



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, April 11, 2018

Day 15

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)
Clark, Greg, Calgary-Elbow (AP),
Alberta Party Opposition House Leader
Connolly, Michael R.D., Calgary-Hawthorn (NDP)
Coolahan, Craig, Calgary-Klein (NDP)
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Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (NDP)
Drever, Deborah, Calgary-Bow (NDP)
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Eggen, Hon. David, Edmonton-Calder (NDP)
Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (UCP)
Feehan, Hon. Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP),
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Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (AP)
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Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)
Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)
Hanson, David B., Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (UCP)
Hinkley, Bruce, Wetaskiwin-Camrose (NDP)
Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)
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Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (NDP)
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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)
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Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (NDP),
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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 11, 2018

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Let us reflect and/or pray, each in our own way. As we contemplate and prepare for our deliberations and debates, let us be mindful of the footprints we are creating today and in which others will walk tomorrow.

Statement by the Speaker

Mourning Victims of Humboldt Bus Crash

The Speaker: Hon. members, in keeping with the support Albertans are providing to those affected by the tragic bus crash involving the Humboldt Broncos and in recognition of our national grief, tomorrow, April 12, I will allow Members of the Legislative Assembly to wear sports jerseys of any type for the duration of the day's proceedings. As a statement of this Legislature's compassion, I would encourage each and every one of you to do so.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Ms Jabbour: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today on your behalf to introduce to all members of the Assembly Mr. Joe Versikaitis. Mr. Versikaitis is a photographer and portrait artist who concentrates mainly on the art of sport. His passion for revealing the intricate relationship between a person and their sport is evident in his highly acclaimed work. Born in Venezuela, Mr. Versikaitis moved to Alberta, where he studied at Medicine Hat College and later earned his degree in computer graphics and dynamic media in Calgary. Mr. Versikaitis now resides in Calgary with his wife, Michele. He is seated in your gallery, and I would ask him to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome, Joe.

The hon. Associate Minister of Health.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you a group of advocates from the Parkinson Association of Alberta. Today is World Parkinson's Day, which is a time to raise awareness about the disease, to build understanding about its impacts, and to educate patients, caregivers, and professionals about the condition. I send a warm thank you to the Parkinson Association of Alberta for their work in supporting Albertans affected by Parkinson's and helping them live full and happy lives. I was pleased to meet with the delegation before the proceedings this afternoon and to hear a little bit about the latest research in Parkinson's. I would ask that John Petryshen, CEO of the association, along with other board members, staff, volunteers, and families please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Nielsen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a real pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members in the Assembly a very proud member of team Edmonton-Decore,

James Paull. James is a proud father of three wonderful children and is a long-time NDP supporter and a volunteer for several of my colleagues here in the House. He's also a local drag queen and an antique transit bus collector. I'm very proud to have him as a member of my team even though he is a Leafs fan. I would now ask James to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: I'm just wondering where you keep the buses.

Members' Statements

YWCA and SPCA in Banff-Cochrane

Mr. Westhead: Mr. Speaker, the constituency of Banff-Cochrane is full of people who are just as inspiring as the impressive landscapes that surround them. I recently attended two fundraising events for equally worthy causes. The YWCA Banff does incredibly important work helping women and families in the Bow Valley. A few weeks ago they held their annual VineArt gala fundraiser at the beautiful Fairmont Banff Springs Hotel. Proceeds from the event go towards maintaining the Bow Valley women's emergency shelter program. A recent funding announcement from our government means that they can hire a second full-time staffperson for their harmony project, which provides direct supports to victims of sexual violence.

Our government also helped cover the costs of renovating their bridge house project, a home for survivors who are prepared to transition from an emergency shelter to a supported, independent living arrangement. This project was made possible by the support of a wide cross-section of the Bow Valley community, including tradespeople and church officials at St. George-in-the-Pines.

While YWCA Banff provides essential supports to women and families, the Bow Valley SPCA provides supports to our furry family members. Last weekend I attended the SPCA's Paws 'n' Paints fundraising event at ArtsPlace in Canmore. Participants took part in art classes to paint animal statues and portraits and make clay pet bowls.

The Bow Valley SPCA provides the community with an adoption centre that follows a no-kill, no-cage philosophy. All dogs and cats are housed in rooms rather than cages or kennel runs. This reduces the stress of being housed in an adoption centre.

I'd like to thank YWCA Banff and the Bow Valley SPCA for the work they do every day providing such important services to the community. Thank you.

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

Decorum and Civility in the Assembly

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Abraham Lincoln was credited with saying, "Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man's character, give him power." As time passes and the landscape changes in the Alberta Legislature, my comprehension of Lincoln's statement has become clearer than ever.

When the United Conservative Party leader was recently elected, he was prepared to try and set a new standard for the Official Opposition in the Legislature. He did so with the intent of representing Albertans with dignity and respect. As members of the opposition it is our civic and moral obligation to every taxpayer in Alberta to question the government on their policies and actions to ensure that Albertans get the most from their representation. In that pursuit there are rules of engagement. These standing orders are intended to maintain decorum and civility in the Legislature as well as direct the proceedings in an orderly fashion.

A good friend once told me that bullies can present themselves in various fashions. Some are subtle, and others are not so subtle. We've all experienced forms of bullying throughout our lives both as children and adults. There is no place for this behaviour in this Legislature. This subject has justifiably been brought to the forefront in recent years in the political arena. As we've seen, there is a difference between respectfully presenting authority and condescendingly presenting authority in the course of debate.

Last week in the Legislature during question period the condescending presentation brought from the government towards the MLAs for Chestermere-Rocky View and Calgary-Foothills reached a new and disappointing low. The point is that this NDP government has the responsibility and honour to represent all Albertans, as do all members of the Legislature. We owe it to the Albertans that we represent to raise the level of discussion and debate to a respectfully productive level. The UCP caucus is committed to delivering on that responsibility and to showing Albertans that we have the dignified character to represent you in a manner . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member, thank you.

The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

Hinton Cougars

Mr. Rosendahl: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The cougar monument is the town of Hinton's 60th anniversary legacy project. Ever since the now iconic image of a cougar reclining on the Welcome to Hinton sign surfaced years ago, the cougar has become an unofficial mascot for the Hinton community.

In 2014 local resident and craftsman Roger Roy pitched the idea of making the cougar the official mascot by creating a statue in a public place. Roy searched out options for the cougar monument and found that the most fitting, considering he had long-standing ties to the timber industry, was a wood carving. One of the best purveyors of such carvings is Pioneer Log Homes, also known as the Timber Kings. The Timber Kings are famous for their log home builds around the world.

On October 27, 2017, while my staff and I watched, the cougar statue was installed at the Green Square. The arrival of the cougars in Hinton was then broadcast during an episode of *Timber Kings* on HGTV. The carved wood statue of a mother cougar and two kittens is set within a background meant to represent the Rocky Mountains. This monument is located in a place of pride near the Hinton tourist information centre on highway 16.

1:40

Visitors from all over the planet are stopping by. Politicians from across Alberta and other notable folks have begun stopping to have their pictures taken with our celebrated Hinton cats. These pictures are finding their way onto websites, Facebook pages, newspaper and magazine articles, and all over the World Wide Web.

