural Albertans need to see boots on the ground. That's where they're needed most. You spoke about this, but this needs to be resolved. We need to look

at other measures to make sure rural Albertans and their properties are safe.

Now, I've had several town halls in my constituency, and this is what we've heard: we need to address the gaps in the current judicial system. Quite frankly, the amount of capital that's being allocated for the number of Crown prosecutors who are retiring and leaving right now: we're not even going to meet that demand, never mind adding more Crown prosecutors.

We need to review the resources for the RCMP. We need to review the centralized 911 system. We need to increase the resources for mental health treatment. We need to support designated crime reduction units and work closely with the rural crime watch.

Finally, to bring my speech to a close, I'd like to stress that no one in this Chamber cheers for Alberta to fail. We all work together in this opposition as Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition. We'll do the best we can to continue robust debate and bring the truth to this Assembly.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any others wishing to speak to the Speech from the Throne? The hon. Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

Mr. Piquette: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It is my privilege to rise in the House today to respond to the Speech from the Throne. I think the member who just spoke mentioned this being about choices. That was the theme of the throne speech. I think the key kind of line from that is when the Lieutenant Governor – and I got it right this time, which is great – said, “The cumulative impact of making different choices is paying off.” I think that if we wanted to summarize maybe the leitmotif of our government, it's that.

Of course, we do have an NDP government in Alberta. In May 2015 the people of Alberta decided that they wanted to make a different choice. They'd been told for decades that – you know, the refrain was this person called TINA, right? I mean, our predecessors liked to talk about TINA all the time. TINA was one of Klein's favourite people. Of course, TINA refers to: there is no alternative. The message that Albertans had been told for many years was that there was only one party that could govern the province and that there was only one way of doing things. The sort of sad irony of that is that that way of doing things was pretty much the opposite of many other jurisdictions.

The kind of choices we made in the past would be – I guess you could characterize it as reverse Keynesianism. Classic Keynesianism is the idea that, you know, there are going to be boom-and-bust cycles, that that's something that comes with our free-market system. The government does have a very important role in evening that out, and they do that by spending more money, borrowing money, if necessary, during a downturn in order to keep the economy from continuing to sink, and then they start to work to restrain spending, carefully and responsibly, once the economy starts to recover.

In Alberta we tended to do it the opposite way. When the economy started tanking, the idea was: “Oh, well, what we need to do is cut spending. We need to slash infrastructure. We need to cut back on maintenance. We need to start laying off teachers. We need to start laying off nurses.” The refrain was: yes, you know, it's really unfortunate, it's too bad, but there is no alternative.

5:10

Now, of course, in the early spring of 2015, you know, Premier Prentice proposed his budget, which was very much framed that way, that we have no alternative, that we need to freeze or roll back

spending, and that we need to increase a whole bunch of user fees, things that even at the time they'd know would slow down critical sectors of our economy such as the real estate sector and the energy sector. It just sort of goes on. I think Albertans made a wise choice at that point and said: “We've had enough. We've given you guys 44 years, and this is the best that you can provide for us? This is what you're telling us?” I think that the last few years have shown that Albertans, despite what some of the opposition say, do know what they're about and that they made the right choice.

I think that where we are today as a province reflects that. We're leading the country in growth. We're the first out. Although there is a long way to go – and I think nobody here pretends otherwise – definitely all the numbers and all the indicators show that we are definitely on the right track.

One of the first rules – and I think one of the other members alluded to it, but maybe I'll take a different spin on it – is that when you're in a hole, the first thing you want to do is stop digging. Now, I mean, you could characterize that as “stop digging to spend resources,” but another way to look at “stop digging” is not to make things worse – that's sort of the first step, I think – and then to incent recovery. It's going to be a different type of recovery, based on different understandings.

You know, another choice that our predecessors made and that the new, rebranded incarnation is making is this misconception that the government really can't do anything to help diversify the economy, that you just have to leave these things up to the market and that the market always knows best. The problem with that is: what do you do when the market puts you in a way where you're dependent on just a few commodities and you don't have any recourse if they start to collapse?

