



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Fourth Session

# Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, November 26, 2018

Day 53

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

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (UCP),  
Deputy Leader of the Official Opposition  
Anderson, Hon. Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (NDP)  
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-Hawthood (NDP)  
Coolahan, Craig, Calgary-Klein (NDP)  
Cooper, Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UCP)  
Cortes-Vargas, Estefania, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (NDP),  
Government Whip  
Cyr, Scott J., Bonnyville-Cold Lake (UCP)  
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)  
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (NDP)  
Dreesen, Devin, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (UCP)  
Drever, Deborah, Calgary-Bow (NDP)  
Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UCP)  
Eggen, Hon. David, Edmonton-Calder (NDP)  
Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (UCP)  
Feehan, Hon. Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Fildebrandt, Derek Gerhard, Strathmore-Brooks (FCP)  
Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (NDP)  
Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (AP)  
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (NDP),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Gill, Prab, Calgary-Greenway (Ind)  
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)  
Goodridge, Laila, Fort McMurray-Conklin (UCP)  
Gottfried, 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)  
Horne, Trevor A.R., Spruce Grove-St. Albert (NDP)  
Hunter, Grant R., Cardston-Taber-Warner (UCP),  
Official Opposition Deputy Whip  
Jansen, Hon. Sandra, Calgary-North West (NDP)  
Kazim, Anam, Calgary-Glenmore (NDP)  
Kenney, Hon. Jason, PC, Calgary-Lougheed (UCP),  
Leader of the Official Opposition  
Kleinstuber, Jamie, Calgary-Northern Hills (NDP)  
Larivee, Hon. Danielle, Lesser Slave Lake (NDP),  
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Littlewood, Jessica, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (NDP)  
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Luff, Robyn, Calgary-East (Ind)  
Malkinson, Hon. Brian, Calgary-Currie (NDP)  
Mason, Hon. Brian, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP),  
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Premier  
Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (UCP)  
Panda, Prasad, Calgary-Foothills (UCP)  
Payne, Brandy, Calgary-Acadia (NDP)  
Phillips, Hon. Shannon, Lethbridge-West (NDP)  
Piquette, Colin, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater (NDP)  
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie (UCP),  
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Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (NDP)  
Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (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)  
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)

### Party standings:

New Democratic: 53   United Conservative: 26   Alberta Party: 3   Alberta Liberal: 1   Freedom Conservative: 1   Independent: 2   Progressive Conservative: 1

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Joe Ceci	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
David Eggen	Minister of Education
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Kathleen T. Ganley	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Christina Gray	Minister of Labour, Minister Responsible for Democratic Renewal
Sandra Jansen	Minister of Infrastructure
Danielle Larivee	Minister of Children's Services and Status of Women
Brian Malkinson	Minister of Service Alberta
Brian Mason	Minister of Transportation
Margaret McCuaig-Boyd	Minister of Energy
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Chair: Mr. Coolahan  
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Schreiner

Cyr	Luff
Dang	McPherson
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

### Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Chair: Mr. Sucha  
Deputy Chair: Mr. van Dijken

Carson	Littlewood
Connolly	McPherson
Coolahan	Piquette
Dach	Schneider
Fitzpatrick	Starke
Gotfried	Taylor
Horne	

### Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Chair: Ms Goehring  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Smith

Drever	Orr
Ellis	Renaud
Fraser	Shepherd
Hinkley	Swann
Luff	Woollard
McKitrick	Yao
Miller	

### Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

Chair: Mr. Shepherd  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Malkinson

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Gill	Pitt
Horne	van Dijken
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### Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

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Cooper	Piquette
Dang	Pitt
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### Standing Committee on Private Bills

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Babcock	Rosendahl
Drever	Stier
Drysdale	Strankman
Hinkley	Sucha
Kleinsteinuber	Taylor
McKitrick	

### Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

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Deputy Chair: Ms Babcock

Carson	Loyola
Coolahan	Miller
Cooper	Nielsen
Goehring	Nixon
Gotfried	Pitt
Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	

### Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Mr. Cyr  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Dach

Barnes	Malkinson
Carson	Miller
Clark	Nielsen
Gotfried	Panda
Hunter	Renaud
Littlewood	Turner
Luff	

### Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

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Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
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Kazim	Schreiner
Kleinsteinuber	

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, November 26, 2018

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Good afternoon.

Hon. members, let us pray or reflect, each in our own way. Yesterday marked the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. May we take a moment to reflect on how we as family members, as community leaders, and as legislators can take a stand against violence against women. May we collectively set the best possible example for our children, our grandchildren, and young Canadians in educating them that this behaviour is always inexcusable and never acceptable, and may we find ways to be allies and supporters to survivors.

Hon. members, we will now be led in the singing of our national anthem by Ms Jinting Zhao, and I would invite all to participate in the language of their choice.

**Hon. Members:**

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

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

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

**Mr. Horne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour and a privilege to rise today and introduce to you and through you students from one of our amazing new schools, Sister Alphonse academy, that came equipped with a wonderful playground. The students are accompanied today by their teacher, Mr. Sean Brass, along with their chaperone, Karla Bergstrom. I would ask that they now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly the students and staff of Calmar school. Calmar is a small community in my constituency, just outside of Edmonton, that I've had the privilege of visiting several times over the past three years to talk about the role of an MLA and this Legislature. It would be my dream that one or two of the students today, as a result of their visit to this Legislature, would grow up to become provincial leaders and to one day sit in this very Chamber themselves. Would the staff and the students of Calmar school please stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's truly my pleasure and honour to introduce the hard-working and dedicated sheriffs and commissioners that work around the clock to ensure the safety of all members in this Assembly as well as the public. I'll ask them to rise as I call their names. I'll begin with the sheriffs: Sheriff Munib Malik, Sheriff Keith Taylor, Sheriff Jared Carbert, Sheriff Lisa Goertzen, Sheriff Mark Howell, Sheriff Chris Bijelic, Sheriff Sheldon Denis, Sheriff James Filgate, and Sergeant Warren Posch. I'd also like the commissioners to rise as I call their names: Jean Paul Grimard, Jin Kim, and Bhuvan Ponta. Please join me in extending the traditional warm welcome of the House.

**The Speaker:** Welcome, and thank you for your service.

The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

**Ms Littlewood:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure for me to introduce to you and to the House Strathcona county councillor Paul Smith. He represents ward 5 of Strathcona county, which is the part of the county that includes both Alberta's Industrial Heartland and a lot of farm area. Paul is also the TransCanada Yellowhead Highway Association president and is also a leader on an intermunicipal team that recently resolved a negotiated annexation agreement that had been long awaited between Strathcona county and the city of Fort Saskatchewan. The Smith family are local pioneers and have been farming in Strathcona county for generations. I'm sad to hear that Paul and his wife, Merla, retired from farming last year, but that is likely to spend more time with their two children and four grandchildren. I'm proud to see Paul everywhere in his community being an excellent representative, including at the Christmas in the Heartland event, that was just over the weekend. I would ask everyone to extend the traditional warm welcome of the House.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

**Mr. Kenney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to introduce five special guests in the gallery. First, Brendan Fisher was born in Calgary, and he enjoys attending Bowness high school. His passions include refereeing hockey and snowboarding. Asher Betts was born in Banff and is in grade 6 at Lawrence Grassi middle school in Canmore and plays soccer, hockey, and skiing. Drew Betts is a proud Albertan, born in Calgary, raised in St. Albert, and enjoys supporting the local women's shelter, coaching hockey, and helping to organize an annual food bank drive for the past 20-some years. Dawson Rodney is 10 years old, attends grade 5 at Lawrence Grassi middle school, a hot hand, as he is known by his sports peers, and is a dedicated and focused athlete. I'm told he's also a politically astute young man. Last but not least is our former colleague Dave Rodney, the former dean of this place, the CEO of Tourism Canmore Kananaskis. He says that his most important job is being a dad to Dawson and Evan and husband to Jennifer. I would like to ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Continuing with the introductions of the Minister of Justice, it's my honour to recognize some of the fine folks who work in this building and in the Federal Building and take such excellent care. The folks that I'll be introducing are caretakers. We know that this building beams with pride for all Albertans, and it's because of the hard work of these folks who I'm going to introduce. I ask that they rise as I say their

names: Rhonda Sorochan, Nelcy Mendes, Nimfa Zoleta, Emma Yakhina, Terrance LeBlanc, Claudia Delgado, Steven Bourns, Ahmed Asfour, Sandi Aamot, and Sandra McCuaig. There will be more by my colleagues, but please, hon. members, join me in thanking these hard-working public servants.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

**Mr. Strankman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two introductions here today, please. The first would be personal friends of mine, Jay Summach and his good wife, Anne, who are in the gallery. I'd like to introduce them to you and through you to all members of the Assembly. Jay is the account manager at Yellow Pencil, a digital agency that works with the public sector to deliver digital services, and his fine wife, Anne, is a nurse practitioner directing a nurse practitioner clinic for seniors at the SAGE Seniors Association here in Edmonton. These fine people in the gallery here today are actually constituents of the Member for Edmonton-Glenora, but they have been long-time hunting guests at our family farm. I'd ask that Jay and Anne please rise and receive the traditional welcome of the Assembly.

1:40

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

**Ms Jansen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to continue on introducing our good-looking Infrastructure team up in the galleries. It is absolutely my pleasure to help introduce some of the amazing men and women who keep this building in tip-top shape. On behalf of all members of the Assembly, all government staff, and visitors I want to offer my sincere thanks for the incredible hard work they do all the time and always with a smile. Will you please stand: Loretta Bieneck, facilities manager; Mario Galka, gardener; Richard Redden and Geoff Visscher, grounds supervisors; Claude Smith, gardener; Christin Siminiuk, carpenter; Jim Walsh, electrician; Bill Stecyk, facilities co-ordinator; and Donald Sieffert, facilities manager. Thank you so much.

**The Speaker:** Thank you and welcome. I have learned very much from these people.

I believe you had another introduction. My apologies, Drumheller-Stettler.

**Mr. Strankman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce also to you and through you again to all the members in the House other friends of mine. Some may think that I may not have that many friends. They are Bill and Kim Rock, who operate the C Store in Amisk, Alberta, near Hardisty. Bill is the plumber of the constituency, and Bill has also been a friend of mine since the beginning of what I call the Wildrose cycle of conservatism in Alberta. Bill and Kim, if you'd please rise and receive the typical warm welcome of the Assembly, I'd be appreciative of that.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

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

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To continue on with the introductions that the ministers of Justice, Health, and Infrastructure have started with regard to the people who work in and around this building – on this side of the House we're extremely grateful for the hard-working Albertans who keep our public buildings running safely and smoothly – it's with great pleasure that I introduce some of our caretakers, and I would ask that they rise as I call their names: Abe Jara, Fadumo Mohamed, Michael Ramjug,

Mohammed Yagoub, Rustamali Hudda, Jesu Junio, Nathaniel Jorquia, Maura Del Rosario, Yulier Sotolongo, and Berhane Ghebrekirstos. Please join me in extending the traditional warm welcome and appreciation of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome and thank you.

The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Mr. S. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to continue to introduce some of the hard-working staff who keep the Legislature grounds and building going. I'm not sure what's happening out there. They're in here, so hopefully they've got people in their stead right now to keep us going because I know that without them, we'd be in disarray. They're seated in the members' gallery, and I hope I get all their names right. If they could rise when I call their names: Ben Pike, Joe Plante, Benoit Morin, Angela Neuman, Barry Malayko, Laurie Fedorchuk, Lou Webb, and Randall Sorochan. I would wish that everybody could give them the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome to you.

To the Minister: the real work happens out there.