So come to Hinton, and see our cougars when you're there. Thank you very much.

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

Official Opposition Leader's Educational Background

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to address some troubling behaviour. Recently the Member for Banff-Cochrane has been openly mocking the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition for – get this – not having completed a university degree. Yes, apparently this member thinks the hon. Leader of the Opposition is

underqualified for his position as a result, never mind that he's got over 20 years of experience in Parliament, including as minister for three federal departments, and that he's more knowledgeable on most subjects than any of us in this room.

Now, Mr. Speaker, a degree is admirable but not the only path to a successful career. Ask any LPN, rig hand, power engineer, welder, graphic designer, administrative professional, firefighter, or paramedic whether they are unqualified for the lack of a degree. In fact, I think most diploma and trade certificate holders would take offence at the member's suggestion that someone like the Member for Calgary-Lougheed deserves any less respect for not having a degree.

I myself did not pursue a university education, Mr. Speaker, yet I've had a successful career as a meat cutter, or butcher if you prefer, and then later in business before beginning my second career as an elected representative. I didn't need a degree to represent Calgaryans on city council, the constituents of Calgary-Hays as their MLA, or Albertans as minister of Transportation or Infrastructure or Labour. To suggest that those of us who chose a different path are somehow second-class is unfair and arrogant.

Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the Member for Banff-Cochrane, when he made his comments, meant to smear the 80 per cent of Albertans without a university degree or just the Member for Calgary-Lougheed. There are many paths we can choose when it comes to our education that are all legitimate. To suggest that anyone who has chosen a path that doesn't include university is somehow less or unqualified in this House is not only wrong. It's offensive. But that is the level of contempt for everyday Albertans that we have sadly come to expect from the NDP.

Mr. Speaker, the member owes the Leader of the Official Opposition and, indeed, 80 per cent of all Albertans an apology.

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

Sikh Society of Calgary

Drever: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The various communities in my riding of Calgary-Bow represent a diverse and vibrant population. The Sikh community has played a vital part in shaping the social, economic, and cultural fabric of Alberta. April is recognized as Sikh Heritage Month in Alberta. It is also significant as it marks the celebration of Vaisakhi. For Sikhs in Alberta and around the world it begins the new year and the start of a new harvest, and Vaisakhi honours the formation of the Khalsa and the birth of a code of conduct for Sikhs to live by.

Mr. Speaker, I highlight the Sikh community in my riding and, in particular, the Sikh Society of Calgary. The Sikh Society of Calgary has been a pillar of Sikhism in Calgary for over 40 years. As one of the first gurdwaras in Calgary the Sikh Society of Calgary is proud to be an active and steadfast institution promoting and practising the ideals of Sikhism. The Sikh Society of Calgary contributes to the cultural mosaic that is Alberta and promotes an attitude of integration, participation, and community service.

Mr. Speaker, the Sikh Society of Calgary has a rich and diverse history that has been shaped by the early settlers in Calgary since the early 1900s. The gurdwara was built in 1978 through the dedication and determination from the pioneer Sikhs in the Calgary area.

In participating in many events at the gurdwara, I have been heartened by their generosity not just to myself but to the wider community. Vaisakhi celebrates the fact that humans are given the spirit and opportunity to live lives of courage, sacrifice, and equality. I know that I can collectively say that we appreciate the

hard work of the Sikh community in helping to strengthen our province.

Thank you.

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

Provincial Fiscal Policies

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta has suffered the worst recession in generations, and this NDP government must own it. Instead of providing stability and hope, they made the recession worse than it ever needed to be. How? By going down a path of risky ideological experiments, costing Albertans billions and saddling the next generation with massive debt.

From the start, in the midst of a recession, they imposed higher corporate taxes, higher personal income taxes, higher gas taxes, and even higher insurance taxes. Then on June 25, 2015, the environment minister proudly proclaimed an increase in the specified gas emitters regulation from \$15 to \$30 per tonne. As a result of this change, the power generators began to dump their power purchasing agreements. The decision to crank up the SGER is costing Albertans over \$2 billion. On top of that, the NDP's plan to shut down coal power early is costing Albertans another \$1.36 billion. Then in November 2015, while the Premier was campaigning in downtown Toronto, she announced that a carbon tax was on its way. It would have been nice if she would have told Albertans first. The largest tax increase in Alberta's history, and the NDP never even mentioned the carbon tax in their campaign platform. Their job-killing carbon tax is all economic pain with no environmental gain. It is just another tax directed at increased spending.

These reckless tax-and-spend policies have us on a path to \$96 billion worth of debt, have created instability and a loss of hope, and have driven over \$35 billion worth of investment away. Yes, Mr. Speaker, risky economic policies of this NDP government have made this the worst recession in generations, and they will own it in 2019 at the ballot box.

Thank you.

Notices of Motions

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

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to provide notice that at the appropriate time I will be moving the following motion in accordance with Standing Order 42.

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government of Canada to delay its planned \$4.4 billion infrastructure funding award to the government of British Columbia until the B.C. government ceases its efforts to obstruct the Trans Mountain expansion project.

I have the appropriate copies for the page.

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Labour and minister responsible for democratic renewal.

Bill 11

Lobbyists Amendment Act, 2018

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce Bill 11, the Lobbyists Amendment Act, 2018.

Amendments to the Lobbyists Act will inspire more confidence in the policy-making process by lifting the veil on more lobbying

activity in Alberta. Albertans will have more access to information about what discussions are taking place because those being paid to influence government would need to register more of their activity. Lobbyists are currently required to provide information to the Ethics Commissioner of Alberta, who is responsible for maintaining and administering a registry of lobbyists that's publicly available. However, currently Alberta allows significant amounts of lobbying activities to go unreported. Our government is moving to change this. Albertans have a right to know who's trying to influence their opinion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 11 read a first time]

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

Provincial Response to Pipeline Opposition

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It has been 316 days since the Green and NDP parties signed their agreement in British Columbia to use all tools to stop the Trans Mountain pipeline. It's been 267 days since the NDP was sworn into office. Why did it take this NDP government so long to respond with legislation threatening to turn off the taps to the Lower Mainland?

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We're incredibly proud of the fact that we got the approvals on that pipeline very early in our mandate. Honestly, we thought the approvals were worth more than the paper they were written on. We thought that those approvals, which are very clearly in the national interest, meant that this pipeline would be moving forward very quickly. It seems that there have been a number of delay tactics exercised by colleagues to the west. We certainly have strategies that we can use to expedite it to move more quickly, and we are undertaking those on three fronts. I'll be happy to elaborate on those in future answers.

1:50

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, that begs the question: why did the government think that paper approval was sufficient given that their New Democrat counterparts in Victoria announced last summer, last July, that they would use every tool possible to stop Kinder Morgan? Why didn't they believe their own New Democrat friends over in Victoria?