I had one interesting discussion, just to give an idea of this sort of attitude. I won't mention who it is, but I did speak to a high-ranking member of the previous government. I asked him the question: how is it that you guys didn't have a ministry for economic development? Why didn't you have, you know, officials that are working directly on diversifying our economy? The response I got was sort of: well, we didn't need one. I mean, I'm not sure how far-sighted that was. We're not making that same mistake, so what we're choosing to do is that we're choosing to use the power of government to make investments happen where otherwise they wouldn't.

A key part of that – and I'm happy to see that referred to in the budget – is the petrochemicals diversification program. It's a wonderful program because, of course, if the projects don't go ahead, it doesn't cost the taxpayer a dime. In fact, the credits being provided are being paid for by property taxes and income taxes before it's even complete. I mean, it's an ideal program, and it managed to bring Alberta back into consideration for these types of projects. For many years people didn't think about Alberta for petrochemical diversification, and I'm happy to report that that has changed in a big way. I've spoken to companies and individuals from jurisdictions like Texas and other areas that are actively looking in Alberta. What's bringing them in? The wonderful work that they're seeing happening in the Industrial Heartland. Basically, now that we're going to be having a supply of polypropylene, that opens up a lot of doors for us, too.

That's a choice we made, and that's why people elect a government, to make these types of choices that are going to benefit people rather than pretending that they don't have a choice. There is an alternative, and I think that whatever else happens in the future, we've shown Albertans that there is another way of doing things. I think what it means is that in the future they're going to be a little bit harder to fool.

I'll talk about another thing where making choices would be – you know, we can go back to the last big recession or, of course, the Klein government, which our opposition tends to pump up, that this was a great thing. I mean, that was a choice about once again pretending there was no choice when there was, and the sad part is that in that situation it was done quite intentionally. Basically, the idea was that our deficit was totally out of control and that we had to hack spending or the province was going to go bankrupt.

Now, I'm sure some of the members remember an individual named Kevin Taft. At that time Kevin Taft blew the whistle on that approach. I don't know if I need to table this or not. He basically said that the fix is in, that the types of small cuts and, you know, the incremental approach that had been done by the Getty administration had slayed the deficit dragon and we did not have to have massive and brutal cuts.

You know, what about under Klein? They set that aside. Instead, they went to Albertans and they told Albertans: there is no alternative; we're going bankrupt; we need to slash and burn. Then, with that, came a lot of the other issues that we're dealing with to this day. So they used it as: "There is no alternative. We have to privatize services. We have to privatize Alberta Transportation. We have to privatize registries. We have to privatize liquor stores." Some of those changes maybe were good; some of those maybe we're starting to regret. But, I mean, it was done under them.

My suspicion is that if the opposition changes sides with us, you know, after the next election, it's going to be very much that narrative. I mean, right now they're basically claiming that they can do – well, let's just say that if they have a magic formula for how you can continue infrastructure spending, cut taxes, reduce the deficit, and do that with no impact to front-line services, I'd like to see that magic formula.

Now, of course, one thing is the *deus ex machina* that the Leader of the Opposition has proposed: well, we're just going to take the government to court over equalization payments. I don't know if they're still saying that because their messaging keeps changing. But I think they know very well that they're not going to succeed. Just as the Leader of the Opposition and the members of his caucus say: we're also going to repeal the carbon tax. You know, this is despite the understanding that is out there that this is something that the federal government can make provinces do.

Why would they say these things when they know that they can't do them? Because they want to be able to be all things to all people until after they get elected, and then guess what they're going to be saying? There is no alternative. Then they're going to be able to do the types of cuts, you know, the slash and burn. I mean, the last round of that: in a major way the province is still recovering from that.

So, you know, it's about choices. I mean, the other choice would be to – the opposition likes to talk about that we let rural Albertans down. We made a much different choice than they did in a similar situation, where we didn't download our deficit problems onto municipalities. We've maintained MSI funding. We've even advanced it.