The Minister of Community and Social Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this House a couple of my family friends, Mrs. Rehana Rafiq and Mr. Zafar Nabi. Mrs. Rehana Rafiq is a family violence counsellor by profession, and she also works at YWCA Sheriff King, while Mr. Nabi is a secretary to the government of Azad Jammu and Kashmir. It's equivalent to a deputy minister here. I also want to add that Mrs. Rehana Rafiq has a degree, an MSW, from the U of C. When I was applying for the same program, I benefited from her advice and guidance, for which I am grateful. They are also accompanied by their daughters Shifa and Maha and their niece Aliza Zia. I ask my guests to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Second introduction.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to introduce to you and through you Nim and Nita Herian. Mr. and Mrs. Herian are the parents of my staff member Reena Herian and a staff member of the Minister of Environment and Parks, Ayesha Herian. They have dedicated their lives to working for Alberta Health Services. Mrs. Herian is a clerk at the U of A hospital, and Mr. Herian is a dialysis technician, providing life-saving services to remote communities across Alberta. Mr. Herian is also the cofounder and director of the Punjab United Sports & Heritage Association, a nonprofit organization that brings together folks from all ages and backgrounds to promote diversity, heritage, and community health. They are celebrating their 40th anniversary this year, so congratulations. Mrs. Herian is an advocate of Brahma Kumaris, a UN-designated nonprofit that works to deliver global supports through meditation. I ask my guests to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

**Ms Goehring:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to introduce to you and through you Dylan Maguire and Katy DeCoste. Katy is working towards a bachelor of arts, combined honours in English and history, at the University of Alberta. She's also involved with the Concert Choir and student journalism society. Dylan is studying acting in the bachelor of fine arts program at the University of Alberta and has

been following politics since grade 4. I met Dylan and Katy during their first visit to the Alberta Legislature. I sent them a note wishing them well, and the note inspired them to reach out to my office to return the well wishes and do something that they had wanted to do for a long time, volunteer for the provincial NDP. Dylan and Katy, thank you for joining us here today and for your help on my team. I'd ask you now to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you two friends of mine. They're both fathers, they're both family people, and their greatest concern right now is Alberta's economy. Mr. Speaker, you may know them because they're both formerly from Medicine Hat. Could I please ask my friends Dean Weber and Cameron Chenier to rise and accept the traditional warm welcome of the House.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of this House a young conservative who has been helping me in my constituency office. Mr. Hadyn Place is one of the many conservative activists who is looking to help bring common sense back to Alberta and back to Calgary. Hadyn used to be the debating rival to the Member for Calgary-Hawthood. Hadyn really, really doesn't like Justin Trudeau, and I'm sure that Mayor Nenshi has some choice words for Hadyn's choice in civic causes. Hadyn is visiting Edmonton after cheering on the Calgary Stampeders to victory in the Grey Cup on Sunday, so please join me in giving Hadyn the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, any other guests today? Chestermere-Rocky View.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly an amazing group of parents and students and community members who are here representing the larger community of the residents that are advocating for a Langdon area senior high school. The community is one of the fastest growing in Alberta, with 30 per cent of its population under the age of 15. It is also one of only two communities of its size without a high school. Our current designated school is at capacity and will just continue to be stretched past its limits with student growth. They are here today to put faces to the hundreds of letters that you've been receiving highlighting the need for this high school. I will be tabling those letters later. I would ask that they rise when I say their names and please remain standing with us: Chrissy Craig, Sarah Craig, Frances Trevors, Leah Henderson, Tony Baker, Louise Howatt, Samantha Graham Chamberlain, David Chamberlain, Michael Chamberlain, Brandi-Lee Mouck, Corrie Carrobourg, Susan Pilling, Janice Jesenovec, Teresa Wasylenchuk, Linda Isbister, Alain Carrobourg, Evelyn Carrobourg, Jacqueline Weiss, Denise Twizell, Stephanie Brundige, Theresa Layzelle, Marilyn Collins, Rody Visotski, Joshua Neiszner, Isabelle Thuy, and then the Tweit family: Travis, Lorraine, Chase, Cole, Brody, and Bryce. Please give them the traditional warm welcome of the House.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

1:50

## Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed and Leader of the Official Opposition.

**Mr. Kenney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, go Stamps. Congratulations to the Calgary Stampeders on a huge Grey Cup win last night. I'm sure all members will agree with that, especially the Edmontonians here.

## Oil Price Differentials

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, it has been estimated by Professor Fellows from the University of Calgary that the price differential for Alberta oil at \$39 a barrel would cost this province's treasury \$7.2 billion. But the price differential in the last month has been averaging nearly \$45 a barrel. Can the Finance minister tell us: how much is this costing the Alberta treasury, the current price differential?

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. I know that the Premier has said that when it comes to getting fair value for our resources, nothing is off the table. But for all members let me be clear. We are going to make sure that we use every tool that's available to us to ensure we get full value. We're not going to accept the differential as being a sure thing. That's why we've been fighting to get our access to tidewater, and that's why we're considering increasing options with things like rail and working with our partners in the oil and gas industry as well, because Albertans deserve fair and full value. We wish we would have gotten it years ago, but thank goodness we're here at the table and we're able to do something.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Kenney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. However, my question was not for the government to recite its cliché talking points. It was a very simple, statistical question, so I'll ask it again: does the government have an estimate of the forgone revenues that would accrue to the Alberta treasury as a result of the current \$45 price differential? It's not a partisan question; it's not a negative question; it's simply a factual question. Do they have an estimate of how much this is costing the Alberta government?

**Ms Hoffman:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we've been very clear that \$80 million a day is the estimate for the impact to the country of Canada. Certainly, we think it's important that folks in Ottawa and all Canadians and all Albertans know about that impact on the national economy. Of course, Alberta is a big share of that, and that's why we won't rest. But this isn't just in Alberta's interest; this is in all Canadians' interests, and that's why we're not backing down. We're going to make sure that every option that's at our disposal is used, and that's why we're fighting so hard to get this pipeline built that the member opposite had 20 years while he was in Ottawa, 10 at the cabinet table, to get done. But we're going to make sure it happens.

**Mr. Kenney:** Just for the record there, Mr. Speaker, a simple, factual, nonpartisan question and a partisan attack in response: par for the course for that minister and this government.

Mr. Speaker, we understand that the hon. the Premier will be visiting Ottawa this week. Will she be meeting with Prime Minister Trudeau?

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, I will never stop fighting for the people of Alberta and reminding them of the record of all hon. members when it comes to fighting for these projects. That's why I'm so proud that our Premier won't back down. She is fighting every single day to make sure that we get our access to tidewater, that we're leaders on the environment, and that we protect the jobs that are so important to the people of Alberta and grow our economy, not just in Alberta but across our nation. From coast to coast to coast, the Premier keeps working on this. Certainly, the Prime Minister will be hearing from the Premier; I can assure you of that. I believe he's heard from her already, and he will continue to hear so because she sure is fighting for this province.

**The Speaker:** Second main question.

**Mr. Kenney:** Well, the minister couldn't answer the first question about the estimated forgone revenues, and she can't even answer the second question about whether the Premier will be meeting with the Prime Minister. That seems peculiar, Mr. Speaker.

### Federal and Provincial Energy Policies

**Mr. Kenney:** This NDP government gave the Liberals everything they wanted: they supported the veto of Northern Gateway, didn't protest the killing of Energy East, supported the emissions cap on the oil sands, supported the imposition of a carbon tax. Yet Justin Trudeau came here last week and gave us nothing but a condescending pat on the head. What has the NDP managed to get for energy workers out of their alliance with the Trudeau Liberals?

**Ms Hoffman:** Just to reiterate, the Premier has made her message loud and clear to the people of Ontario, including the Prime Minister, and she's going to continue meeting with people who are directly impacted by the decisions of the federal government and consecutive federal governments, I might add, Mr. Speaker, that failed to get our product to tidewater. The Premier is going to be meeting directly with a number of people in Ontario, and she's definitely made her position clear to the Prime Minister and will continue to do so. Never count our Premier out. She is tenacious, she is hard-working, and she is fighting for Albertans.

**Mr. Kenney:** So, in other words, the government cannot identify a single thing that they've gotten from their alliance with the Trudeau Liberals.

Last week over 2,000 Calgarians came out to welcome Justin Trudeau on short notice to condemn his government's failure to defend this country's biggest engine of job growth in the past, our energy sector. Now, again, the federal Liberals got out of this government a carbon tax, an emissions cap. This government folded on Energy East and on Northern Gateway. What did we get in exchange? Did we get a single railcar? What have we gotten from the federal Trudeau Liberals in response?

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, I can understand the frustration felt by the folks who were outside the meeting. I have to say that, as the Premier said before and I'll say it again, I'm with them. Our government is with them. The differential is hurting Alberta, and it's hurting Canada. It's important that Ottawa and the Prime Minister are well aware of that. That's why we won't back down. That's why we launched the Keep Canada Working 2.0 campaign, that's why we're working furiously to find solutions, and that's why we'll continue to fight to make sure that Alberta gets a fair share from Ottawa, which we didn't get when the Leader of the Official Opposition was there for his 10 years. While we continue to push forward again right now, we won't back down. That's for sure.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, the NDP told Albertans that the punishing carbon tax on heating homes and filling up gas tanks would get us a coastal pipeline. We don't have a coastal pipeline. Why do we still have a punishing carbon tax?

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, the fact that the member opposite keeps drawing attention to the failure of the government that he was a part of for over a decade in Ottawa and now decides to blame us for it astounds me. It's true that the member opposite did fail to get products to tidewater. That's why our Premier is in the middle of this fight right now. That's why we continue to push forward and why we won't back down. This is in the national interest. We haven't gotten a Canadian pipeline to Canadian tidewater in 65 years, but you know who's going to make it happen? Our Premier. That's for sure. Not only did the members of the previous federal government get no pipelines to tidewater; they actually created greater opposition to pipelines than ever before. But that's turning because . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you.  
Third main question.

### Oil Production Volume

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, Alberta oil producers have voluntarily reduced their production of oil by approximately 150,000 barrels per day in the last three weeks. They've done so because of the severity of the current price differential, much of which is caused by a glut of inventory in Alberta right now. There are a handful of companies that have not followed suit with their own voluntary reductions in production. Will the government join with us in calling on those companies to also participate in these voluntary reductions so that we start getting a decent price?

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

**Ms Hoffman:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the concern that the member is raising with regard to the differential. We, too, share that concern, and that's why we created the envoy that's working diligently to make sure that we get full value for our resource. That is certainly one part of the solution. The other part of the solution is to continue forging forward on making sure that we get fair value by opening international markets, something that we've been fighting for since day one. The member opposite actually said that no pipeline is a national priority when he was in Ottawa. I'm shocked by this. I think in *Hansard* he said the word "pipeline" one time. Enough is enough. We have faith in our Premier. She's getting this job done.

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, I said that coastal access was a national priority. I must confess that as minister of immigration I wasn't responsible for pipelines.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister please tell us: why will she not call on all players in the Alberta industry to follow the lead of most companies in reducing production so that we can get an increase in the price? Right now we're underselling Alberta oil by \$45 a barrel. This is a crisis. It's been described to me as a five-alarm fire by people in the industry. Will the government join with us in calling for voluntary action?

2:00

**The Speaker:** Thank you.



**Ms Hoffman:** I am shocked that the Leader of the Official Opposition is owning the fact that he did nothing to get our pipelines built when he was sitting around the federal cabinet table for 10 years. That is sad. That is sad. What is his answer? That he wants us to make him Premier and trust that he'll do it because, magically, he's going to focus on something that he failed to act on when he had the opportunity around the federal cabinet table for 10 years. Enough, hon. member.

**Mr. Nixon:** Point of order.

**Ms Hoffman:** It's time you stand with Alberta, stand with our Premier, and make sure you put your partisan attacks aside and get our pipeline built.

**Mr. Kenney:** Mr. Speaker, the question was not a partisan attack. It was about voluntary reductions in production. I would remind the minister that while she and her colleagues were protesting Northern Gateway, Trans Mountain, and Keystone, the Harper government saw the construction of four pipelines that increased movement of oil by 1.72 million barrels per day, doubling oil movement in Canada. Why will the government not stand up and call on all producers to participate in the voluntary reduction of production to increase the price of Alberta oil?

**Ms Hoffman:** You know what, Mr. Speaker? Our resources belong to all of us. I believe it was Peter Lougheed who called on us to act like owners of that resource, and I wish that when the member opposite was in Ottawa for 20 years, 10 around the federal cabinet table, he would have acted like an owner because we'd be in a different position than we're in today. But I have to say that one of the solutions is fixing the differential. That's why we've created our special envoy. One of the solutions is increasing our takeaway capacity, getting a pipeline built to tidewater, and growing upgrading right here in Alberta, and that's what our government is fighting for.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-South East.

### **Oil Price Differentials** (continued)

**Mr. Fraser:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Prime Minister visited Calgary last week, and as far as the energy industry is concerned, he rode in on a lame horse with empty hands. There was no support for a struggling industry that is so important to our province and this country. It's time for Alberta to take steps as a province to address the price differential directly, not wait for federal help that may never come. To the Deputy Premier: will your government take steps to curtail production and address this huge discount our oil is currently selling for?

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

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. Our Premier said and I will reiterate: nothing is off the table. That's why we've created our special envoy. That's why we are making sure that we are working to address the differential, addressing access to various markets, including considerations around that. Of course, we continue to push forward for a Canadian pipeline to Canadian tidewater to get a fair value for all Canadians, something that would solve an \$80-million-a-day gap in federal revenues. This is something that is of national importance. The differential is certainly one piece of it, and

we are absolutely working to make sure we get full value for all Canadians for this resource, that we are all owners of.