Ms Hoffman: What we do believe is that the project, that's in the national interest, that got the federal approvals in the national interest, that very clearly demonstrates benefit to the economies of Canadians across this country, would be getting the full weight of the federal government. We can give all of our weight to this initiative. Pain is being inflicted on the families of Albertans by the B.C. government. We can certainly do the same to British Columbia although it isn't our first choice. We can go to court as intervenors. We've done that. We've won every time. We can continue to move forward with a public stake if that's so required. We call on the federal government to join us in that charge, Mr. Speaker, because this project is in the national interest, and you can't count Alberta out.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I'm a little concerned in that answer and some yesterday from the Deputy Premier that there's reference to pain on British Columbians or on British Columbia. Will she not agree with me that the majority of British Columbians support the

Trans Mountain pipeline expansion, support environmentally responsible resource development, and that our quarrel is not with ordinary British Columbians but with an irresponsible provincial government and that if we are seeking to impose consequences and sanctions, they're targeted on that government and not the people of B.C.?

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll say that the government of B.C. has taken measures and sanctions that have certainly inflicted pain on the people of Alberta. Our job in the province of Alberta is to stand up for those everyday families. I'll tell you that if I was a British Columbian at the pump today in the Lower Mainland paying \$1.50, wondering what might happen to my gas prices because of the injustices that my government had been taking in British Columbia, I would certainly be appalled at that government. What we know is that the majority of British Columbians support this pipeline. It's time that their government got on board, our federal government got on board, and put their money where their mouth is.

The Speaker: Second main question.

Federal Response to Pipeline Opposition

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The federal government is negotiating the renewal of \$1.3 billion in job-training funding with the government of British Columbia. Will this government join with me in calling on the Trudeau government to withhold those \$1.3 billion in federal job-training funds unless and until the Trans Mountain expansion is complete?

Ms Hoffman: We have called on and will continue to call on the federal government to follow our province, Alberta's lead on the three fronts that we have to move forward in this very aggressive strategy, Mr. Speaker, because we won't stop until this pipeline gets built. As we've made clear, the people of British Columbia might see the same kinds of consequences because of the actions their government has taken on the people of Alberta. We certainly would not like to see that happen. We want to work together in the national interest, including getting our products, our good, Canadian products, to their refineries and upgraders in the Lower Mainland. But it can't stop there. We need to get this pipeline to tidewater. We need to expand our markets and stop having our major and only buyer being our only major competitor.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Mr. Kenney: Well, I appreciate all of that, Mr. Speaker, but perhaps the minister could try to actually answer the question. I'll restate it. Will the government join with me in calling on Ottawa to withhold the \$1.3 billion in discretionary federal job-training funding from the Victoria government unless and until the pipeline is built? Does this government agree with me that that should be used as a leverage point? Do they agree with that or not?

Ms Hoffman: I understand that the member opposite spent 20 years in Ottawa and knows what it's like to rag the puck, Mr. Speaker, but what we have are three very clear and strong tools that we can use to move this project forward. We have the ability to make sure that we control access to our products to the people of British Columbia. We have the ability to go to court, and we have as intervenors. We've done that 14 times. We've been successful, with 14 rulings in favour of Alberta. We can, if it's necessary, take a

public stake in this pipeline, potentially buy it outright, because this is in the national interest. We compel the federal government to join us in this. These three steps will make this happen and make it happen quickly.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, let the record show that this government does not support using leverage, actual, real leverage, against the New Democrats in Victoria. I don't know why she won't answer the question. The notion that their court strategy has been successful is rather obviously belied by the fact that the program was suspended on Sunday. The pipeline has been suspended. Will this government join with me in calling on the federal government to withhold the 4.1 billion federal dollars for B.C. infrastructure that were announced last week unless and until the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion is complete?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, the government of Alberta, this government of Alberta, will defend the people of Alberta and the working people of Canada on this pipeline initiative. Now it's time that industry needs Ottawa to step up as well. We call on them to act. Of course, the opposition leader never stepped up either; 20 years in Ottawa, zero pipelines to tidewater, yet he wants to be named MVP. I don't think so. We've got our approvals. Now we need to get our product to tidewater. We call on the federal government to help make that happen.

The Speaker: Third main question.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I'm genuinely confused by that response. The government is saying that it wants to do everything to fight for these pipelines. They want to put pressure on B.C. and call on Ottawa to act. Here we have a rather obvious direct point of leverage that could actually get the attention of the Horgan government, by Ottawa withholding the \$4 billion in infrastructure and/or the \$1 billion in job-training funds as real leverage. If the government is serious about its rhetorical commitment to this, why won't they join with us in calling on Ottawa to use that leverage and withhold those funds until the pipeline is done?

Ms Hoffman: When I was in education for a number of years, Mr. Speaker, I'll tell you that we talked about natural consequences. The natural consequence of not wanting our product to go to tidewater is the natural consequence that we might very well withhold that product from the members of the Lower Mainland. That's not something we want to do. We want to make sure that we have access to international markets and that we keep prices low in Alberta.

But I have to say: talking about withholding job-training funding from the people of B.C., too? Which is it, Mr. Speaker? Does the member opposite think that we shouldn't be hurting the people of B.C., the individuals, or that we should? I have to say that in his strategy I can't tell which way he's trying to move the ball, but on this side of the court we're trying to move it to the tidewater.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, my strategy was calling for Alberta to be prepared to turn off the taps last July, a strategy that this government mocked and ridiculed until they made it their own a few weeks ago. It took them nine months to do so.

Bill C-69, according to the energy industry, will make it effectively impossible to get approval for another major pipeline project ever again if it's passed. Does this government agree with us that the federal Liberals should withdraw Bill C-69, yet another Liberal attack on Canada's energy industry?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, I've been very clear that this side of the House believes that we need to stop at nothing to get our pipeline

built. The project means tens of thousands of jobs, billions of dollars to the economy, not to mention better public schools, better hospitals. There are three fronts that we are moving this forward on, and we take them very seriously. One is intervenor status, going to the courts. We've won 14 out of 14 times. Two is making sure that if the government of B.C. wants to keep inflicting pain on the people of Alberta, the natural consequence would be that the people of B.C. better get ready because their prices may go up as well. The third one, of course, is that if necessary we will take a public stake in this pipeline. I have to say that those are the three fronts we need to be fighting on.

Mr. Kenney: "Stop at nothing." Mr. Speaker, remember it was John Horgan who a little over a year ago, when he met with our Premier, said that she did not even try to persuade him to support the pipeline. It's this government that lifted its symbolic wine boycott. It's this government that will not support withholding federal transfers for infrastructure or job training as leverage. All that we hear are words. We don't see any actual, concrete actions. Doesn't the government understand that the only way we can get respect for the rule of law and defend our vital economic interests is through action? Will they support us in calling for the withholding of those federal funds?

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to set the record straight. This side of the House acted immediately after forming government to bring forth a responsible climate leadership plan that resulted in getting two pipeline approvals. One of those is well under construction to the east, line 3, but that isn't enough. We need to make sure that we get Trans Mountain built to the west coast as well. So we are moving forward full speed ahead. We have three fronts that we're moving very aggressively on, and we call on the federal government to join us on that: make sure that the people of British Columbia know the kind of pain that their government is inflicting on the people of Alberta, and make sure that we have a public stake in this if that's what it takes, because this project is not to be negotiated.