You know, I kind of wish that the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre had kept – he quoted three lines, I think, or three words from an article in the *Smoky Lake Signal*, taken out of context, of course. That's just fine, but I wish that he'd kept on reading because at that same meeting the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills was present as well, so he could actually – the mayor of Smoky Lake was also at the meeting. And this is from the article: after his report, the town of Smoky Lake's mayor, Hank Holowaychuk, expressed his appreciation to the NDP government and to Piquette for looking at the rural crime issue, ensuring the stability of the MSI funding, and ensuring that the agricultural

societies have the funding they need as well, all positive moves; we appreciate you guys. That's what he said. He then goes on to mention a couple of infrastructure projects that all of us wanted to see, that he was disappointed that he didn't see them. But that was really the outcome of that meeting. That's really the type of reaction to the direction we're going in, reflecting the throne speech, reflecting the budget, that I'm seeing out there.

5:20

I mean, I guess the other choice, you know, the one that the Member for Banff-Cochrane alluded to, was to fund the rural crime initiative. I have to say that I'm really nonplussed. When I talk to RCMP staff sergeants and constables – actually, I spoke to an officer from Ardrossan just this morning – and ask them their opinion about the rural crime initiative, I get a very, very different interpretation of what it means than what the opposition is presenting here. What they tell me is that they think this is the way to go, that being able to bring in additional resources in problem situations to be able to nip that problem in the bud is, like, a solution that makes sense to them, that, as a matter of fact, providing more support for civilian staff so that they can be out in the community more, so that they can actually leverage existing resources makes perfect sense. They're excited about these crime reduction units.

I don't seem to hear much concern about recruitment into them. On the contrary, you know, this type of posting is going to be something that's going to be very attractive to ambitious RCMP officers because, of course, they get the opportunity to investigate. Now, that was our choice, and it was their choice.

Well, they keep criticizing us, but I've yet to hear any sort of rural crime strategy, well, at least one that has anything to do with the province. The last I heard, they were waiting a year before they would propose something. I don't think Albertans... [Mr. Piquette's speaking time expired] Oh, I guess I'm out of time.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, just a request to please table any articles you've quoted from.

Mr. Piquette: I understand.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner under 29(2)(a).

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Madam Speaker. As I listened to the Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater, he was referencing an economist, John Maynard Keynes. It's interesting. I appreciate that he's read and studied past economic models, but the Keynesian economic model states that you buy your way out of your troughs, but as you get out of your recession, you save for the next one. And the reality is that we now have decades where we've been able to study these models, and unfortunately there's actually been very little evidence that any of the governments that follow a Keynesian economic model actually save during the good times. So to base the government's policies, to base the government's go-forward strategy on an economic model that has been proven to be ineffective in being able to accomplish the second part of that model, which is the saving for that rainy day when the economy goes into recession again, is folly.

Now, I get the idea, and I've heard many times from the government side that they had to make choices, that they had to choose whether or not they were going to tighten their belt or whether they were going to spend their way out. Again, every Keynesian economic strategist would say that that's the right approach. The problem is that the original strategy that the government had at this point – and they did recognize this right from the beginning, and I take my hat off to them for recognizing

the problem that we were facing. Right from the beginning their approach was that they would quickly inject quantitative easing, whatever they want to call it, into the economy in order to be able to try to pull us out of that recession quickly. At this point, based upon their strategy, their Keynesian economic strategy, they should be at a positive. This year should have been a positive figure. Then they would show positive figures going into the future, which would fulfill that second part of the Keynesian economic model, which is to always save for the next time that it goes into the trough.

I do have a question, and I'm going to let the member have the opportunity to respond. I want him to be able to help this side of the House understand if they do have a plan for being able to get to that point where they actually do pay off or start to pay down that debt that they've accumulated, which is to the tune of about \$96 billion from their own numbers.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Piquette: All right. Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to answer the member's question. Now, we do have a path to balance. Of course, we can't predict the future. I mean, these are plans; these are guidelines. But we would be, you know, running a balanced budget by 2023, and then that would be the time.