**Mr. Fraser:** The federal Minister of Finance said in an interview on Sunday that they would not be supporting Alberta's request for more rail cars to transport oil. Morneau said that it wasn't a consideration because it would take nine months to get going even. Premier, we can't afford nine months of cheap oil. We need to take action now. If not curtailment, what action does your government actually intend to do today?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said in a previous answer, we are committed to fixing the differential. There are certainly a number of different tools in our ability to do that. We have a special envoy that we need to entrust – they were named about a week ago – that we have doing that work, reporting directly back to our Premier and making sure that they're continuing to move forward on making sure that we close that gap. That should have been addressed decades ago, but we certainly are at the table working to make that happen because of this Premier and this government. We're also working to increase our takeaway capacity, getting pipelines built to Canadian tidewater, growing upgrading right here in Alberta, all things that owners should do when they own a resource, and owners are . . .

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Fraser:** Our hearts go out to the workers in Oshawa who just lost their jobs, but let's be very clear. Alberta has been dealing with substantially more job losses in oil and gas and may lose more now because of low oil prices. It's imperative that our energy industry and the workers who have lost their jobs remain a top national priority. To the Premier: what are you doing to ensure that the crisis in our energy industry remains a top priority for all levels of government?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. One of the things our Premier did was create a very talented special envoy because she knows it's important to have the best negotiator, the best talent at the table fighting for Albertans every single day, and that's what we've done. That's another reason why our Premier will be in Ottawa later this week, because she is speaking to people who are impacted. Everyone is impacted by this impact of the differential and by the lack of access to international markets. The best way to fix that, of course, is ensuring that we have our pipeline to tidewater, but she won't back down on any of the other options that are available at her disposal, and I am so proud to be a part of her team.

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

### **Diversity and Inclusivity Initiatives**

**Ms Kazim:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Within my own constituency of Calgary-Glenmore and the city of Calgary as a whole there is a breadth and depth of diversity that is reflective of the population of Alberta. I have the pleasure of regularly interacting with Calgarians that are bilingual, multilingual, or of different ethnic backgrounds and who practise different faiths. To the Minister of Education: how is the government supporting these communities so they feel a sense of belonging within the province of Alberta and are able to continue contributing to their communities?

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

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am, too, very proud of the diversity that we find not only in the city of Calgary but right across the province of Alberta as well. Two things. We have started to build the Anti-Racism Advisory Council. We have interviews that are being conducted right now to help to get advice and to reach into communities across the province. We also have a grant program by which groups can make application to projects that they want to do in their communities to fight racism, foster acceptance, and to promote inclusivity.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Ms Kazim:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that among my constituents are individuals and organizations doing all they can on behalf of racialized communities and that we need to do more to ensure they're heard and acknowledged, again to the same minister: how is the government ensuring racialized communities have a voice and can impact government decision-making?

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

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, we've been hosting these round-tables right across the province. I thank all of my colleagues for your work to bring people together in your communities to look for ways by which we can fight racism and foster acceptance as well. We also are building a new curriculum. I think it's very important for young people to be able to see themselves reflected in the curriculum, to see their histories reflected in the curriculum, to recognize that they are supported and thus will be more successful in school.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Ms Kazim:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that there are many people actively working to create more welcoming and caring environments, I cannot help but wonder how far that impact could go if these organizations were better supported. To the same minister: how can the government help these individuals in the great work they're already doing within their communities?

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

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, we believe by using established programming and ways by which community groups have already been doing very good work to fight racism in their communities. We would like to support that and supplement that with the grant program that came out of the antiracism initiative. We're working very hard, and we need all Albertans to pull together to foster inclusivity and to build a more accepting society for all.

### Federal-provincial Relations

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Last night the Calgary Stampeders on behalf of all Alberta defeated Ottawa to win the 106th Grey Cup. Unfortunately, Alberta hasn't beaten Ottawa at anything else in a very long time. While Ottawa has been playing with unnecessary roughness, Alberta's NDP has been playing with two-hand touch. Last week the Minister of Finance said, quote: if we were, say, Bombardier or if we were the auto industry, there would be all hands on deck trying to address this oil crisis as quickly as possible. Are you just figuring this out now?

**Mr. Ceci:** You know, we saw just last week how Calgarians poured into the streets to address the issues of the federal government. They weren't happy with the federal government. I wasn't happy with the federal government's federal fiscal update as well, Mr. Speaker. I let them know that. We are going to continue to speak loudly and longly, as long as we can, until action is taken by the federal government on this differential.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** When the Stampeders want to put points on the board against Ottawa, they put up Cornish and Cahoon. When the NDP want to put points on the board, they put up Charlie Brown and let Ottawa hold the ball. The fact is that Stephen Harper was right in 2001, when he said that Alberta needed to build firewalls to protect our prosperity and decision-making. Does this government agree that it is time for Alberta to repatriate all of our powers under the Constitution to bring decision-making and prosperity back to Alberta?

**Mr. Ceci:** What this side of the House believes, Mr. Speaker, is that the Premier is going down to Ottawa to continue to press the need for pipelines to tidewater for addressing the differential as quickly as possible. Crude by rail is that interim solution that will take us to a better future once pipelines are in place, and we're not going to give up on that.

2:10

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** The sad reality is that when Liberals are in Ottawa, Alberta is actively undermined. When the Tories are in Ottawa, we are mostly ignored and taken for granted. When the referee is working for your opponent, you need to change the game. Confederation is broken. If Alberta is ever to be treated as more than a glorified colony, then we must reject the status quo, that treats us as such. Will the government agree to hold a referendum in conjunction with the next provincial election for Alberta to renegotiate its constitutional relationship with the federal government?

**Mr. Ceci:** Mr. Speaker, you know, we started off talking about the differential, so I'll just continue on that. The differential is something that we need to address right away. We are pushing Ottawa to address that in an interim solution. We have envoys who are talking to oil companies in this province to try to get them voluntarily to address this issue. What seems to be the best thing for Albertans is to make sure our economy is functioning on all cylinders. We are doing that on behalf of Canada, too, because so much of Canada depends on a sound, functioning economy in this province.

### Oil Price Differentials and Provincial Debt

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, Alberta is in the middle of a crisis of this government's making. The differential is costing Alberta \$210 million for every differential dollar. Kent Fellows, a research associate at the University of Calgary, estimated the differential would translate into a \$7.2 billion loss to the Alberta government if it persisted for a year. That was in March. To the minister: how much more is the deficit going to grow because of your pie-in-the-sky differential projections, that you missed by \$25 a barrel?

**Ms Hoffman:** I can't help but chime in on this for the first one, Mr. Speaker. I have to say again that the members opposite were in government here in Alberta for 40 years, and the member opposite's leader, the Leader of the Official Opposition, was in Ottawa around the cabinet table for 10 years. They failed to fix this, and now they're saying that it's our fault, that magically overnight we are to

blame for the differential. You know what? That couldn't be further from reality. But you know what is reality? We're creating an envoy, we're fighting hard to get our product to tidewater, we're closer than we've ever been before, we're going to make sure we address the differential, and we are going to move forward because we are the owners of this resource, and it's about time Alberta had a Premier who acted like it . . .

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Barnes:** Given that Alberta is in the middle of this government's fiscal crisis and managed decline and that over 180,000 Albertans are unemployed and that over 90,000 Albertans have exhausted their employment insurance and given that hard-working Albertans have seen their RSPs lose value as Alberta companies like Canadian Western Bank and Boardwalk have dropped in value, to the minister: why didn't you stand up to your ally Justin Trudeau, who won't finalize our pipeline approval but just provided Canada's richest families half a billion dollars for their newspapers while Alberta families see our savings evaporate?

**Mr. Ceci:** Mr. Speaker, with regard to the deficit I can tell you that this province and this government were dealt a really tough hand when the collapse of oil prices happened in late 2014, but we focused on what matters to Albertans, and that is jobs and diversification and health care. We cleaned up government and all the expenditures like the sky palace and insider deals that were taking place from the former Progressive Conservatives. Our plan is working, and things are looking up. Ninety thousand Albertans got full-time jobs, mostly in the private sector, in 2017, and we cut the deficit – cut the deficit – by \$3 billion since our original budget.

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, this NDP government has increased Alberta's debt by 650 per cent since 2015, a burden of \$50,000 per family of four. This puts every important Albertan priority at risk. Again to the minister: when will you stop burdening Albertans with unsustainable interest, unsustainable deficits, chasing investment out of our province, something that even the *Globe and Mail* reports is rapidly turning Alberta into a have-not province, and instead get focused, get focused on re-establishing Alberta as the beacon of free enterprise for families and all Canadians?

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

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much. You know, Mr. Speaker, if we want to talk about debt, let's focus on what the Leader of the Opposition and the governments he was part of did when they were in Ottawa: six straight deficit budgets, a \$56 billion deficit in just one year alone. He added, their government added \$145 billion, with a "b," to the national debt and \$309 billion in interest payments. What about that as a record over there? We will continue to stand up for hard-working Albertans and make sure this economy comes back . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister. [interjection] Thank you.

### Oil Price Differentials (continued)

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, there are several names for Canadian oil blends like light sour blend, peace sour, central Alberta, Syncrude sweet premium, sweet crude, Hardisty light, et cetera, but they all have one thing in common: they sell for less than the lowest price oil blend from Texas, where many pipelines are being built to tidewater. To the minister: investors built production on good faith

that pipelines would be built for export. Where are Alberta's pipelines to tidewater?

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

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, from day one we have fought as a government for what's important to Albertans, and that's responsibly producing our resources and access to tidewater, and we continue to do that. We wouldn't have had to do that had previous governments had the vision 10 years ago, 20 years ago that this was going to be a problem. They failed to get access to tidewater. They failed to upgrade our resources here in Alberta. But we're not failing that on this side of the House. We're working hard for that.

**Mr. Panda:** Given, Mr. Speaker, that Hardisty light is now selling for \$6.42 a barrel, which is 4 cents a litre, and given that we are selling our oil for less than the price of bottled water and that the second-quarter update is due later this week, to the Minister of Finance: how deep is the budget deficit going to be because of the differential, and how many people are going to lose their jobs? We need answers, not an attack. The Leader of the Official Opposition actually helped build pipelines so . . .

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

**Mr. Ceci:** Mr. Speaker, I'll tell you an answer. The answer is that we cut the deficit by \$3 billion already since 2015's budget, \$1 billion this year already. The member is right. We'll have the Q2 update this week, and I will tell Albertans where we are with regard to the first six months of this budget year and how we're staying on budget. We're doing a better job than the drunken sailors on that side.

**Mr. Nixon:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** Point of order.

**Mr. Ceci:** When they had money, they spent, Mr. Speaker. When they didn't have money, they didn't.

**The Speaker:** Hon. minister, you may want to be thinking about that.

**Mr. Panda:** Given, Mr. Speaker, that Ottawa has abandoned Alberta on differential prices and given that sources around the province report that businesses like Trican, Repsol, and Torch are suspending, cancelling, and ending projects and pulling out of the communities and that at the same time no one is applying for permits to build new homes, to the minister: given that your best friend and ally Justin Trudeau came to Calgary to shed some crocodile tears and offer lip service, where are the jobs for Albertans?

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

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can tell you that anyone who doesn't understand our energy sector or work to promote it and support it is no friend of this government. We are extremely disappointed with the federal government. They have demonstrated that they are tone deaf and out of touch with Alberta's energy sector. And, really, it should be Canada's energy sector. When Alberta does well, Canada does well. That's why our Premier is in Ottawa fighting, as she always has from day one, for market access

and for pipelines to tidewater. She's accomplished more in three years than that leader did in 10.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Airdrie.

#### **Sheriffs' Mandate**

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have been talking to sheriffs here in Alberta, and they're very concerned that they don't have the necessary tools to be able to do their jobs. They have reportedly lost their ability to act in certain situations even where there are reasonable, probable grounds to do so. Minister, are you confident that our Alberta sheriffs are being utilized to their full potential?

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

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Well, of course, we work with our law enforcement at all times to ensure that they have the necessary tools to perform the functions that they are given. It's very important to this government to ensure that all workers throughout the province have the necessary tools. We certainly will continue working with the sheriffs to ensure that they have the ability to enforce a whole range of different things out there in our communities and to keep Albertans safe.

2:20

**Mrs. Pitt:** Mr. Speaker, given that when the public sees a sheriff, they see a fully armed law enforcement member yet the public doesn't know that their hands are tied in many situations and yet the sheriffs play an important role in the safety in our communities, Minister, have you had a meeting with the sheriffs about this issue, and are you aware of the public's perception of our sheriffs?