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

Trans Mountain Pipeline Public Purchase Proposal

Mr. Clark: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have to say that it's nice to see the opposition benches so nice and full today.

Over the past few days the Premier has mused about buying a stake in the Kinder Morgan pipeline, up to the point of purchasing the entire project. The Deputy Premier has doubled down on that again today. I'm glad to see that the province is willing to do what it takes to move this important project forward, but I am concerned that the Premier has painted us into a corner. This morning federal Finance Minister Bill Morneau said that any talks about investment should be held behind closed doors. To the Premier: why have you been so open about your negotiating strategy? Are you worried that you have weakened our bargaining position?

2:00

Ms Hoffman: Not at all. We want to make it very clear that this project is in the national interest. Albertans want to make sure this project goes forward, and they want a government that's fully behind it, Mr. Speaker. Our message to the government of B.C. is that we will not back off. We are a determined – determined – investor, and we need to think like investors. We certainly do. We are the owners of these resources. We need to get them to tidewater,

we deserve the very best price, and we will not stop until that is the case.

Mr. Clark: Well, I'd sure love to play poker with this government, Mr. Speaker. I think it would turn out pretty well on this side.

My concern is that the government has jeopardized Alberta's negotiating position for the sake of a quick-win headline. Again, I am broadly supportive of doing whatever it takes to ensure that the Kinder Morgan expansion project is built, but I am genuinely worried that this government has overplayed their hand. To the Premier: is there any scenario where you will take a lesser stake, or are we boxed in already and committed to buying the entire project?

Ms Hoffman: I want to invite the hon. member to play poker with myself and the Labour minister. In fact, we'd be happy to take that call.

I have to say that the Trans Mountain pipeline is in Alberta's interest, and Alberta's government is acting in its interest. You know what? We're not going to let the investor board from Houston threaten our national interest and threaten our getting the very best price possible. We'll make sure that we do so in a respectful way, Mr. Speaker. But we've said: mark our words; this pipeline will get built. Mark our words: this pipeline will get built.

Mr. Clark: Mr. Speaker, the number one focus must be to get Alberta's products to Canadian tidewater, and the Kinder Morgan expansion is our last chance. As much as bringing the government of Alberta on as a, quote, more determined investor may help, it is useless if Ottawa doesn't also do their part, which they seem to be more than happy to do for Bombardier or for southern Ontario car plants. To the Premier: will you commit to investing in Kinder Morgan only if the federal government is also going to buy a stake?

Ms Hoffman: Well, that sounds like a proposal to box us in, Mr. Speaker. We certainly call on the federal government to join us on the three fronts, becoming a public investor, should it come to that. Buying the pipeline is, of course, one of those; the second one is joining us as intervenors in the court challenges, that are continuing to be successful for the government of Alberta; and three is making sure that the province of British Columbia knows the kind of pain they're inflicting on Alberta, by joining us and reciprocating that same behaviour on the people of British Columbia. While that isn't our primary hope – we hope to get the pipeline built – we need the federal government to be partners, and we call on them to do that.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

Electricity Capacity Market System

Mr. Rosendahl: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta is one of only two places in North America that still operates in an energy-only market for electricity, where power producers are paid based on fluctuating prices. I have heard from members opposite that moving from an energy-only to a capacity market for electricity will discourage investment from power producers. To the Minister of Energy: how is a shift to a capacity market encouraging investment in the energy sector?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, we're focused on the right priorities for regular Albertans like ensuring that energy bills are affordable. Since electricity was deregulated under the Conservatives, Albertans have been exposed to a price spike roller coaster for a number of years, and our current market,

which was designed, is built on that volatility and discourages investment, in fact. We're fixing this with common-sense reforms, reducing those spikes and uncertainty, and we're building a system for now and for the future because that's what we do as a government. We have Albertans' backs.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Rosendahl: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. How will the shift to a capacity market affect the electricity bills of all Albertans?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, at every step of the way in this process to make a better electricity system, it's about making life affordable for Albertans. Our shift to a capacity market is to a system that'll be more reliable, more sustainable, and more predictable. Once it's fully implemented, in 2021, it's going to provide Albertans with more stable, predictable prices. A capacity market is a proven system. It's widely used in many jurisdictions. It does encourage competition, innovation, and private investment. The deregulation policies of the previous government were not helpful. This . . .

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

Mr. Rosendahl: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that we know how price spikes and volatility affect prices on electricity bills for consumers, how will a capacity market protect Albertans from price spikes and volatility in the electricity market?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're focused on the priorities of regular Albertans, and we're focused on ensuring that energy bills are affordable. That's why we've capped the energy bills of families, small businesses, and farms from those price spikes. It's clear that this government has the backs of Albertans, something that backroom deals in the past did not for regular Albertans. Under our plan everyday Albertans are protected from the market crisis. Once it gets to 6.8, our cap comes in. This is about saving Albertan families money.

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

Trans Mountain Pipeline Alternatives

Dr. Starke: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans are united in their support for the expansion of the Trans Mountain pipeline. Unfortunately, vocal and very active opponents of this project are creating great uncertainty, that jeopardizes the project moving forward. Now, while I do not doubt the sincerity of those who insist that this pipeline will be built – and I certainly hope they're right – even they must know that there is a risk that Kinder Morgan will shelve the project. To the Premier. Good business practice dictates that we have a plan B. Does the government have a plan B, and if so, what is it?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, when our country joined Confederation, many provinces said that we need to get a railway from coast to coast. That happened, and the same thing needs to happen with our product to tidewater. That's why we are moving on the three fronts to ensure that our pipeline to tidewater gets built, because we won't take no for an option. We need to be responsible. We need to act

like investors. Investors make sure that they have multiple buyers, and that's why we will take a public stake if it comes to that.

Dr. Starke: Well, Mr. Speaker, there's been a lot of talk about tools and tool boxes in recent days, but forgive me if I want to bring our focus back to the project at hand. If the Trans Mountain expansion is cancelled, all the tools in the world aren't going to revive it. Given that any prudent plan includes developing a contingency in the event that plan A runs into problems and given that a number of alternatives to Trans Mountain exist and that they could in fact provide us with leverage in our negotiations with B.C. and the federal government, to the Premier: what discussions have been held with the proponents of the Eagle Spirit pipeline?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for the question. I'm going to stay on Trans Mountain, which I think was the thread of the first question and the supplementals that relate. What I do want to say is that the Premier is meeting this afternoon with the federal Finance minister. This is an important meeting for us, and it's important to all Canadians because this is a project in the national interest. Of course, there will be some cost if this does become public ownership or a public stake, but it has the ability to generate billions of dollars in public revenues for the people of this province, to get us the right price, and to make sure that the country has good access, a reliable port on Canadian tide to make sure that we can access those international markets.