Now, of course, there's another factor to this, which is that over time, as long as the economy keeps growing, the debt becomes smaller relative to the overall economy. I mean, we look at other jurisdictions that run debts. The United States has carried a national debt I think since the Civil War. They're maybe not in a good situation now, but when they were growing, it was not seen as a big issue because it was in small proportion to the overall economy.

Now, as we go into the future, you know, we're bringing spending into balance. The productive potential of the economy is increasing as well; therefore, we're getting more tax revenue. We've made some very, very conservative assumptions about this.

The other thing that can prevent – I know what his concern is, of course, because until recently he was a member of quite a different party. He was a member of a party that, in fact, you know, came up partly to concerns over the Progressive Conservatives. [The time limit for questions and comments expired] Oh. I wish I could. Next time.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the Speech from the Throne? The hon. Member for Little Bow.

Mr. Schneider: Thank you, Madam Speaker. As always, it's indeed an honour to be able to rise in this House and give my response to the Speech from the Throne. Every time I rise in this House, I feel privileged that I was elected to represent the constituency of Little Bow. Despite the privilege of being an MLA, I think of myself as a pretty regular guy. I like to work around the farm. I like to ride my off-highway vehicle out west. I like the occasional beer on a hot day just like the Finance minister. I like classic westerns. And I like spending time with my family. That's who I am, and that's who I like to be.

What I don't want to do is to become out of touch with where I came from. I don't want to succumb to what my colleague from Drumheller-Stettler often refers to as dome disease. That isn't who I want to be. If I get a chance on a Friday afternoon, I'll go down to the curling rink and shoot pool with the boys for two or three hours. It's a pretty good barometer of what's going on in Alberta, not near as formal as some would think it needs to be but a good barometer for me nonetheless.

Unfortunately, this malady, this dome disease, creeps up on you, and it can colour your thinking. I think that's what's happening to this government. It appears to this side of the House that the

government may be a little out of touch with Albertans, and they're starting to realize it now. We've seen more and more examples of this ever since the Member for Calgary-Lougheed took his place in the front row as the Leader of the Official Opposition. This government has spent a lot of time backtracking from their previous positions to be more in line with the views expressed by members from this side of the House. It may seem odd that a party of socialists could come around to conservative thinking, but I guess that when a party spends as much time talking about a former Conservative Premier as much as the present one does, well, I guess it's not that far of a reach. It kind of makes me wonder why they don't shout out about the virtues of any socialist leaders that they prefer in their speeches. But I digress, Madam Speaker.

5:30

My point here is that sometimes I can't help but wonder if this government truly understands what the average Albertan feels, what's important to them. I talk with them all the time, Madam Speaker. I attend council meetings. I talk to reeves. We have a group down in southern Alberta called the mayors and reeves of southwestern Alberta. I get to speak with mayors and reeves from all over the area, meet with other politicians. I talk to folks on Main Street, Alberta. I've held town halls. I've got to tell you that the feedback I've heard leads me to believe that this government has lost touch with the average Albertan.

Rural crime has been brought up in the House a lot of times today. It was a good portion of the throne speech, yet if it was such a priority of this government, why was it that when we asked for an emergency debate last November, this government shot it down, with the gallery seats full of victims of rural crime? You know, I understand that it may have been procedurally incorrect, but if the government was compassionate and actually felt that a discussion about rural crime could be something important, I think the House leaders could have met. Maybe the House leader from the government would have said: "Look, we've got a full slate for the next week. What about Tuesday next we give you some time, and we'll have a debate next week?" That would have made some sense. That would have been a compassionate government understanding the people that were in the gallery here that day.

Despite numerous town halls – and that's been said several times here today, too – held by both UCP members and Members of Parliament, they have more than ample time to do so. I keep hearing: why weren't we invited? Members opposite were asking why they weren't invited. Well, the members opposite are citizens of Alberta just like every other Albertan, just like everybody on this side of the House. We're free to come and go as we please. All of our town halls were sufficiently advertised, and anyone would have been welcome. Madam Speaker, I'm not going to go too far there, but I think that truly is being out of touch.