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

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, somewhere in that slightly oddly worded question is probably what I understand to be a reference to the fact that sheriffs are, in fact, peace officers as opposed to being police officers, so they have slightly different powers. That is, of course, a legacy of when they were created. When this government took office, as we do with many things, we've been reviewing that. We've been working with the individuals who work on the front lines, and we will continue to have those conversations.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Mr. Speaker, crime is on the rise here in Alberta, and given that the United Conservative Party released a report that called for a review of the sheriffs' mandate to be expanded and given that our law enforcement officers want to do everything that they can for Albertans, but they need to operate within the set of rules of the government, will the minister please tell this House what she's doing to address their concerns?

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

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, I'll start with two things that we're doing to ensure that we keep Albertans safe and to ensure that we keep our law enforcement safe. First of all, we're funding for additional positions, matters which that party voted against. Further, we're continuing to work with our law enforcement officers to ensure that they have the necessary tools, unlike the opposition, who takes the time to attack both the police in Lethbridge and the RCMP. We will continue to work with the front lines to ensure that they can keep Alberta safe.

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

#### **Kindergarten to Grade 4 Draft Curriculum**

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Ordinary Albertans have yet to see any of the instructional materials that will be used in the draft K through 4 curriculum field testing and eventual rollout. Since the curriculum itself is so light on the details of what it will be teaching, Albertans need to be able to evaluate the instructional materials before they can make informed judgments about the curriculum itself. When will the Minister of Education release the instructional materials for the K through 4 draft curriculum?

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

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you so much for the question. As the hon. member knows, we have the draft of the K to 4 curriculum up on the Alberta website now, so Albertans are very welcome to take a look at it. Of course, when the rubber really hits the road is when you are field testing. So this is the part of the process that allows to build content and allows to flesh out the curriculum. We're very proud of what we've done so far, and we can't wait for more input to get the job done.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the identities and the affiliations of the curriculum's designers remain a mystery to Albertans and given that the perspectives of the creators will inevitably make their way into the instructional materials and given that in a province as diverse as Alberta it is vital that a broad range of perspectives be included, to the same minister: where are the instructional materials coming from?

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

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very proud to say that our consultation with the curriculum thus far has been unprecedented, with more than 110,000 interactions with Albertans. You know, it's not only created excellent curricular material; it's created excellent engagement, where people are talking about education and actually working through these things with their kids, with their families and so forth. You know, I find it a bit rich for the member opposite talking about this curriculum. I know that his leader said that he would put it through the shredder, so I don't know exactly what constructive mechanism that happens...

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Alberta is indeed a broad and a diverse society and given that Alberta's schools teach from a myriad of cultural, religious, and educational perspectives and given that it would be impossible for a central committee to identify much less produce a wide enough range of appropriate materials, to the minister: how much flexibility will the minister allow for Alberta's diverse educators to choose materials appropriate to their students?

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

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's an excellent question. You know, we defer back to the professionalism of our teachers to make choices around content material to teach the curriculum here in the province of Alberta, and the degree to which you allow that professionalism increases, I believe, the quality of

teaching and the engagement of students, teachers, parents and so forth. So this is the way we're going to roll. We respect teachers here on this side. We certainly wouldn't fire 4,000 of them, as the members opposite would suggest. In fact, we do quite the opposite. We're building schools. They say that it's going to hurt. We say that we're here to help.

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

### Early Learning and Child Care Centres

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For parents in my riding of Edmonton-McClung and all over Alberta finding affordable child care is a struggle. Recently I visited the Jamie Platz YMCA, located in my constituency, which is a designated \$25-per-day early learning and child care centre. One father I spoke to told me that he and his wife would save over \$36,000 in child care costs over the next five years while their two children are enrolled there. What is the Ministry of Children's Services doing to ensure that all parents in Alberta who wish to work outside the home have access to the safe and affordable child care options they deserve?

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

**Ms Larivee:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. When parents drop their kids off at daycare, they should feel confident that their kids will get the same level of love and attention that they would at home. I've heard from parents how important these \$25-a-day centres are for their families, and that's why I'm so proud of the work that we've done to expand our pilot now at over a hundred new centres, with thousands of new spaces this year alone. These investments are making life more affordable, and I'm going to keep fighting for every parent in Alberta to have the affordable child care that they deserve.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that these pilot projects are clearly working but too many parents still don't have access to affordable child care, will the Ministry of Children's Services consider making this program universal so that every parent and child is able to benefit?

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

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Absolutely, that's my goal. Unlike the Conservatives, our government doesn't think that investing in affordable child care is a waste of money. On this side of the House we're committed to growing our \$25-a-day child care program until every single family in every single corner of this province is able to access safe, affordable care for their children. We know the positive impacts that these centres are having on families, on communities, and on our economy, and we believe that everyday families are worth investing in.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that programs for children and families were often first on the chopping block during each round of Conservative austerity, again to the Minister of Children's Services: how are these ELCCs benefiting Alberta's families?

**Ms Larivee:** Mr. Speaker, every time I talk to a parent who's accessing these \$25-a-day centres, the first thing they tell me is that these investments are life changing for them. That's why it's so

heartbreaking to hear Conservatives talk about how they'd roll these programs back. Jacking up the price of daycare and cutting programs that families rely on just so they can pay for a \$700 million tax giveaway to the richest Albertans is only going to make things harder for Alberta families. Only a party that wants to hurt everyday Albertans would think that that's a good idea.

### Mobile Home Site Regulations

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Mr. Speaker, in my riding of Highwood I've heard concerns from occupants of manufactured homes who are facing the problem of substantial increases to the price they pay to rent the pad their home sits on. Some owners of manufactured homes are facing unbearable rent increases. In 2016 the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association supported a motion from the town of Okotoks asking the government of Alberta to amend the Mobile Home Sites Tenancies Act offering residential tenancy dispute resolution services. Given that this motion was passed two years ago, can the Minister of Service Alberta explain why no action has taken place by this government?

**Mr. Malkinson:** Well, thanks very much to the hon. member for the question. Of course, our government is always available to any Albertans who need assistance. We are always open to also hearing from Albertans. I'd encourage anyone who, you know, has particular concerns with the Mobile Home Sites Tenancies Act to contact my office, and we will look into them.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Well, Mr. Speaker, given that the town of Okotoks sent a letter to the Minister of Service Alberta asking for a timeline on when they might hear of any possible solutions to this issue and given that the minister responded in a letter – and I'll table it later – that he has no additional information for them, can the Minister of Service Alberta tell this Assembly and my constituents of Highwood what he plans to do to address this problem that manufactured homeowners are facing?

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

2:30

**Mr. Malkinson:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, I will point out that in cases where the provincial government under the current Mobile Home Sites Tenancies Act, or MHSTA, is unable to intervene, these matters can be pursued through the courts or through local municipalities. Under the MHSTA municipalities do have tools to help mobile-home owners and tenants. Of course, municipalities have the authority to receive and investigate complaints as well as requirements of the owner of the mobile-home park to remedy any dangerous or unsightly conditions.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Mr. Speaker, given that this topic was brought to the minister's attention last week in question period and that the Minister of Service Alberta's response was for these Albertans to write letters, can the minister explain why he needs a letter-writing campaign for him to take action when his department has been well aware of this problem for over two years and has done absolutely nothing about it?

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

**Mr. Malkinson:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, you know, our government is always out there to support affordable housing options for Albertans, and some of those include mobile homes, so our government is considering changes to various acts that would provide additional low-cost remedial measures for

cases like what we often see in mobile-home parks. Of course, before we make any changes, it is important that we do proper consultation with all those involved because we are always open to ways to make life better for Albertans.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Infrastructure Project Prioritization

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There seems to be a great deal of confusion for those outside of the government on the criteria used to determine which capital projects are built in this province. Constituents in my riding were certainly confused when Rocky View-Langdon junior-senior high school remained on the unfunded list for capital projects despite the fact that the community has 30 per cent of its population under the age of 15. It is also only one of two communities of its size without a high school. To the minister: what criteria are used to determine which schools are built in Alberta, and has Langdon fulfilled those criteria?

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

**Ms Jansen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member, and I thank her, of course, for advocating for her constituents very enthusiastically. I certainly got her extensive list of capital submissions, I think over 15 now, which is wonderful and enthusiastic. We will consider all of those capital submissions as we go through with our ministerial capital committee and make the difficult choices of how to spend the capital money we spend in this province.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, given that when a Rocky View councillor inquired about this school project during the RMA convention, the Infrastructure minister informed the councillor that they take their marching orders from the Minister of Education but given that if an inquiry is asked of the Minister of Education, they defer to the Ministry of Infrastructure, who has control over half a billion in the schools capital budget, my question is to one of the ministers of the government. Who is the one and only point of contact for school boards and municipalities with respect to the capital construction of new schools: Education or Infrastructure?

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

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for the question. You know, I had the great pleasure of meeting with representatives from Langdon here this afternoon and had a very constructive conversation about the school that they are interested in building. We use geography, we use enrolment, and we use imminent needs as factors for building schools. Each of the lists that we've built over the last number of years has been very fair and balanced. We have a growing enrolment population. It's a good problem to have. We have lots of young families, and we're building lots of schools.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, and I'd like to thank the minister for meeting with the Langdon families today.

Mr. Speaker, given that the Auditor General had a choice of words for the government when it comes to setting capital priorities and given that the government seemed content to approve a bunch

of backcountry chalets for construction, which never appeared on the unfunded capital list over the last three years, while other important capital projects like schools never proceeded, I have a question, actually, for the Minister of Environment and Parks. Did you use the mysterious in-year, outside-of-the-budget capital planning process to get Treasury Board to sign off on your chalets instead of schools?

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

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will make no apologies for the fact that we have built more than 240 school projects in the province of Alberta in the last three years. That side failed to build schools for more than 20 years. Then when communities like Langdon come, they're so relieved to come to my office because they know that I actually build schools. This government actually builds schools. We're very proud of that fact. You wouldn't be able to do so by making big cuts. It's going to help. They're going to hurt. End of story.

### Public and Private Health Service Delivery

**Mr. Yao:** Mr. Speaker, our province has a deficit of over \$8 billion, our debt will exceed \$50 billion this year, and our energy industry is crumbling under this NDP government. Despite all this, this Health minister continues to invest in laundry services, but numbers haven't been updated or released. Your last estimate was between \$54 million and \$200 million. How much will it cost to build and invest in your laundry services? Or is accounting difficult?

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

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much for the question, Mr. Speaker. When I travel, in rural communities especially, throughout Alberta, they say to me: "You know, we're worried because we've heard that the former government was planning on laying us off, consolidating these jobs, and creating a super laundry facility. This would impact our rural communities and our rural health outcomes as well, potentially, because we know that if grandma loses her dentures and the laundry is done down the hall in this hospital, we'll be able to get them back, and if it's not, they'll be somewhere else." So I'm proud to defend those front-line workers. I'm proud to defend rural health care. Feel free to keep asking me to cut and fire because on this side we believe in building and hiring.

**Mr. Yao:** Three years later and she still hasn't figured out how much laundry services cost.

Mr. Speaker, this minister commissioned a report by the Health Quality Council of Alberta, which concluded that there is no difference in the quality of lab services provided whether it's private or public. The current provider, DynaLife, is one of Alberta's best workplaces and one of Canada's best-managed companies. Why is this minister investing in lab infrastructure, that has already doubled in cost from \$300 million to \$600 million? You can't even build a building on budget and on time. Why are you doing this?

**Ms Hoffman:** You know, Mr. Speaker, again, nothing is further from the truth. I've explained to the hon. member that what he saw originally was a three-year fiscal plan, and then we rolled out a six-year fiscal plan. I am not apologizing for the fact that we're defending quality lab services in this province. We know that the members opposite wanted to outsource to multinational corporations on labs and on laundry, but on this side of the House we know that it's very important for Albertans just like Anne, the

nurse practitioner in the gallery, to have quality information that she can rely on no matter where her patients are anywhere in the province. Under this government that's what we've done. We've invested in the things that matter to Albertans.

**Mr. Yao:** No one can not answer questions like this minister.

Given that this minister has now had the opportunity to learn about the pharmaceutical industry and has learned how efficient and effective our pharmacies are at distributing medications, why is this minister spending time and money on pharmacy infrastructure, to the tune of \$36 million, instead of utilizing our free-enterprise pharmacists?