Dr. Starke: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's interesting that the minister mentioned railways because there are two other plan B proposals that offer intriguing advantages to both northern Alberta and Canada's northern territories, and they involve the construction of a railway from northern Alberta to Alaska. Given that the benefits of such a proposal include the capacity to transport not just bitumen but also agricultural, mineral, and forest products to Asian markets through the port of Valdez, Alaska, to the Premier: while the fate of Trans Mountain is in the hands of those seemingly unwilling or unable to help, will the government aggressively pursue alternatives like the G7G railway?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I have a whole division in my ministry on market access, that includes rail, pipelines, and that. The Minister of Economic Development and Trade and myself have met with the G7G folks. It's in its concept stage, but it's not out there that that's a possibility. Right now Trans Mountain is much further ahead. We can use both, but right now we have to focus our efforts on Trans Mountain as well. That pipeline will get built.

Provincial Fiscal Policies

Mr. Barnes: This government is responsible for our swiftly falling competitive tax advantage. According to a recent CBC news story, "Albertans . . . spend more than people in other provinces on fuel." The reason we pay so much for fuel? In a word: taxes. Alberta has the third-highest provincial fuel taxes in Canada, a staggering 19.7 cents per litre, and a 67 per cent NDP carbon tax increase looming. To the minister: are you proud of your record-setting tax increases?

2:10

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

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know what? I'm very proud of the work that the Finance minister has done

ensuring, in our budget, that not only are we protecting the public services that Albertans rely on; we're also staying focused on diversifying the economy, something the opposition doesn't believe in, as well as supporting our job creators while also outlining a path to balance. What I will say to the member opposite: Albertans pay \$11 billion less in taxes than the next lowest jurisdiction, their besties in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Barnes: Given that this Finance minister's goal is \$96 billion of permanent debt and given that interest payments will hit nearly \$3 billion by 2021 as per his three-year outlook, assuming no more credit downgrades, so much money that it could build every single highway, bridge, hospital, and school in the province that year, to the minister: do you truly believe that the path to balance involves sending twice as much money as the entire Justice ministry to line the pockets of Bay Street bankers?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, I'll say a couple of things. Number one, the reason Alberta's economy is looking up and that we are moving into a recovery is because of a number of factors, two of those being the historic infrastructure build that our government decided to invest in at a time when infrastructure was sorely needed, because the previous governments failed to adequately invest in our schools, our hospitals, our roads, our bridges, and our trade corridors. The other reason is because of our climate leadership plan, which got the approval of the Trans Mountain pipeline. These pipelines will get built, and we're going to do whatever it takes.

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, the largest tax hike in Alberta's history was supposed to get the province some much-needed social licence to build those pipelines. Given that Alberta families have paid the price for this through higher unemployment, underemployment, and price increases and given that zero value has been received after Albertans have paid dearly for social licence, would the Premier please ask her ally Justin Trudeau what his return policy is for this defective social licence, or is she prepared to double down on her managed decline of Alberta's economy?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll tell you one thing. Our government is not about to take advice from the Leader of the Official Opposition, who spent 20 years in Ottawa and got zero pipelines to tidewater. The other thing that I find very rich – and I'll enlighten the member opposite – is that in Ottawa the Leader of the Official Opposition, when he was part of the Harper government, ran six straight deficit budgets, a \$56 billion deficit in a single year. He added \$145 billion to the national debt. Now, he's no math wizard, so don't be fooled.

Mrs. Pitt: Mr. Speaker, a growing number of Albertans are feeling totally let down by this government. Not one full-time job was created last month, yet the carbon tax is increasing. They are failing on the carbon tax, and they are failing on the budget. The NDP won't stand up to their friend Justin Trudeau, who took a personal day during the Kinder Morgan crisis, for Albertans. People are frustrated. They are outraged. Minister, you and your bestie Justin Trudeau created the problem. What are you going to do to fix it?

The Speaker: The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know what's interesting? The members opposite want to cut taxes for the top 1 per cent

earners in Alberta and at the same time still balance the budget and somehow not impact front-line services. His budget is either a storm of fairy dust – he's either deeply misinformed or intentionally misinforming. Which one is it?

Mrs. Pitt: Mr. Speaker, this government isn't interested in helping anyone.

One thing has become all too clear . . .
said the Calgary Chamber of commerce recently,
. . . government policies are making it harder for them to succeed.
Governments are layering on costs, making it increasingly
difficult to run a healthy business.

Minister, will you at least recognize that your policies are damaging Alberta, and will you stop pursuing your very expensive ideological agenda?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What I'll enlighten the member on is the fact that jobs are up in our province, 90,000 new full-time jobs, mostly in the private sector. Our growth is up, exports are up, manufacturing is up, wages are up, and housing starts are up. Now, having said all that, I've been travelling the province talking to chambers of commerce and small-business owners, and we recognize that not all of them have felt the economic recovery. That is why our government tabled a budget that is built on supporting the recovery so that it is built to last for future Albertans, future generations.

Mrs. Pitt: "They blew it," Mr. Speaker. Even though I agree with those words, they aren't my own. They are the words of economist Trevor Tombe in response to the NDP's disastrous budget. Now, given that this government is putting Albertans on the hook for more debt each and every day, less of their taxes are going towards services, and more of their taxes are going to service our debt and given that Albertans are hard-working and that they don't want any of their income to be going to bondholders and foreign bankers, would this NDP government stop kicking Albertans when they're down, stand up for us, scrap this ridiculous carbon tax, and give us some plan on how to get back to balance?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, the members of the opposition would actually completely kill the Trans Mountain pipeline. They would kill our economic recovery with their ideological cuts all over the place. Our government is investing strategically in critical infrastructure, in public services. We're also supporting the job creators in this province. Our two tax credits that we introduced a year and a half ago are wildly successful, and \$60 million conditionally approved has leveraged \$1.2 billion of capital investment here in the province at a time when it's needed.

Federal Energy Policies

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, I have read the Minister of Energy's prior submission on Bill C-48, the Oil Tanker Moratorium Act. Most of that submission was spent arguing the science of naphtha and condensates and asking for the bill to be executed instead of opposing the tanker ban outright. Can we trust this Minister of Energy to stand up and protect Alberta families and jobs in the face of this ruinous Bill C-69 when she chose to try to make Bill C-48 less bad instead of opposing the tanker ban outright?

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.
The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure if the question is about C-48 or C-69, but I will say that we are in constant contact with the federal government on a number of matters, and the lens with all of those is that we're standing up for Alberta and Alberta's industry interests, and that will always be. You're correct. I've written letters on a number of fronts, and we will continue to do so. My colleague the Minister of Environment and Parks and I are in regular contact because these matters span both our ministries.

Mr. Panda: Given, Mr. Speaker, that when I questioned the minister in estimates yesterday, she and her staff believed that they still had time to make a submission in opposition to Bill C-69 and given that the federal Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development's written submission deadline on C-69 was April 6, will the Minister of Energy join me in defending my submission on Bill C-69?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I've worked with a number of my industry colleagues and stakeholders such as CEPA, and I'm well aware of the issues. Again, my colleague the Minister of Environment and Parks and I have made submissions to the federal government on a number of fronts. Especially with this, we do understand that there are some issues, but at the same time we've been welcome to submit our information and our feedback, and that's what we've been doing. I am somewhat puzzled why you guys are so obsessed with the federal government and what they're doing. Maybe that's where you need to be instead of across the way. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Panda: We are not in bed with the Trudeau Liberals, for sure. Given, Mr. Speaker, that the federal Trudeau government will shake up the National Energy Board with Bill C-69 and given that the Canadian Energy Pipeline Association says that it is difficult to imagine that a new major pipeline could be built in Canada under C-69 and since the minister of environment said yesterday that she wrote her Trudeau friends last summer about specifics they want to see in C-69, will the minister outline those specifics and table her letters sent to Ottawa?