We've heard discussion from the Justice minister that they've promised some extra officers. If there's a plan on how they're going to roll this out, I'm afraid I haven't heard it. For the sake of those victims that were here today and the victims that I listened to in five town halls that I went to and the victims in all of rural Alberta that are feeling this kind of pain, I hope that it's a better plan than the one they rolled out when they alienated rural folks across the whole province with that ill-conceived Bill 6, the farm bill. They had to scramble a little to fix that one, and the residual damage is still being felt today. They just seem to have a certain disconnect, and that's what makes this throne speech so frustrating. It touts a list of objectives, but given this government's poor record of carry-through I can't help but be a little pessimistic.

Madam Speaker, the throne speech talked a lot about ensuring Canadian tidewater access for Alberta energy. There are certainly a

lot of things that we could talk about there if we start that discussion with Tzeporah Berman as we begin our conversation about getting Alberta's energy to tidewater. Tzeporah Berman is a radical environmental activist. Her exploits are well known. She's been connected with civil disobedience for nearly 30 years. In 2016 this radical environmentalist was appointed co-chair of the Alberta NDP government's oil sands advisory group. Right from the Alberta government's website I'd just like to quote what the group was intended to do.

Specifically, the group's primary focus was to:

- consider how to implement the 100 megatonne per year carbon emissions limit for the oil sands industry.
- develop durable, effective structures and processes to address local and regional environmental issues.

Examples being air, land, water, biodiversity, cumulative effects and such.

And to:

- provide advice to government on investing carbon price revenue in innovations to reduce further emissions intensity.

Basically, the board was charged with making recommendations on implementing the new climate leadership plan, reviewing cumulative impacts of oil sands operations, and designing climate recommendations for the pathway to 2015. Quite a board to appoint a radical environmentalist to.

It didn't last long, though. It became a bit of a problem for the Alberta government when Ms Berman made it clear that she supported British Columbia's newly minted NDP Party and its environmental thoughts. Everyone involved claimed that the Berman release from the OSAG was some kind of mutual agreement. I guess it really isn't important enough to talk about or worry about. At the end of the day, she left an organization that was to implement a plan of the Alberta government on behalf of Albertans so that she could get back to fighting and chaining herself to equipment and causing as much civil disobedience as humanly possible for a pipeline company and work against the Alberta government. And it's a pipeline company, as much as this Alberta government hates to admit it, that they need to get busy with a project that will see Alberta's energy delivered to British Columbia, to be sent off from there to world markets. That is just one of the issues with Alberta energy that this government just doesn't seem to have quite figured out.

When I got here in 2015, the new government was teetering on how to keep oil in the ground because it was dirty somehow, off base. To me, it is amazing how that message has changed in under three years as this government has found that without oil, we are just another province. Madam Speaker, every other province in this country would give an arm for what we have, an abundance of wealth near a small city called Fort McMurray, 3 trillion barrels of the stuff that dreams are made of. There are a lot of zeros in 3 trillion. There are a lot more zeros in the value of those 3 trillion barrels, a number that this government has now realized it is impossible to do without.

The wealth in the oil sands is not an easy portion of the gross domestic product to ignore. That's why an environment that encourages development of that monstrously huge resource that directly affects the economy of the entire country is so hard to ignore, so hard to ignore that a once leave-it-in-the-ground government has turned into a fight-for-Alberta government simply out of necessity. As Conservatives we appreciate this government helping themselves to the opposition's ideas because those ideas really do help Albertans. The only issue for the Alberta government now is that their ally and friend Ms Berman is helping or possibly leading the battle to make sure that our resource, that every other

province would bend over backwards for, never gets to tidewater. Ironic.