**Ms Hoffman:** Again, Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to explain that the way that pharmacy works in Alberta is that we work together. We bulk buy. We bring in medications, and we make sure that they're available to all of our facilities. Those drugs need to be manufactured in other facilities and stored in our facilities, so it's important that we have these available. Instead of continuing to fire and outsource, we're investing in the people of Alberta. Obviously, if you can buy or rent, it's more long-term sustainable if you buy and make sure that you've got that asset and you've got those good, long-term jobs. I'm not going to apologize for that. I appreciate that you're coming clean with your ideology, hon. member, but on this side of the House we're standing up for ordinary Albertans.

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

The Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

### Dental Fee Guide

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. More than two decades ago the Conservative government of the day cancelled the Alberta dental fee guide, leaving us as the only province without one. Since then my constituents have been subject to the highest and fastest-rising dental fees across Canada. Canadians in every other province, whether they live in a small town or a big city, have gotten a better deal on dentistry than Albertans. It's been one year since this government brought back the Alberta dental fee guide. Can the Minister of Health please update the House on its impact?

**Ms Hoffman:** The member is absolutely right that we were the only province that failed to have a fee guide. As a result, our fees were by far the highest of any jurisdiction in Canada, Mr. Speaker, so of course you look at what broke the situation, and you bring in a tool to help fix it. I'm very proud that the college and association of dentists sat down and worked with us on this. They brought forward a recommendation of an 8.5 per cent reduction in fees, which we felt was a very good start. As of today about a third of Alberta dentists are charging in line with that. Before we brought in that guide, only about 6 per cent of Alberta dentists were, so it's definitely a good start.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that dentists are still free to set their own fees, how does the voluntary fee guide actually affect the prices families pay at the dentist?

**Ms Hoffman:** Again, Mr. Speaker, we worked in partnership with the college of dentists and with their association, and what we came up with was a fee guide for common procedures across Alberta. We want them to come in line rather than being dramatic outliers in the nation. We want to be getting full value for Alberta residents who choose to access dental services in the province, and we want

everyone to feel that they can do so. What it is is a tool now for consumers to use. Even myself, when I went to the dentist, I said to the billing agent there: do you charge in line with the fee guide? Of course, I was very pleased when she said yes, but if she didn't, she'd have an opportunity to explain why, and as a consumer I could make a choice if I wanted to stay or go.

2:40

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At the time of the fee guide announcement some critics claimed that it would be too great a burden on dentists' businesses. What has the reaction been from Alberta's dentists?

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

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We knew that it wouldn't be able to snap to a national average overnight, but our plan here is to help Albertans get better informed and get better outcomes for the value that they do pay. Hundreds of dentists have played a role in making sure that they were in line very quickly with the fee guide. As consumers we can continue to use the fee guide as a tool to make sure that we are asking our dentists and using that tool to get full value for ourselves. We're getting greater value outside of the public health care system, and we're also getting greater value within the public health care system and investing in front-line workers. Instead of proposing that we cut 4,000 nurses, on this side we're hiring and protecting those services that Alberta families count on.

### Members' Statements

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

#### Inspiration Award Recipients in Edmonton-Decore

**Mr. Nielsen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Friday, November 23, recipients of the seventh annual inspiration awards were announced at a ceremony in Calgary. Every November during Family Violence Prevention Month the government presents the inspirational awards to honour individuals, organizations, and business leaders who have shown exceptional dedication to violence prevention and to promoting healthy relationships and community safety. I'm proud to say that two individuals from the wonderful riding of Edmonton-Decore were chosen to receive an award: Emma Potter in the area of bullying prevention and Mana Ali in the area of family violence prevention.

Emma Potter is the helplines manager at the Canadian Mental Health Association in Edmonton. She oversees the contact centre, which responds to calls for the Edmonton distress line, 211, the family violence information line, and the bullying helpline. She ensures that staff and volunteers are prepared to respond to clients in great need. She has built links between community organizations and the helplines to ensure that clients get the support they need. Emma has responded to countless calls from those experiencing abuse and has helped them feel heard and supported as they look for a path forward.

Mana Ali was born and raised in Mogadishu, Somalia. In 1991 Mana moved to Canada as a government-sponsored refugee to escape the war. Mana arrived with fluency in English and a degree in English but struggled to find employment. She persevered, and after several years began working at the Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers, where she has been supporting immigrants with stories much like hers for a long time. Fast-forward to 2018,

and you can see that she continues to work tirelessly to help those around her.

The award recipients and nominees demonstrate incredible commitment and leadership in violence prevention. They inspire others to take action and make a difference in their communities. I would like to personally thank both of them for their efforts in building awareness, contributing to violence prevention, and advancing healthy relationships for all Albertans.

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

### Grey Cup 2018

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past weekend Edmonton hosted the 106th Grey Cup. This great city hosted the Ottawa Redblacks from the east and, for the third straight year representing the west, the Calgary Stampeders. Thousands of CFL fans converged from across Canada, celebrating a great season with parties and events throughout the city. Jasper Avenue was hopping.

But it was the big game yesterday that so many Canadians came to see, and, Mr. Speaker, it would appear that for Calgary the third time was the charm. The Calgary Stampeders took an early lead and never let go, defeating the Redblacks 27-16. We saw history made as Calgary's Terry Williams ran 97 yards to the house to close out the second quarter, setting the record for the longest ever touchdown return in Grey Cup history. Bo Levi Mitchell was the game's most valuable player, a crowning achievement in a season that saw him the CFL's most outstanding player. From the party headquarters at the Shaw Conference Centre to a horse riding through the lobby of the Hotel Macdonald, CFL Commissioner Randy Ambrosie told us that it's clear Edmontonians know how to throw a party.

Mr. Speaker, as Calgaryans celebrate with their team, there are others who are planning the path to next year's Grey Cup, which is to be hosted in Calgary. As we look to the future, we can see bright days for the CFL and Canada's game, with talks of a 10th team, the Atlantic Schooners, that would see the league become a truly Canadian affair, with teams from coast to coast.

This weekend saw a Spanish-language broadcast of TSN's production of this CFL Grey Cup game, aired on ESPN3 in Mexico. This may lead to future CFL games being played in Mexico.

So as bright days lie ahead for the CFL, we stand today to offer heartfelt congratulations to the Calgary Stampeders on becoming the 2018 Grey Cup champions.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

### International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women

**Ms Babcock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday, November 25, was the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. Women's rights activists have observed the 25th of November as a day against gender-based violence since 1981. This date was selected to honour the Mirabal sisters, three political activists from the Dominican Republic who were brutally murdered in 1960. It took another 20 years for the UN to officially designate this important day and invite governments, international organizations, as well as NGOs to join together and organize activities designed to raise public awareness of the issue every year on this date.

Violence against women and girls is the most widespread, persistent, and devastating human rights violation around the globe. The shame, stigma, impunity, and silence that surround the issue means that this violence remains largely unreported. This has

adverse effects on women's psychological, sexual, and reproductive health and can affect women at all stages of their life. Some of our sisters are particularly vulnerable to violence: young girls, older women, women that identify as lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or intersex, migrants, refugees, indigenous women, ethnic minorities, women living with HIV, women with disabilities, just to name a few. Here in Alberta we still have some of the highest rates of gender-based violence in the country. We need to do better as a province and a society. Our government is committed to doing that work.

Mr. Speaker, this government is committed to supporting our most vulnerable. We have boosted funding for women's shelters by \$15 million to ensure that no woman fleeing violence is turned away. We have invested in more supports for survivors of sexual violence. We have invested in police and court support and crisis assistance in communities. This government has made it easier for survivors of domestic violence to get out of dangerous situations by allowing them to break residential leases without financial penalties. There are many ways in which we as a society can and must support and encourage the strength of women.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Government Policies

**Mr. van Dijken:** Mr. Speaker, this past weekend Edmonton hosted the 106th Grey Cup. Football fans from across the country were out in full force to take in the festivities, the parade, the legendary Spirit of Edmonton hospitality suite, and, of course, the game at Commonwealth Stadium, seeing the Calgary Stampeders beat the Ottawa Redblacks 27-16.

But, Mr. Speaker, in this House another game is under way, played by a team that I'll call the NDP Government Rams and Team Liberal Elite. For the NDP Rams, their slippery fingers have been continuously dropping the ball, racking up the debt, growing that points deficit, and getting scorned by the Alberta fans. The Liberals' quarterback, an elite named Trudeau, keeps intercepting pipeline plans time and time again. The Rams' defence has only been to play footsie with Trudeau, without mounting any credible defence to the quarterback's game plan to give lip service to pipelines but obstruct all efforts for any touchdowns and field goals.

The Rams' total offence has amounted to a 10-day wine ban on their affiliated NDP team in B.C. As a result, the Rams keep racking up penalties. The flags on the play fly as they keep getting caught offside with everyday Albertans. Once in a while the Rams land a first down, which results in their Premier quarterback doing a touchdown dance. The NDP Government Rams have been caught holding: holding down the economy with their carbon tax. They even got an illegal procedure call over their power purchase agreement boondoggle. If only they could land a safety, but they keep coming up short with more credit downgrades. Team NDP keeps getting called for unsportsmanlike conduct because of name-calling, even going as far as labelling opponents as sewer rats, nearly earning some members a game ejection.

Albertans love a football bandwagon, but the NDP Government Rams are a disaster. Albertans will chalk this up to experience and never jump on this NDP bandwagon ever again.

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

### Support for Seniors

**Drever:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to rise today to speak of the great work seniors do in my constituency of Calgary-Bow and around this province. Whether it is through their hard



work, volunteerism, or community involvement, seniors contribute to this province every day. In my own constituency we have formed an advocacy group made up of seniors, social workers, police, firefighters, Alberta Health Services, and my constituency office called the seniors constellations. We meet on a monthly basis to discuss issues affecting seniors in the community. On Friday over 100 people attended a workshop about safety in the home. We also discussed fraud and consumer protection. It is my privilege to know and partner with so many seniors in Calgary.

2:50

Our government invests close to \$3 billion into senior supports every year. We protected the seniors' benefit program through tough economic times. We launched a home repair program to help seniors age in place in their home and communities close to friends and family. In June we invested \$20 million in the Temple community to help provide 70 supportive units for people over 55. And in 2017 we passed important legislation through the Alberta Human Rights Act that prohibited discrimination based on age.

Mr. Speaker, I am concerned for the calls for cuts from the other side of the House. Cuts will have a direct and negative impact on our seniors. We even heard a member opposite say that it is going to hurt. Seniors have contributed so much to the success of this province, which is why I will proudly fight for them every day. I want seniors in my constituency and across this province to know that I and this government have your back.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** I recognize the Deputy Government House Leader.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to Standing Order 7(8) I'm rising to provide notice to the Assembly that the daily Routine shall extend beyond 3 p.m.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Highwood.

#### Out-of-country Health Service Reimbursement

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to address the situation that one of my constituents is facing when dealing with Alberta Health and the out-of-country health services application process. After exhausting all options for treatment in Alberta, Mr. Manchulenko, a resident of Highwood, travelled to Germany to have a 3-level M6 ADR lumbar surgery performed. As a result of this surgery Mr. Manchulenko is pain free, off medication, and has returned to work. Mike is back at work serving his community as a firefighter and putting his life on the line for all Albertans.

The surgery came at a cost of \$60,000, so, as he's entitled to, he made a claim through the out-of-country health services application process for reimbursement. Unfortunately, what should have been a clear-cut case was anything but that. Mr. Manchulenko submitted his application in September 2015, and after dealing through all bureaucratic mess, his application was ultimately denied. I've been advocating on behalf of my constituents since he submitted his application. Unfortunately, the Health minister has not stepped in to address this issue. In 2018, two and a half years after the initial application, OCHS sent a cheque for \$8,000, far less than the cost of surgery. It turns out that he will have to continue to fight to get his rightful reimbursement.

Mr. Speaker, there is no reason that this constituent of mine should have to fight for this. He is no longer a burden on the health care system, he is off medication, and he is contributing to the Alberta economy again. In fact, the cost of \$60,000 that the Alberta government is responsible for covering is far less than the cost it would have been bearing if Mr. Manchulenko did not receive the

surgery in Germany. I call on the Minister of Health to do the right thing and help him and direct her department to reimburse Mr. Manchulenko for the cost of the treatment out of country.

Thank you.

#### Notices of Motions

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

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to give oral notice of a bill for the next Order Paper, that bill being Bill 30, the Mental Health Services Protection Act, which will be sponsored by the hon. Minister of Health.

Thank you.

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

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you. This is on behalf of the Member for Calgary-Foothills. Mr. Panda is to ask the government the following question, due date 53: how many megawatt hours of coal-fired electricity has the Alberta Electric System Operator imported, broken down by month, from generators located in the state of Montana from April 1, 2016, to May 31, 2018?