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

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The first thing I'll say is that everyone, at least on this side of the House, knows that this minister doesn't have any friends.

Second of all, I believe we tabled that letter, and if we didn't, we'll table it afterwards, because we've been very clear on what we've been asking the federal government for on this particular piece of legislation.

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

2:20 Agricultural Environmental Programs

Mr. Piquette: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. No one cares more about the environment than our agricultural producers, who are always looking to decrease their environmental impact. That's why I know that many were pleased to see this government expand its funding to the agricultural sector under the climate leadership plan by over \$80 million over the next four years. To the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry: what have we learned from the last round of funding that has prompted this expansion?

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

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Yes, undoubtedly, we know that climate change is having a serious effect on our environment. This is leading to more extreme and unpredictable weather, and farmers are very vulnerable to that, which is why I'm proud we're taking action on climate change. I think we have learned just how necessary these programs are and how valuable they are to producers because they have been so highly subscribed to. Through the climate leadership fund we were able to top up the program again, by an additional \$21 million, to help farmers make their operations as efficient as possible.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Piquette: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that farmers are always looking to decrease their input costs, how will this money help save money for farmers?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. On-farm efficiency programs don't just help farmers, but they contribute to the fight against climate change. As an example, Susan and Evan Schuurman from Schuurman Dairy farm have said:

The energy-efficiency programs offered by the government gave us the incentive to move ahead with installing solar power on our operation . . . We have found that by investing in solar power we have been able to lower our dairy operation's power consumption by over 60 per cent.

Efficiency and sustainability from a business perspective has always been important for producers, and when I talk to producers across the province, they realize that.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Piquette: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that I've already heard from a number of interested constituents who would love to participate in this program, to the same minister: how can farmers apply for funding this time around?

Mr. Carlier: Mr. Speaker, I encourage all farmers interested in ensuring they have the most efficient systems possible and those interested in generating their own power to visit the Agriculture and Forestry programs and services web page. We have many programs to choose from. If any farmers have questions, they can speak with one of our department's experts at 310-FARM. This government believes in programming and a public service that supports communities and small businesses, not reckless cuts that would leave Albertans behind.

Rural Emergency Medical Services

Mr. Stier: Mr. Speaker, with the recent announcement of new funding to the AHS ambulance system, details regarding the key changes specific to rural operations have yet to be disclosed. Several key, obvious problems must be addressed. Enormous delays for paramedics in emergency departments is number one. Plus, nonemergency transfers, flexing of units into large cities, and faulty centralized dispatch all must be remedied immediately. To the Health minister: what changes, if any, to these problematic rural ambulance operations will be made with this new funding?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. It is certainly our priority to make sure that no matter where you are in this province, you have quality, timely access to emergency first responders. We are very proud of the fact that we're increasing EMS funding in this budget by \$23 million. I hope that the members opposite will support us in the budget that is going directly to front lines. AHS is developing their plan should our budget be approved, and then we'll be able to share that publicly with all Albertans and members of this House.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Stier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Rural Health Services Review Final Report clearly indicated that the rural EMS units must be treated differently in terms of hospital wait times and mandatorily released no later than one hour after arrival and given that the same report clearly indicated that these rural units should be returned to their home community directly rather than being flexed and diverted elsewhere to prevent coverage gaps in the local communities, to the minister: with the new funding, why can't these crucial rural operational problems be addressed now?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know that those were some of the recommendations that were heard from folks in the community, and I certainly heard the member's statement yesterday in this House. I have to say that having hard and fast rules about being returned to community – I know no first responder who, when they got called to go to the terrible accident that was happening in Saskatchewan, would want to go back to their community instead of going and running to the call to help those young men who were dying on the side of the road. It's important that we increase funding, that we increase services, that we increase opportunities throughout this province, and that's why we're bringing forward a budget that does just that.

Mr. Stier: Mr. Speaker, given that that same rural health report clearly identified that rural EMS units and their highly trained paramedics' valuable time were being wasted when taxi-style nonemergency transfers, doctors' appointments, and transport duties were assigned to them and given that, instead, the obvious solution to that problem is to return to an auxiliary transport system for that need, Minister, with the new funding, why can't that crucial rural operational problem be addressed now?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Every year since we've been in government, we've increased the number of nonemergency transfer vehicles because that's the right thing to do. But it's also the right thing to do to make sure that we are increasing the opportunities for front-line paramedics as well through having more first responders available throughout this province. That's why we're bringing forward a budget that has a \$23 million increase, that's why we're expanding the community paramedicine program so that transfers don't need to happen unless they're actually required, and that's why we're increasing the number of long-term care and acute-care spaces in this province so that those patients have somewhere to be, instead of moving for deep ideological cuts, like the members of the opposition call on us to do every day.

Health Care outside Large Urban Centres

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, this government is investing in community paramedics. These paramedics will provide medications and

supplement other aspects of home care. In our two largest cities citizens can access the abundance of labs, diagnostic imaging, and specialists at a health or allied health facility in mere minutes. They have public transit, taxis, and Ubers available to all, not to mention a bunch of rural ambulances. To the Minister of Health: why did you choose to have this initiative in the two largest cities?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This program did start in the two largest centres in the province, and we've expanded it throughout the province. I'm sure the associate minister can elaborate on that in her subsequent responses. It's important that we have this service available throughout our province. We want to have it in a hub and spoke model, and that's why we have expanded it to communities, including Camrose, for example. We are very proud of the fact that it's going to reduce wait times, it's going to provide more prompt response, and it's going to mean that patients are getting the care in the right place.

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, nurse practitioner investment is also terrific as they do help supplement the existing professionals, ensuring citizens get timely support. The community of Vulcan is fighting for additional locum spaces to supplement their physician support. A nurse practitioner might have helped this community. Minister, why did you focus your nurse practitioner investment in the cities, where people have an abundance of physicians relative to the smaller cities?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We are very proud of the demonstration projects that are under way to make sure that we increase opportunities in primary care. We also have nurse practitioners throughout the province in a variety of other communities. We've actually just recently posted I think it's two for Wabasca, which is certainly not one of the largest communities in our province. We want to make sure that we have the right health experts throughout our province instead of moving forward with deep, drastic ideological cuts, like the members opposite propose, and privatization. We're investing in important front-line service providers, including nurse practitioners.

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, these initiatives would provide most benefit in areas where people don't have immediate access to health, as in communities that are not Edmonton and Calgary, and given that the plans released by the minister have a very urban focus, again, why aren't you putting more resources to the rural, where it will make a very big difference?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, it's so interesting. These guys will tell us that we need to cut, cut, cut, and then when they have a chance in question period, they'll pretend that that's not the case. They are always arguing for us to make deep, drastic cuts. I understand that they want to blow up hospitals in Edmonton and Calgary, like they did in the 1990s, but on this side of the House we're going to protect all Albertans. We're going to make sure we fund growth, we're going to keep communities stable, and we've proven that through the last three years, the last three budgets. You guys don't even have a draft budget.