Oh, the government speaks about social licence and how that will get this Trans Mountain pipeline built. "Social licence," a term that their friend in Ottawa, Mr. Trudeau, embraced because Alberta went ahead and did what he was hoping to see go forward. But the funny thing is that their friend is what I would call missing in action on this file. If the friendly Mr. Trudeau is to be of some help to get this pipeline built so that oil from this province can get to world markets, he's going to have to hurry up because Albertans are going to be making a pretty big decision about their government's future in a very short time.

Now, another topic from the throne speech talked about how things are looking up. Well, I would like this government to tell that to the folks that are unemployed here in Alberta. Calgary has one of the highest unemployment rates outside of the Maritimes. Madam Speaker, many people have also come off the unemployment rolls for a number of reasons. They may have exhausted their benefits. In a futile bid to find employment, they may have been in a trade and hung out their own shingle in order to go into business for themselves, or they may have had to settle for a stopgap job out of their field for considerably less pay as a way to keep themselves afloat financially. These aren't long-term solutions.

5:40

The government actually said in their speech that "now that the economic recovery is here, we will keep our focus on the priorities of regular people." Well, from what I hear, what regular people want this government to do is stop overburdening them with unnecessary taxes like the never-ending, ever-growing carbon tax. They want mortgage-paying jobs. They want their towns to remain viable without fading into history due to some ideological slant the government takes. They want a government that doesn't choose winners and losers with our wildlife. They want a government that doesn't interfere with investment coming into the province by making the economic climate hostile. That's what regular folk want, and we know that because we talk to them.

Madam Speaker, it's no secret that ideology pushes the government's agenda. We heard it throughout the throne speech. Their plan to diversify the economy is rife with it. Just a sidebar, our economy has never been as diversified as it is right now. In fact, in 1986 Alberta's economic prosperity table showed that the economic diversity in that year had a total gross domestic product of \$59.6 billion. In 2016 that number skyrocketed to \$314.9 billion. In fact, the greatest portion of this economic diversification came from the previous Conservative governments. How can you expect economic growth when you align yourselves with only those sectors that coincide with and complement your ideology? Why do that at the expense of other sectors? When you hamper other sectors' growth at the expense of another's growth, it is near impossible, but that doesn't seem to bother.

Madam Speaker, this government talks about choices made during the downturn. Well, one of those choices, of course, was foisting the single largest tax on Alberta taxpayers that's ever happened in this province. That was the choice that this government made during the downturn. Imagine burdening a hurting company with a crippling tax that was nowhere in their election platform.

I came across a fellow from northern Alberta. Just a little anecdote here. Not every area has access to clean-burning, efficient natural gas. They just don't. Fortunately, technology has progressed so that furnaces that burn stoker coal were efficient enough to be a cost-effective way to heat homes, heat barns, outbuildings, et cetera. Well, Madam Speaker, some of those rural locations still

don't have natural gas options. Solar and wind don't have the efficiency or the ability . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Schneider: Just tell them to adjourn. They want to adjourn.

The Deputy Speaker: You can't adjourn under 29(2)(a).

Mr. Panda: Yeah. I was very closely following what the Member for Little Bow was saying in a very balanced, very civil manner. I would like him to tell me about the people in southern Alberta, south of Calgary, actually, in the area that you represent and the rest of the southern Alberta ridings. How are they feeling about this recent budget or the direction this government is taking? If you can share your thoughts, I'd appreciate it.

Mr. Schneider: Well, Madam Speaker, I was in the process of starting a story, and I'm going to finish it. As I was saying, some of these rural locations don't have natural gas options. Solar and wind don't have the efficiency to stop the gap; otherwise, they wouldn't need natural gas as a fallback. So they still use this coal.

One such operation, just a gentleman that sent us a copy of the bill that he paid, recently bought a load of coal to use on his farm. The cost of said coal was \$45 a tonne. The carbon tax on this was \$53.09 a tonne, and with the GST, which is the tax on the tax, the total was \$60.08. This resident paid over eight bucks more for a tonne of carbon tax than the price of his coal. Those are choices made during the downturn, Madam Speaker.