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I would seek the guidance of the table officers, but I don't believe that that is a notice of motion. That will be a little while later.

#### Tabling Returns and Reports

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Mr. Speaker, I just want to table the appropriate number of copies of two letters I am in possession of, one from the mayor of Okotoks to the Minister of Service Alberta and his subsequent response to the mayor of Okotoks.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members? The Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table a letter that was written to our caucus by Dr. John T. Huang, MD. He's a select delegate for ophthalmologists and with the Alberta Medical Association.

**The Speaker:** Same subject matter? Chestermere-Rocky View.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite five copies of a package of letters written by kids who attend the Langdon and area senior high school in my riding. I'm proud to represent these kids, who are showing such an interest in civic engagement so early in life. I know that many of the students from this school have already taken the time to write the Minister of Education about their concerns.

Langdon and area is a thriving community that is focused on small-town living and a simpler way of life, where everyone knows their neighbours and kids stay out until the street lights come on. Many nights you can hear people gathering around the firepit. This community is one of the fastest growing in Alberta, with 30 per cent of its population under the age of 15. It is also only one of two communities of its size without a high school and will continue to be stretched past its limits with student growth.

I introduced this group of concerned residents earlier, who are here today to put faces to the hundreds of letters the minister has been receiving highlighting the need for this high school. I want to sincerely thank the Minister of Education today for taking the time to speak with this group earlier. I have the five requisite copies.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I believe we're at points of order. The Opposition House Leader.

### Point of Order Language Creating Disorder

**Mr. Nixon:** Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's great to be back this week. Another day, another point of order. I will try to be brief.

I rise on 23(h), (i), and (j), particularly language to create disorder, in regard to comments made by the Finance minister at the time that I called the point of order to the member who was asking the question, which escapes me at the moment, Mr. Speaker, but you probably have the Blues. My focus will be on the Finance minister.

The Finance minister very directly referred to us as drunken sailors, not that we "spend like drunken sailors" or anything like that, very directly as drunken sailors. Now a couple of things to that, Mr. Speaker. First of all, none of us are intoxicated on this side of the House; I can assure you of that. I know the hon. Finance minister probably has talked the most about his love for beer in this Assembly. I won't speak for him, but I will make it clear that we are not.

And in addition to that, most of us are not sailors either. You may have noticed that we come from a landlocked province, so sailing is not the most common hobby. In fact, I think that if we were not land locked, we would have a lot fewer problems inside this Chamber.

With that said, I can see the hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville is heckling during a point of order. That is the point. That is where this government has ended up. We continue to be in this spot. So I think the government should do the right thing, Mr. Speaker, to rise and apologize and withdraw.

**The Speaker:** Thank you. I think I've got it.  
The Deputy Government House Leader.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't think the minister was out of order in his comments. You know, the Free Dictionary online has defined the expression to spend like a drunken sailor as meaning "to spend money freely and frivolously." The minister was clearly engaging in debate about the matter of spending responsibly or not, as the case may be.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I would be quite curious and surprised to believe that the members opposite didn't have concerns with the previous government in terms of their choices, you know, of flying around Alberta as if it was a private jet. Certainly, if the sky palace wasn't spending like drunken sailors, I'm not really sure what is. The expression has been used several times in the Assembly, often by the Minister of Finance, including on October 29 and November 19, when no point was made. Curiously, Heather Forsyth used the same expression when discussing the previous government's fiscal track record during question period on March 26, 2015, when she told the Premier at that time: "I think we should make something very clear. We're in the fiscal situation because of your government spending like drunken sailors."

3:00

**The Speaker:** I think I got your message as well, hon. minister.

Member for Calgary-Hays, is there a really new – I'm prepared to make a ruling on this.

**Mr. McIver:** Yes. Two things. One, the minister referred directly to us and not through the chair, which I believe you will find to be a point of order, and, two, I differ from the House leader from the

government. The expression wasn't "spend like drunken sailors." He said: "like those drunken sailors over there" or something close to it if you have the Blues. In other words, that was directly calling a name, completely unparliamentary. The only right thing to do is to stand up, apologize, and withdraw those comments. I believe this is probably a simple one for you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Let me just read for those of you who were captured by this moment. I'm not going to read it all.

The member is right. We have Q2 update this week, and I will tell Albertans where we are with regard to the first six months of this budget year and how we're staying on budget. We're doing a better job than the drunken sailors on that side.

The Minister of Finance is normally a very gentle, respectful member of this House. I think that in an earlier comment, though, I did also hear that he made a statement about insider details. On this particular matter, again, we've talked many times: context, context, context. Yes, I have heard the phrase "drunken sailors" used in this Chamber before, but I think in this particular context it was unnecessary. I believe there was a point of order and would ask that the minister withdraw the comment.

**Ms Larivee:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, on behalf of the minister I will withdraw that comment.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

## Orders of the Day

### Written Questions

[The Acting Clerk read the following written question, which had been accepted]

### Power Purchase Agreements

Q5. Mr. Panda asked that the following question be accepted.  
As of May 31, 2018, how many power purchase agreements remain in place, and what is the expiry date of each remaining power purchase agreement?

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

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

### Montana Coal-fired Electricity

Q4. Mr. Panda asked that the following question be accepted.  
How many megawatt hours of coal-fired electricity has the Alberta Electric System Operator imported, broken down by month, from generators located in the state of Montana from April 1, 2016, to May 31, 2018?

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm disappointed the hon. Government House Leader wants to reject my question on how much coal-fired electricity is being imported from the state of Montana in the United States of America into Alberta. Now, the question of coal-fired electricity imports in light of our own coal-fired electricity phase-out was brought to my attention earlier this year by a number of Albertans. It was further made clear to me that there was something to this when during the budget estimates debate for the Department of Energy on April 9 – you can refer to *Hansard* page RS-739 – the now Minister of Service Alberta and the Member for Calgary-Currie asked the Minister of Energy:

I get questions saying that the government is buying coal power from Montana because we're phasing out our coal power. Is that true, Minister?

to which the Minister of Energy responded:

No. That's the famous Facebook false facts. Yeah, I've seen that on Facebook as well. It's talking about 196 megawatts of coal-fired electricity from Montana, and it's absolutely false. The Alberta government does not purchase coal-fired electricity from Montana under any arrangement.

That's what the minister said, Madam Speaker. The Minister of Energy went on to elaborate about the Montana Alberta Tie line.

Enbridge has said that the project was for connecting wind energy in Montana to Alberta's demand for power.

Madam Speaker, one needs to watch the words the minister has used here. The minister has used the terms "the Alberta government does not purchase coal-fired electricity," and to that, I would concur that the government does not purchase the electricity for Albertans.

But, Madam Speaker, the minister never refuted the Alberta Electric System Operator, the AESO, or Enbridge, the operators of the Montana Alberta Tie line, from purchasing coal-fired electricity from Montana. When Albertans say that Alberta is buying coal-fired power from Montana, Albertans are talking about Alberta as a whole, beyond just the government. They're talking about everything and everyone who makes up the province. The average Albertan does not know the complex terms to refer to corporate bodies like the AESO or use the legal speak the Minister of Energy used at the budget estimates. They talk about Alberta in the broadest general sense.

Hearing the minister make this assertion at the budget estimates, I investigated. I had my people call Enbridge, and Enbridge said: yes; coal-fired electricity moves across the line. The Montana Alberta Tie line has a rated capacity of 400 megawatts. Given that there's only 189 megawatts of wind power connected to this transmission line between the Canada-USA border and the substation near Great Falls, Montana, and given that on multiple occasions this year the AESO was drawing more than 189 megawatts from Montana – therefore, some of those extra megawatts had to be coming from coal-fired electricity.

On May 29, 2018, I asked the Minister of Energy in question period about the electricity coming in from Montana – it can be found on page 1275 in the *Hansard* – and the minister again demurred, saying:

It is a private contract. I can't remember the number of kilowatts. It's a very small contract between a private operator and Montana.

The minister went on:

I could delve into it and see what I could find out, but I'm guessing that when it's a private contract, it's not any business of the government.

When asked if Montana's coal-fired electricity will enjoy a prominent, low-cost place of privilege in the forthcoming Alberta capacity market, the minister said,

I appreciate the question, but it is misinformed and not totally full of facts.

I was not satisfied with the minister's answer, Madam Speaker, so I submitted this written question. If the NDP is truly serious about their climate leadership plan, the importation of coal-fired electricity to Alberta represents a serious piece of carbon leakage to Montana to backstop an electricity system that is going for 30 per cent renewables. We know the wind doesn't always blow and the sun doesn't always shine. That's why baseload from generators of coal and natural gas is needed. So how about it? How much coal-fired electricity are we importing from Montana?

When AESO appeared before the Public Accounts Committee on the 6th of November, 2018, page PA-760 of *Hansard*, the question

was put to Mr. Michael Law, the senior vice-president and chief operating officer, who responded:

Electricity flows that occur on interties are managed by the Alberta Electric System Operator, but we do not have ownership of or have any insight into the origin of those original flows. So we do not track the source of those power flows, whether they are from renewables or from coal.

3:10

I would submit to you, Madam Speaker, that as much as the government of Alberta does not know and as much as the AESO does not know, at least the AESO has those commercial relationships with Montana's equivalent independent system operator and Enbridge and could at least make the ask for the information. This is important. We are shutting down our own coal-fired power plants. Westmoreland Coal, the U.S. company, was not compensated by the NDP government, and they have now filed a NAFTA, which is USMCA now, challenge for \$500 million, affecting taxpayers across all of Canada because of this NDP government's action. Not only Albertans but Canadians from coast to coast to coast are going to pay, or at least they're on the hook, for this \$500 million.

Meanwhile, in December 2017 a 60 million tonne expansion of Westmoreland Coal's Rosebud mine was approved in Montana in order to serve the 2,100-megawatt Colstrip power plant in eastern Montana. Madam Speaker, that is a 2,100-megawatt coal-fired power plant, which is a size of significance, and they're adding 19 more years of coal mining to fuel a power plant that is bigger than any power plant in Alberta. You know what? Actually, the governor of that state of Montana is a Democrat. He's not even Republican, and they're building such a massive coal-fired power plant. It's not fair to close our mines and plants and then create carbon leakage to Montana and create a fly ash shortage in Alberta's construction sector.

That's why this written question is so important. I hope I made my case and ask the hon. Government House Leader or the minister to reconsider the advice they have received.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I don't mean to be argumentative, but I think this question portrays a fundamental lack of understanding of how Alberta's electrical system works. All of the data clearly shows that the overwhelming majority of power consumed in Alberta was and is generated here compared to overall Alberta demand. In 2016 Alberta's grid was a net importer of only three megawatts on average over all the hours of the year. At peak times private operators, not government, to be clear, but private operators in Alberta, import power. They do so to ensure that Albertans have a reliable source of electricity. But let me repeat: all of the data clearly shows that the overwhelming majority of power consumed in Alberta was generated here.

The source of the power consumed in Alberta is almost wholly determined by the mix of sources in Alberta's electricity system. Madam Speaker, the Alberta Electric System Operator, or AESO, tracks the amount of electricity imported into Alberta from other jurisdictions month to month. It also tracks the amount of electricity exported by Alberta to other jurisdictions. That includes imports and exports between Montana and Alberta. AESO can tell us, for example, that in September of 2016 private operators exported 9,969 megawatts to Montana but that they imported 7,094 megawatts from Montana in the same month, almost 3,000 megawatts less. What AESO does not do, however, is track every individual electron of electricity generated in Montana that might

subsequently be exported to Alberta because, of course, to do so is impossible and to attempt to do so would be absurd. There is simply no way of distinguishing one electron from another in terms of whether it was generated by coal versus wind versus hydro versus gas.

Before the opposition goes further into undermining trade with our neighbours to the south, let's be clear. Montana has all of these sources in their electricity supply. But the important point here is that it isn't how the system works. To differentiate the source of electrons coming into Alberta in that way would require a separate line from each facility in Montana to come to Alberta separately. That would, of course, be extremely expensive for Alberta's consumers. I certainly hope that this is not the vision of a future that the opposition has for our utility consumers, but at this point it's not surprising.

In 2013 our first international intertie was built when Enbridge invested in a line between Montana and Alberta. They said explicitly that they were building the intertie in order to bring low-cost excess wind energy from Montana into Alberta. In fact, I'll read from their corporate social responsibility report. "Our first power transmission project – the 300-[megawatt] Montana-Alberta Tie-Line – went into service in 2013, supporting the electric transmission needs of new wind power facilities in north-central Montana and strong power demand in Alberta."