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

Electricity Power Purchase Arrangements

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government's action of increasing the specified gas emitters carbon tax in 2015 made the

power purchase agreements more unprofitable, triggering the exit clause. Then the agreements fell into the Balancing Pool's lap, which forced them to pass it along to electricity consumers, which are everyday Albertans. Why does the NDP government continue to slag the Alberta Utilities Commission and Neil McCrank, the former head of the Energy and Utilities Board, and blame everything on the unfounded nefarious agreement for what is, in reality, NDP incompetence?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, just over a year ago we took action to protect Alberta families. We've settled the PPA disputes with all the companies, and we've provided a loan to the Balancing Pool. If we had not acted, consumers would be facing much higher charges on their bills because, again, it goes back to the backroom deals of the previous Conservative governments. Instead, because of our actions, average charges in the next year will be 78 per cent below what they would have been had we not acted.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you. Well, that's costing Albertans approximately \$73 million a month.

Given that according to documents filed in the Court of Queen's Bench, the province has said that the minister only became aware of the "or more unprofitable" after the fact – evidently it wasn't communicated to the ministers – and that when asked, the Deputy Premier said that they were not aware that raising the carbon tax could trigger the exit and that this information was not in their transition binders when there were elected – uh-oh – why did the minister not consult with the industry, when this "or more unprofitable" clause was widely known, before making the decision?

2:30

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In fact, in pretty much everything we've done since we've taken government, we have consulted with industry. We've consulted with Albertans, environmental groups. We've gotten all kinds of input on the climate leadership plan, on the modernized royalty framework. We continue to do so all the time, and we absolutely got good advice along the way. We will continue to do that.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Minister, given that Bill 16, An Act to Cap Regulated Electricity Rates, allows the minister to change the rate of 6.8 cents, which is double what the actual rate is right now, without seeking the consent of the Legislature and given that the regulated rate option that is now set by the government used to be set by an independent body, the Alberta Utilities Commission, and given that the Calgary Chamber of commerce has said that the government's lawsuit sets a devastating precedent that will erode public trust, how, Minister, do you expect Albertans to have any confidence in this government given the mishandling of the PPAs?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, first of all, I would say that we are not setting the rate at 6.8 cents as the price for electricity. That is the cap that we have set should prices rise. To be clear, they are not there now, and if you're in a contract, you may pay less. It all goes back to the backroom deals that the

previous government made and completely destroyed our electricity system in doing so. We are going to 30 per cent renewables by 2030. The rest will be natural gas. We are changing our electricity market. We're encouraging investment. Our first reps proved that.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

DynaLife Medical Labs

Mr. W. Anderson: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to explore the DynaLife panel appeal decision we tabled last week to remind the House that the panel found that the decision by Alberta Health Services toward a \$3 billion lab services contract to provide it with no facilities in Alberta or Canada breached its duty of procedural fairness in the RFP process. The evaluation methodology and process raised doubt as to the validity of the award. Many aspects of the RFP process were not transparent, and there was an opportunity for bias and favouritism to influence the evaluation. To the Minister of Health: was she aware of these concerns regarding the DynaLife award, and did she consider them to be of a serious nature when she made her decision to cancel the award to the preferred proponent?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We made it very clear during the election campaign that what we weren't going to do was continue in experiments of privatization as the previous government had. As a result, we put a cease to the privatization of lab services for Edmonton and north. We thought it was important that we look at evidence and make a decision that would best serve the people of Alberta. I'm incredibly proud that we've moved forward with a public lab and that it will be built here in the city of Edmonton. This will mean good jobs for the people of this province, instead of privatizing and outsourcing them for people living elsewhere.

Mr. W. Anderson: Not the answer we were looking for, Mr. Speaker.

My second question to the Minister of Health: given that the minister cancelled the award, did she have concerns regarding the manner in which Alberta Health Services, her ministry, had conducted the procurement process?

Ms Hoffman: I understand it's not the answer you're looking for. The answer according to your leader and your policy manual, that's to be considered here in a couple of weeks, is more privatization, Mr. Speaker, more layoffs, more reductions, more two-tiered health care, American-style health care. That's not the answer that Albertans deserve. Albertans have made it clear in the past, and we are standing up for the public health care services in this province because what's in the bottom of your pocket shouldn't drive your access to health care. We all deserve quality health care. Your colleagues just asked me to invest more in rural Alberta. We're investing in the people of this province because we know it's important, and we're not going to be driven to privatization through your ongoing calls and efforts.

Mr. W. Anderson: May I remind the minister that our leader wasn't here when you cancelled the contract and let us know.

The third question is: if it was determined that Alberta Health Services demonstrated a pattern of such behaviour, what would you have really done?

Ms Hoffman: Well, the good thing is that we don't have to answer these kinds of hypothetical questions because the truth is that we took government on a platform that included stopping experiments

in privatization, which I know is what the members opposite are calling for. We stopped that privatization. We're investing in a public lab. We're protecting those workers. We're protecting Albertans' information. We're making sure that these important tests, which drive about 70 per cent of the decisions in the health care system, are done by the people of Alberta in a public model, and I couldn't be more proud of that.

School Equipment Funding

Ms Luff: Mr. Speaker, I'm passionate about equity in education. The fact is that many public schools rely on parent fundraising councils in order to buy things like Smart boards, new sports equipment, and furniture. Given that there is often a discrepancy in a school's ability to fund raise depending on where the school is located and the number of parents who have time for such endeavours, this can put some schools, like many in my riding, at a disadvantage. What is the ministry doing to ensure that all public schools have the same level of access to technology, supplies, and specialty teachers?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for the question. We all know that our schools and our school systems have been underfunded for a very long time. That's why our government has put almost a billion dollars more into the system over the last three years than would have happened with the previous government. You know, that has resulted in at least 3,600 new positions in terms of teachers and support staff.

We also introduced, Mr. Speaker, the \$75 million classroom improvement fund. This is a way by which we can move and make decisions around improving the classroom conditions for students in all schools, in all school boards across the province. So we're going to continue to work hard on it and . . .

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

Ms Luff: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that St. Peter school in Penbrooke has had to tear down its playground due to safety concerns and given that we are providing new schools with playground funding and given that no school should have to fund raise for a playground, what opportunities are available to finance this playground?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We knew, as we had more than 200 new school projects that we were involved in, that it was important to include some funding for school playgrounds with those new schools. It's a great time to do the levelling and do the process that's necessary to put a playground in place. So we have for new schools a \$250,000 grant. People can still fund raise to supplement that as well. And for established schools and school playground programs there is the Culture and Tourism community improvement grant that can be applied for, that can help to build and replace playgrounds.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Ms Luff: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that schools often rely on these CFEP grants to buy a litany of things from band uniforms to computers and given that these grants require matching funds, what is the department doing to reduce schools' reliance on these Culture and Tourism grants for things that many would consider essential?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, we are aware that there's more work to do in regard to strengthening our public education system in schools. You know, we have more than 200 school projects that are being built in every corner of the province. As well, we reduced school fees considerably, more than \$54 million to reduce school fees both last year and again this year.