Average Albertans understand that fossil fuels are transitioning out, but this is cutting off your nose to spite your face. I guess there will always be other choices to be made, choices that will be made in 14 months, choices made in the next few months.

Now, I would be remiss if I didn't touch on the path back to balance, that portion of the throne speech. Would the average Albertan actually believe that a debt of \$42 billion, or about 9,800 bucks a person, is the path back to balance? I wonder. At this rate our children's children will be paying for this government's follies.

By now everyone has seen the media report stating that if Kinder Morgan pipeline is built, we – and by “we” I mean the government – believe that we can balance the budget in five years, which begs the question: what happened to getting off the royalty roller coaster if they're putting all of their financial eggs in the Trans Mountain pipeline?

Madam Speaker, this brings me full circle back to the malady of dome disease. Could it be that our government is so infected that it completely contradicts its previous positions almost on a weekly basis? Is this simply spending too much time under the dome in the halls of power, or is it a manifestation of a government that simply can't reconcile ideology over economy, a government that is completely out of step with the average Albertan?

That being said, Madam Speaker, I thank you for the time I have been allotted to speak. I'm going to adjourn debate if that's all right.

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

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak to the Speech from the Throne? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Mr. Drysdale: Madam Speaker, I'd like to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 2 Growth and Diversification Act

Mr. Panda moved that the motion for second reading of Bill 2, Growth and Diversification Act, be amended by deleting all the words after “that” and substituting the following:

Bill 2, Growth and Diversification Act, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship in accordance with Standing Order 74.2.

[Adjourned debate on the amendment March 22: Dr. Swann]

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Mr. Drysdale: The referral amendment?

The Deputy Speaker: Yes.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to support my UCP colleague's motion to refer Bill 2, Growth and Diversification Act, to the committee. This bill is proposing to use a mixture of incentives, also called taxpayers' money, to encourage diversification in Alberta's tech sector. I support sending this bill to committee for a full review because the committee can invite stakeholders to discuss whether this is the kind of support they are looking for. An all-party committee can spend time meeting with stakeholders affected by Bill 2 to determine if the direction set by the proposed legislation is the common-sense approach they are seeking. After all, the Alberta investor tax credit left \$1.4 million on the table. This might indicate that the government has had a lower-than-anticipated interest in this tax credit because it's narrow and sector specific. Another possibility is that the government has not been able to efficiently and effectively distribute this money to investors.

Clearly there are questions about this tax credit and how it is performing. Why serve up millions of dollars of taxpayers' funds before understanding if this sector needs this change to the tax credit? The AITC is only one of a suite of tax credits adjusted or introduced into Bill 2. Concern is that the government is playing favorites by seeking a focus of tax credits on relatively narrow sectors of industry. Is this the right approach for Alberta? This question is a very good reason to send Bill 2 to committee. Let's review the sector's needs before introducing tax credits or increasing and adjusting others.

Standing committees and legislative policy committees have proven their worth time and again. We in the UCP want to use them more to connect with Albertans and help inform government about the most effective way to move forward. Since I'm talking about the value of committees, if we're going to refer Bill 2 to Resource Stewardship, we have to unfetter the committee to allow it to take on as many consultations as it wants to.

5:50

Our UCP members have been pleading for many months to allow our committees to perform other tasks when the Legislative Assembly has sent them a piece of legislation to review. When we're doing these reviews, we often wait for weeks for the public to provide submissions and then for presentations to be co-ordinated. During those times UCP members have been seeking the ability to continue to meet with the many stakeholders who are sending requests to the chair to speak with the committee.

We would also like to initiate our own consultations on issues pertinent to the committee. Let me provide an example. The Resource Stewardship Committee has a lineup of six organizations, some who have now been waiting for three years to meet with us. We have made motions in committee to create working groups to meet with these patient stakeholders. These motions have been rejected. We have even made a motion to change the standing orders to allow a committee to perform other business when the Legislative Assembly has handed it a task because, Madam Speaker, committees can and should multitask. But the NDP members of the committee vote it down every time. Let me stress that they are voting against meeting with Albertans.