In fact, because coal power in the United States is no longer competitive against lower cost, cleaner gas power, Montana's coal power has fallen in recent years. Indeed, the proportion of its power from coal has been lower than that in Alberta. There is no other line from Montana into Alberta.

We have seen rounds and rounds of rhetoric from the opposition claiming that Alberta is importing coal power from Montana, and now, apparently distrusting Enbridge, they want an accounting of exactly how much coal power we have imported. I'm not sure why they are so keen to argue with Enbridge's previous statements on that matter, but regardless the simple answer is that this is just not how the system works. Even if we had all that info at our fingertips, I'm not sure that it's a precedent we want to set. Imagine if other jurisdictions started demanding a specific accounting of exactly which facility supplied the fuel for a local gas station or exactly which farmer's wheat was used to bake a particular loaf of bread.

In closing, Madam Speaker, I'm sorry, but the information the opposition is seeking is impossible to provide. Therefore, we have no choice but to deny their request.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Yes, I'd like to speak in favour of this question here from my hon. colleague. I think it's actually very important to know how many megawatt hours of electricity are coming from coal-fired generators in the state of Montana. We know that there is power crossing the border – and that's fine – but I think it's important that we have that knowledge of what is coming from coal-fired generators down in Montana.

Obviously, this government brought in the carbon tax and has heavily taxed the coal that's being burned in coal-fired generators in Alberta. They've also of course accelerated the shutdown of coal-fired generating plants, and it's cost Albertans over a billion dollars to phase out the coal. If we have a situation here where we're shutting down coal-fired generating in Alberta but buying coal-fired generated electricity from Montana, I think Albertans deserve to know how much that is.

I note that the minister just finished speaking about it, saying that we can't tell how much is coming in or out or where it's coming from or anything. I don't know. I would think that these generating plants actually have some sort of meter to measure what's going out. If you have a meter to see what's going out and you have a bill going to somebody that has to buy that power, I would think that it should be relatively easy to calculate.

It has nothing to do with, as she mentioned, undermining trade. I mean, it's absurd to suggest that this is undermining trade. This is simply a matter of getting the facts for Albertans, and I think Albertans deserve to know what is coming out of Montana coal-fired generators.

You know, we've seen here where Westmoreland Coal was not compensated by the NDP government and has now filed a NAFTA challenge for \$500 million. That's affecting taxpayers from all across Canada, Madam Speaker. I mean, the whole situation that this government has created around coal-fired generating in Alberta by the early shutdown of these coal-fired generating plants is costing taxpayers billions of dollars. I think that why it's so important to have this information is because of the cost that Alberta has burdened taxpayers with with this early shutdown of the coal-fired generating plants.

We know that some of the plants were about to be – you know, their lifespan was to run out anyways, and the plan with the federal government was to wait for their timeline to run out anyways. That wouldn't have cost taxpayers any money. But, of course, this government decided to take some of our newest coal-fired generating plants and shut them down early so that the companies would lose money, the companies that had in good faith built these coal-fired generating plants. Obviously, not being able to recover their input costs, their investment costs, they needed to be compensated, and of course, because of this government's actions, taxpayer money has had to go to these coal-fired generators.

3:20

Now, Madam Speaker, it seems like maybe the government thinks this is some sort of burden or something, but I think that maybe there's a problem with transparency here. I think they probably do not want to admit how much is being bought from coal-fired generators in the U.S. I know the minister talked about how the net exchange isn't that much, but if the net isn't that much, that's somewhat irregardless if we're buying massive amounts of coal-fired generated electricity, bringing that into Alberta at certain times of the day or at certain times of the month or whatever. Even though there's electricity going back, that's irregardless. The fact remains that we need to know how much coal-fired generated electricity is coming into Alberta, and I don't think that's too much to ask. Obviously, we need a way to have a steady supply of power. If we have to get that from Montana, then I guess that's the situation, but we need to know where that power is being generated in Montana. We don't want to see the people of Alberta and the companies of Alberta out of power at any point. We want reliability, and reliability is important, obviously, in the electricity market.

Madam Speaker, this is a simple question. Like I say, I have to believe that anybody that's selling electricity has some way to gauge it, some way, some metering system to figure out exactly what's going back and forth and where it's coming from. It isn't like, you know, there's wind power generation in Montana and coal-fired generating power in Montana and they just push it all together in one big lump sum and then send it across the border without metering it until it comes together. I'm sure it's metered as it comes off each plant. That's the only thing that makes sense.

This government has caused an enormous amount of hardship in Alberta because of their power boondoggles. What's happened,

Madam Speaker, is that the first time the government brought anything to do with electricity before this Legislature, they messed it up from the start, and then ever since then they've been trying to play catch-up and trying to patch up the mistakes that they've made all the way along. Each one of these mistakes has cost Albertans lots of money in electricity, like I say, over a billion dollars in the coal phase-out alone. Now, of course, we've got a NAFTA challenge for \$500 million because of this government's actions, and we're closing out near-new coal plants and paying billions of dollars out to those companies to shut down these plants. In return, these companies either have to retrofit or they have to build natural gas generators so that we can backstop the wind and solar.

Madam Speaker, none of this makes any sense. Again, this government has over and over again been making huge mistakes when it comes to electricity in Alberta, and each of these mistakes – I mean, they put a price cap on electricity, 6.8 cents a kilowatt hour, when electricity was 3 cents a kilowatt hour. Obviously, they knew there were some problems coming, and after three and a half years we know who's responsible for these problems. This government seems to want to blame previous governments for everything, but after three and a half years sooner or later they're going to have to take responsibility for their own actions. I think it's time that this government accepts responsibility for what they've done and admits that they've made huge mistakes when it comes to electricity in Alberta, and these mistakes, of course, cost Albertans billions of dollars.

Again, I don't think there's any problem with the government being able to get this broken down so that we can find out about this electricity from Montana, where it's being generated. Again, it only makes sense that these generators have meters, and somebody has to be keeping track of how much electricity is going back and forth. The minister used some numbers, even, on how much electricity is going back and forth. Now it's just a matter of breaking down where it's coming from.

Again, I think this question should be answered by the government. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Chestermere-Rocky View.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm very, very grateful to the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills for bringing this forward. I think it's probably worth a little bit of a trip down memory lane, and the hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky had already started us on that, but let's just start with a couple of things. This government changed us to a capacity market. That was their decision, and as we went through the entire process, all of us on this side, in fact all Albertans could see this intense puzzle being put together that started initially with the destruction of the system that we already had. One of those was getting rid of the electricity police that actually monitors this in the first place, the MSA.

Even more importantly, when we skip ahead a couple of months, a couple of many, many late nights of discussion and debate around this issue, we found out that the taxpayer, the ratepayer in Alberta was on the hook for a grand total, at least at this point, of \$4 billion because of the boondoggle of this government. Putting all of the other things aside, that in itself – you know, I just had a school group in here today from Langdon looking to build a school, that they have been working on for the last four years, to find out why they're not at the top of the list, why they're on the unfunded list, and why they keep getting moved around. Well, I can easily tell you that when you have a boondoggle of that level, there are going to be people that suffer. Langdon is one of them.

The rate riders that were on the electricity grid as it was before for the people helped to mitigate any issues that were going on in

the electricity market, and then the government brought in a 6.8-cent cap that hides absolutely everything that's going on, and I can guarantee you that that's why the minister cannot give us any numbers. We have electricity right now going back and forth on a tie-in that has existed for some time. It's not like this is new information.

You know, what I find absolutely mind-boggling is that we shut down our own coal-fired, but now we're buying even more from the United States. How is that possible? We shut down our own excellent, high-functioning, extremely efficient coal operations here, creating a \$4 billion boondoggle to the ratepayer, and now we can't get a straight answer on how much we're paying for coal-fired electricity that's coming from Montana into the province of Alberta, Madam Speaker. How is that even remotely okay? All we're asking for is to have some clarity on how it's broken down month to month so that the ratepayer understands what's going on.

We've had money that had been paid to the Balancing Pool right off the bat, \$750 million to the Balancing Pool, because of the mess-up from the government on the PPAs, because they didn't read their binders when the information came to them, or at least that's what was told to us in here. Then all of a sudden the Alberta ratepayer is on the hook for that mistake, and now, when we're asking for a clarification, really, in all honesty, a little bit of transparency, we're being told – and I'll try and quote the minister here – that the power is to be determined and that there is a distrust with Enbridge, if I understood correctly. Maybe she can correct me if I misunderstood that, but that was what I understood.

Hopefully, she'll take a chance to correct me on that, but I'm curious how it is that Enbridge could have a relationship with the government, then, and not be able to produce numbers on the amount of electricity that is coming into our province so that we have an understanding of what it is that we're paying for. There's a mandated 30 per cent of renewable energy, they've phased out coal-fired electricity, they're paying out practically brand new coal-fired facilities for \$1.1 billion, and the minister had said how we have to buy from the United States at certain times because of the way the electricity boosts up during the day. Okay. That's probably true. However, is there a possibility that we could have provided that for ourselves had we not phased out our coal-fired in the first place? It's just a question.

I just find the whole thing ironic, that we're buying coal-fired from somebody. Does anybody else in here find that ironic, Madam Speaker? Even to say the words out loud seems absolutely disastrous, and I think anybody who's listening to this is just really questioning the ability of this government to make decisions about the energy sector at all.

3:30

While we're on the subject of Enbridge, I have another question, not related to this, necessarily, about the pipeline. I'm curious about that pipeline. Maybe the minister could fill us in on that, too. That pipeline is weeks away from being done. I'm just curious how that tie-in is going and when that capacity is going to be online. We haven't heard about that either on line 3, the Enbridge line 3. Just curious. Just thought I'd bring it up since we're talking about Enbridge. It'd be nice to know that that capacity is actually going to be available when the government says it is. But then again, maybe we're just not supposed to ask those questions. Evidently, it doesn't really matter how much electricity is going from one end to the other because it's all hidden under this 6.8-cent cap on electricity, and the rest of us are supposed to just sit here and trust the government that they've got our backs when it comes to electricity. Good luck.

When you take away signals from a market, a market will become distorted as a result of not getting those signals. What happens when you put a cap on a capacity market like this is that you remove the signals from the industry as to how they're supposed to react. It doesn't matter whether it's renewables. It doesn't matter whether it's coal-fired, cogeneration, or any of those things. When you remove the signals, the market is not able to respond.

When a minister in this Legislature is unable to provide numbers on a piece of infrastructure that provides electricity to this province and is not able to update the House, which is basically all that the hon. member is asking for, it leads us to great concern that the government doesn't know what they're doing. It's a simple request for an update. I could understand it if the minister said, "Give me a week" or "Give me a couple of days; I'll get back to you with that." That would have been a reasonable response, very reasonable. But, unfortunately, even with having given the question, with giving time, with trying to be understanding about what is going on – I'll tell you that Albertans don't get it. They are getting their bills right now. They don't get it. They don't understand. Especially – let me tell you – when people start finding out that electricity, coal-fired electricity, is coming from Montana and that we're paying for that to boost our energy, that supposedly has a mandate to bring on renewables that were supposed to cover the amount that was going to be lost by coal-fired in the first place, all of us are sitting here going: what? Honestly, Madam Speaker. I could go on.

You know, the government is planning to tender in June 2018 to procure over half of its energy from solar power. I've said this a hundred times in here: I love solar power. I have 40 panels on my house. I think it's fantastic. I love it. However, the way that it works is that when my solar power panels aren't working because the sun is not shining, I am dependent upon the grid. The sun doesn't always shine, and the wind does not always blow. And according to the Canada Solar Industries Association solar comes in at 6.0 cents per kilowatt hour. Isn't that interesting? That's below the cap.

Interestingly, the Independent Power Producers Society of Alberta indicates that the 2016 wholesale price of electricity averaged at 1.7 cents per kilowatt hour. If I'm not mistaken, there is a payment that has to happen when we're below that 6.8 cents. We are dinged for that. The Alberta ratepayer pays the difference when it does not go to that 6.8-cent cap. The minister had mentioned that before when it was coming in at 3.7 cents per kilowatt hour. I think it was – what? – about eight months ago. It was some sort of great buy-in into the grid. That meant that the rest of the grid was being subsidized for that 6.8 cents, but you wouldn't know that, Madam Speaker, because it's hidden under the cap. So I would really, really love an explanation. How is it that this government, first of all – I mean, there's an election coming up fairly soon here. I'd like to know how the government is going to be able to explain the PPA debacle, \$4 billion of unnecessary spending because they messed up the file. How are they going to explain it?

Then, on top of that, I mean, I'd love to know how the folks from Hanna feel, the ones who lost their jobs because of the coal mine phase-outs.