As well, we have introduced an exponential growth in our school nutrition program. We now are feeding more than 30,000 students every day with a nutritious meal across the province.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Federal Response to Pipeline Opposition (continued)

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, will the government agree with me, given that the provincial government has indicated a willingness to risk tax dollars to ensure investor certainty on the Trans Mountain pipeline, that we ought not do so unless the federal government also participates financially to ensure that Ottawa is fully committed and engaged, with skin in the game, so that it's not just Alberta taxpayers who are left holding the bag? Will they agree with me that Ottawa needs to match what Alberta might do to ensure the construction of the pipeline through a public investment?

Ms Hoffman: I have to say that we are not going to stop, Mr. Speaker. We're going to fight to get this pipeline, and we're not going to box ourselves in by putting forward demands like that. We thought that the Leader of the Official Opposition said that he supported the Premier in her call to make sure that this pipeline went forward, including public investment if that's what it came to. I know the people of Alberta, certainly, are saying that we can't stop at any cost. This is an important infrastructure project for the people of Alberta.

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, the reality is this. It's only the federal government that can use its constitutional authority to ensure the construction of the pipeline. I agree in principle and, regrettably, that we may need to financially backstop the investors, but given that the federal government has done nothing yet to ensure the construction of the pipeline, why does this government not use this as leverage and insist that they come to the table with dollars as well? Why are they prepared to take risks that Ottawa is not going to take to ensure the construction of the pipeline?

2:40

Ms Hoffman: Well, my biggest question is: why didn't the member opposite, when he was in Ottawa, take some investment or even some interest in this project, Mr. Speaker? Because I have to say that spending 20 years in Ottawa and failing to get our product to tidewater, to me, is mighty disappointing.

We've been stepping up at every step along the way, and we will continue to do so. We've been working at this for three years. It's time that we up some of the additional pressures and that Ottawa do the same. That's why we're calling on the three fronts, including them stepping up to support us with public investment. But, Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to say that we're going to sit back on our hands and let Justin Trudeau make decisions for the people of Alberta. This product is too important. This pipeline is too important to do that.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Kenney: Well, given that this government has done nothing to criticize Justin Trudeau's veto of Northern Gateway, his killing of Energy East, his surrender on Keystone, and his total inaction on Trans Mountain, why will this government not join with us in insisting that the federal government help clean up the mess that their inaction has created by helping to ensure the construction of this pipeline through its financial participation if necessary? Why do they keep giving a political pass to their close ally Justin Trudeau, Mr. Speaker?

Ms Hoffman: My allies are the people of Alberta, Mr. Speaker. I have to say that I will not stand down from standing up for them. I know that when the member was in Ottawa for two decades, he got an approval by ramming through and disrespecting the process that, certainly, was far different with the Trans Mountain pipeline than it was with Northern Gateway. I wish they would have done that properly. I wish they wouldn't have set that project up for failure. But you know what? On this side of the House we're committed to working through the appropriate channels. We have an approved pipeline. We have 14 appeals that we've won. It's time that the federal government stood up with us and made B.C. realize the impacts that they're having not just on the people of Alberta but all Canadians if they continue to delay.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Hon. members, if I might, I would just like to remind all of you that after question 5 in Oral Question Period, we have a practice and a standing order about the use of preambles. I would encourage you when you're asking supplemental questions after that time to avoid the preambles.

Tabling Returns and Reports

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, I rise to table five copies of the government of Alberta's submission to the federal Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities on Bill C-48, better known as the tanker ban, in which the Minister of Energy argues to make the bill less bad and calls for the bill to be executed.

My second submission, Mr. Speaker, is five copies of my submission to the federal Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities on Bill C-48, again, the same tanker ban, in which I diligently oppose the tanker ban on national constitutional grounds.

My third submission, Mr. Speaker, is five copies to the federal Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development on Bill C-69, An Act to enact the Impact Assessment Act and the Canadian Energy Regulator Act, to amend the Navigation Protection Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, in which I vigorously oppose this federal bill. I would invite the Minister of Energy and the Minister of Environment and Parks to also table their opposition to Bill C-69.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table five copies of the affidavit of Peter T. Sekulic to the Court of Queen's Bench of Alberta in Peace River under the applicant Northern Air Charter, with respondents Alberta Health Services and Can-West Corporate Air Charters.

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

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand to table five copies of a letter received from Mr. Bill Rowe regarding the Berwyn Autumn Lodge. He says: "I am extremely disillusioned, disappointed, frustrated and angry since the announcement of the lodge closure . . . Because of the closure, my wife and I are separated after over 65 years of marriage." He goes on to say: "I was told that if I didn't like the situation that I should 'just leave'."

Thank you.

Tablings to the Clerk

The Clerk: I wish to advise the Assembly that the following document was deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of the hon. Ms Ganley, Minister of Justice and Solicitor General, pursuant to the Statutes Repeal Act a report, undated, entitled Alberta Justice and Solicitor General Statutes Repeal Act 2018 List.

Motions under Standing Order 42

The Speaker: The Opposition House Leader.

Provincial Advocacy to Federal Government on Trans Mountain Pipeline Expansion Suspension

Mr. Nixon:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government of Canada to delay its planned \$4.1 billion infrastructure funding awarded to the government of British Columbia until the B.C. government ceases its efforts to obstruct the Trans Mountain expansion project.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on the motion that I gave notice that I would be moving earlier. I will be brief. I will give you a few facts that I think will help members as they determine how they will vote on this motion.

First, is that the Premier a few days ago indicated that her government may be open to asking the federal government to stop equalization payments or infrastructure funding going to B.C. till the Trans Mountain is done. Then under questioning from the Leader of the Opposition, it turned out that was probably primarily around the pan-Canadian framework, which is \$30 million, which is really just a drop in the bucket with the numbers that we're talking about.

So today the opposition is giving the government a chance to be able to stand up and say very clearly to Justin Trudeau that we expect him to take action, including stopping payments like this \$4.1 billion, until B.C. respects our constitutional rights and stops hindering Kinder Morgan from being able to put in that pipeline.

To be clear, Mr. Speaker, a vote against that is a vote for Justin Trudeau.

The Speaker: Having heard the motion, all in favour, please say aye. Those opposed, please say no.

Hon. members, the daily Routine is now concluded.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, a point of clarification. Did that motion carry or not? You didn't say anything.

The Speaker: I'm sorry. I indicated that the motion did not pass.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you.

[Unanimous consent denied]

The Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 59.01(5)(b) the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

The legislative policy committees will convene this afternoon and tomorrow morning for consideration of the main estimates. This afternoon Resource Stewardship will consider the estimates for Transportation in the Rocky Mountain Room, and Alberta's Economic Future will consider the estimates for Economic Development and Trade in the Parkland Room. Tomorrow morning

Alberta's Economic Future will again consider the estimates for Economic Development and Trade in the Rocky Mountain Room, and Families and Communities will consider the estimates for Service Alberta in the Parkland Room.

Now the House is adjourned.

[The Assembly adjourned at 2:48 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 59.01(5)(b)]

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