So in supporting this referral motion for Bill 2, I want to take the opportunity to note the importance of changing the standing orders to allow the committee to work on as many different tasks as it wishes while also performing the work that the Legislative Assembly is requesting of it. The NDP members of committees are using the standing orders as an excuse to not meet, and they won't even let us set up working groups that could do it. We were totally stymied at the last Resource Stewardship Committee meeting. The chair immediately shut down our UCP member and would not even entertain his motion. It is time to free up committees to truly work on behalf of Albertans, as they did prior to 2015.

Let's send Bill 2 to committee because this government is going down a path that the sector can help correct if we consult with it. And let's change the standing orders to avoid the NDP from hampering Members of the Legislative Assembly from listening to Albertans just because the government wants to take its own ideological route on every issue.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway.

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's always an honour to rise in this House and speak. Today we are talking about the referral motion on Bill 2, the Growth and Diversification Act. This bill has two points. It establishes a talent advisory council on technology to advise government on the creation or expansion of the new postsecondary tech spaces. The other one is that it introduces an interactive digital media tax credit to improve Alberta's national competitiveness in terms of attracting and developing skilled workers in that growing environment. It introduces the DMTC while reupping the Alberta investor tax credit and capital investment tax credit. It provides clarity for government, postsecondary institutions, and industry to co-ordinate investment and collaboration opportunities in the unmanned-vehicle system sector, like drones.

Other provinces, Madam Speaker, such as British Columbia, Manitoba, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia have found success with some version of a small-business venture capital tax credit. I think we need to have an opportunity to review their models to see if Alberta is aligned for the same success, if this bill would work in our province. Again, we can only do this if we have time to send this bill to committee and work in committee as research prepares a cross-jurisdictional report like when, you know, we recently

engaged with stakeholders, for example, on daylight saving time. So I think it would be a good idea to send this bill to committee.

Now, according to the government the CITC has already, Madam Speaker, stimulated more than \$1 billion in capital projects in manufacturing, processing, tourism infrastructure. If we send it to committee, committee can review that claim. We can't, I mean, take that number just on face value in this Chamber. We all see the argument, and we can talk about those things all day. The revenue from the carbon tax was supposed to be rebated, and now it's going to be going into general revenue. We can't take anything this government is saying, so I think it's important to send that to committee to discuss it.

That's why on this side of the House, Madam Speaker, the United Conservative Party has some questions about the economic policies of the sector-specific tax credits. Will they distort the market? Will they result in industries that are dependent on tax credits and subsidies? I mean, these are important questions, and on behalf of Albertans I think we need to do a thorough engagement and research. That's why it's important that we send this bill to a committee. Then we can find the answers to those important questions. If the sectors are having trouble attracting investment through traditional markets and investment channels, perhaps there are competing factors that are affecting that issue. The committee can review those issues in an in-depth discussion.

As you know, Madam Speaker, any time a tax credit is offered, we need to make sure that the companies who are set to receive it actually need it and that we're not doing it just for the sake of doing it so that we can, you know, make an announcement that we have given this money away. Are there any other channels that they can be using rather than relying on the government? We need to look into those things. The AITC has \$1.4 million left in the pool. It wasn't fully used. Why? Was it needed? All these questions need to be answered. It's important that we send Bill 2 to committee.

These are some of my arguments and reasons. I think that if we really explore these things and further discuss Bill 2 in committee, it'll have fruitful results. If the intent of the government is to actually diversify our economy, as they always say, then send this bill to committee. Let the committee do the research, and then the committee can advise this House on the outcome.

You know, hopefully, we'll get the support of all members to send this bill to committee. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other speakers to the amendment?

Are you ready for the question?

[Motion on amendment RA1 lost]

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 4(2) the House now stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m. The legislative policy committees will convene tomorrow morning for consideration of main estimates. Families and Communities will consider the estimates for Justice and Solicitor General in the Rocky Mountain Room, and Alberta's Economic Future will consider Advanced Education in the Parkland Room.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6 p.m.]

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