**Mr. Nixon:** Out in the cold.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Out in the cold, right? How would they feel knowing that a percentage of our energy in this province is being boosted through coal-fired coming from our friends to the south? Just curious.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other members wishing to speak?

The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to speak to WQ 4. The whole issue here is that we would like to know: how many megawatt hours of coal-fired electricity has the Alberta Electric System Operator imported from outside of Alberta, specifically from the state of Montana?

Madam Speaker, this government sometimes makes some very poor decisions. I know that if there is one constituency in the province of Alberta that has been hit by those poor decisions when it comes to electricity, it's my constituency. Presently in my constituency I have both Westmoreland Coal as well as the Genesee power plant. Should I be successful in running in the next election, my new constituency of Drayton Valley-Devon will also include the Sundance and the Keephills power plants along with the coal mining that goes along with those power plants. This question is us asking the government if they can provide us with the numbers to try to explain how much of the electricity that is coming into Alberta is from the Montana-Alberta tie-line. Enbridge are the owners of the Alberta-Montana tie-line. We need to be able to understand and we want to be able to confirm how much coal-fired electricity moves across this intertie.

Now, we know that about 189 megawatts of wind power are installed along the Montana-Alberta tie-line. We also know that with the 30 per cent renewable energy target, there is also going to be solar. Madam Speaker, the fact that we have renewables and solar and wind provides some real problems for the province of Alberta because neither of those are baseload energy. When the wind doesn't blow, wind does not create electricity. When the sun doesn't shine, the solar panels do not create electricity. We find ourselves in a situation in Alberta where this government has actually refused to look at alternatives that would actually be renewable and baseload and, instead, by looking at solar and wind and phasing out the coal-burning power plants in my constituency, have forced us into going towards a capacity market where we have peaker power plants. We pay companies not to generate electricity but for the capacity to generate electricity when the solar and the wind are not producing electricity.

Madam Speaker, in my constituency they struggled when this government said that we need to phase out the best coal-burning electrical generating plants almost anywhere in the world because of health concerns. Yet when I went to the West Central Airshed Society and I looked up the facts and figures, they have had a continuous monitoring of air in my constituency for over 30 years. In that 30-year period of time we have quintupled the amount of oil and gas and coal activity in my constituency, yet we have today better air quality than we had 30 years ago. The reasoning that they gave us for phasing out the coal-burning power plants was specious.

Madam Speaker, I have talked to many constituents in my constituency that happened to bump into a couple of German engineers. Why was Germany sending engineers into my constituency? Because Germany is moving away from wind and solar. They're going back to coal. Where do they go to find the cleanest burning coal plants in the world? To Alberta, to my constituency.

**3:40**

We find ourselves in this Keystone Kop operation where we now have a Montana-Alberta tie-line that is rated at 300 megawatts of capacity, where 189 megawatts of wind power could potentially be going into that line, but because it is renewable and because it is not baseload, when it is not producing, we now have to go and get electricity from someplace else. And where do we go? Not to my constituency, not to Alberta-created electricity, not to the cleanest coal-burning facilities in North America. No. We couldn't do that. We couldn't create the jobs here in Alberta. We couldn't maintain

the tax load and the tax base for my constituency. No. We go to Montana.

I just don't understand it. When I go to my constituency and I tour the Westmoreland Coal facility and I talk to the people that have got good, high-paying, quality jobs at Westmoreland Coal – and they're now looking at those jobs being phased out – and then they ask me why it is that this government would prefer to pay Montanans rather than Albertans, it makes no sense.

Importing coal-fired electricity to Alberta represents a serious piece of what we call carbon leakage to Montana. In other words, Madam Speaker, we have a situation where, under the guise of environmental arguments, trying to deal with the climate issue – everyone in this House, I believe, supports the whole concept, the idea of climate change. We don't understand how this government believes that climate change ends at the Alberta border, that there's this big wall, that it doesn't make any difference whether it's produced in Montana or Ontario or China or India or Japan. We have the capacity to create electricity and to do it in the most environmentally friendly way of anywhere in the world when it comes to coal, but we choose to go down to Montana.

They didn't even consult with the county of Parkland. I talked with the mayor of the county of Parkland, and he explained to me that the changeover from coal to natural gas is going to attack the tax base of the county of Parkland by between 25 and 30 per cent and that they never had one conversation with this government.

Madam Speaker, what is as perplexing to me is when I realize that there are actually renewable sources of electricity that we could be pursuing that are actually baseload energy. I know that I have talked with one company that is working in Germany, that's in Japan, that's in Holland, that wanted to start deep-well, geothermal electricity, wanted to start it in my constituency yet could not get the ear of this government. They have identified 25,000 abandoned and orphaned wells that they believe will provide the heat and will provide the electricity for this province, which alone would meet our 30 per cent renewable rates, yet this government would not talk to them.

Madam Speaker, it is not an unreasonable question to ask. How much of the electricity going through this Montana-Alberta tie-line is based on coal? The minister says that it's impossible to be able to provide.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, I've had a request to briefly revert to Introduction of Guests. We need unanimous consent. Is anyone opposed to that request?

[Unanimous consent granted]

### Introduction of Guests (reversion)

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

**Mrs. Schreiner:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am pleased to introduce to you and through you guests from the Alberta Federation of Rural Electrification Associations, who are here today in support of my motion to promote long-term viability and sustainability of REAs and other co-operatively organized utility associations. The AFREA represents member-owned co-operatives that distribute electricity throughout rural Alberta. These co-ops have distributed electricity for over 75 years. Here today are President Dan Astner, Vice-president Charles Newell, and Vice-president Robert Peyton. The board has been instrumental in bringing the important topic of REA sustainability to my attention.

Also joining us today is CEO Al Nagel, who has worked in the electricity industry for over 50 years. Al has been with the AFREA for the past 10 years. I ask my guests to now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

### Debate Continued

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other members wishing to speak to the question? The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise this afternoon to address this issue that I think is a pertinent question raised by the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills. Now, as I listen to the banter back and forth, obviously when you have that opportunity, you have the opportunity of being able to think about what the questions are that haven't been answered. One of the comments that was made by the hon. Minister of Energy was that she just had no way of knowing. The first thing that comes to my mind is that – and I think that my hon. colleague has stated it correctly – well, this is not a Mickey Mouse organization. These are multimillion, hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of investments. You don't think that they know exactly where those electrons are being sold to or being created from? It's absolutely ridiculous and ludicrous to think that that would be an answer from a minister of the Crown.

Now, I guess the next question that I think would probably be asked is: if the minister is going to at least establish that she can't figure out whether or not it's coming from renewables or from coal-fired, Madam Speaker, when are we receiving those electrons? When are we receiving that top-up that we need? I can guarantee you that if we're receiving it in the evening or after the sun goes down, we can certainly rule out that it's coming from solar. On this side of the House we're getting lots of yeas; on the other side, silence. That I think is maybe the start. Now, remember, these questions were provided to the minister days in advance so that we could have an answer. Her answer was: I just don't know. You know, it could have been: stay tuned; we'll get back to you. I mean, that seems to be the answer that we usually receive. But this was: no, we don't know.

3:50

Now, the other question that I was thinking about is: whatever that timeline is that we're receiving it, we're getting that top-up, is it feasible to think that if we can't actually receive those electrons, that electricity, at that time from our renewables, is it conceivable to think that we would be able to receive electricity from Montana's renewables? I think that it makes sense that if we can't get it done with our renewables here, it is pretty sure that they can't get it done with their renewables down there as well. Again, the sun doesn't always shine. The wind doesn't always blow.

We get back to the central question. The reason why we're asking this question – and we've dug deep into this before – is that this government has made a policy choice. Now, hindsight is always 20/20 vision. We're starting to see the outcome of those policy decisions. The outcome is that they have decided that coal-fired is not something that they want to do here. That's their decision. They're in government. But they don't get to choose the outcomes, and the outcome is that that baseload has been retired way too soon, and because of that we're having to buy from Montana.

Because they don't get to choose the policies for Montana, they don't get to choose whether or not those electrons created down there are from coal or from renewables. This is a decision that they've made, and they need to own it. This is what we're getting to, Madam Speaker. In the event that the NDP government could

dictate to Montana and say to them, that no, Montana has to follow their decree about how wrong coal-fired generation is, then we could guarantee and say: "You know what? Carbon leakage: we're going to fix it. In fact, we do it all over the place; in China, in Germany, in Europe, wherever they're creating electricity through coal-fired." But they cannot do that. We always get back to this issue, which is that we create in Canada 1.9 per cent of the GHG emissions throughout this world, and that's supposed to be leadership that we're going to be able to pull back some of our, well, get rid of our coal-fired, to tell you the truth.

But what they cannot control is what other jurisdictions are doing, and now we're seeing that this not very well-thought-out policy and direction is now coming back to haunt them, and that's why we're asking the question. That's why my hon. colleague has asked the question. He recognizes that there is a flaw in the way that they think, a flaw in their strategy. That is that they cannot control whether or not it's going to be coal-fired generation down in the States, and therefore if we have to buy that – we've punished our people from Hanna. We've punished our Albertans from Alberta, and we're in a situation now where we're rewarding the people from Montana that made a different policy decision. That is something that this government has to take responsibility for, and that's what we're trying to establish here, Madam Speaker.

Because of the policy decision they made, they have hurt Albertans. They've hurt communities that have these coal-fired plants and they've shut them down, and because they shut them down, they're trying to hide that under the 6.8 cents, which my hon. colleague talked about so eloquently. Yet their answer, Madam Speaker, is that they have no way of telling? Again, the transparency. This government said that they were going to be more transparent, that they were going to be the transparent ones. That is something that this government – and I'm not from that industry, Madam Speaker, but intuitively I can't understand how they could say that we wouldn't know where those electrons are coming from. It doesn't make sense.

Again, I ask the question. It only makes sense intuitively that if we can't produce it up here with our renewables, wind and solar, when that power is coming in here, I guarantee you that it cannot be coming from renewables down in the States, down in Montana. So if we've established that, then the government needs to own up to it and say: "You know what? We probably didn't think this thing through. We probably didn't realize that this was going to be the outcome and that we're going to have to start buying coal-fired from other producers. In reality our program is not working." Just own up to it. If they've made a mistake, own up to it. I actually haven't heard them ever do that in three and a half years, Madam Speaker, not once where they own up to it.

What we're talking about now in terms of the macro aspects of this is our electricity prices skyrocketing. You're not buying that coal-fired electricity at 1.7 cents a kilowatt hour. You're buying it at premium price because we can't do it here; therefore, they're going to charge us premium price. It is a premium dollar that we have to pay for that electron to come up here even though we have the intertie here. It's still a premium dollar we have to pay because we could not supply it ourselves. When supply and demand don't meet, the equilibrium price goes up. So we're in a situation now where not only are they saying, "Well, we're going to have to buy coal-fired," which we disagree with here, but they're going to also pay premium dollar for that coal-fired because they shut down the baseload of Alberta, which is coal-fired.

Once again, if this government has made a policy decision, own up to it, take responsibility for it, and tell Albertans that you're sorry. That would be the responsible thing to do. I have not heard that from this government, not even once. Now, the sad thing about

that is that we see the same kind of issue plaguing every decision this government makes. It chases away businesses, private-sector investment; \$36 billion, according to the Conference Board of Canada, left this province in the first two years.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other members wishing to speak? Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. Dreesen:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Again, as was mentioned before, it's a very simplistic, straightforward question from my colleague from Calgary-Foothills of just having an understanding of the megawatt hours of coal-fired electricity that's being imported from the United States. It's a very simplistic, easy answer. It's just on the NEB website that 47 per cent of our electricity comes from coal here in Alberta, 40 per cent natural gas, 7 per cent wind, 3 per cent hydro, 3 per cent biomass, so there are measurements. It's simplistic. There are great people that work in the Department of Energy. It has great employees. They do a great job of measuring this type of information.

The fact that the NDP – I'm assuming that they are hiding away from giving out this information due to embarrassment. I think it was talked about earlier that, again, the billion-dollar boondoggle that they've had to pay out for phasing out coal plants was a mistake, and we're seeing that now, where we're importing a lot of electricity from the United States. They should just take ownership, Madam Speaker, for that bad decision. Ultimately, when you look at the United States, it's a boon for them. They're quite happy that they get to export electricity coming up into Alberta.

I would rather and I would assume that everyone in this Assembly would rather that our electricity comes from Alberta resources and from Alberta plants with Alberta workers and our jobs here in Alberta. It makes no sense that we would have to import coal-fired electricity from somewhere else when in Alberta we're blessed. We sit on a massive, huge coal bed. We're one of the richest coal areas in the world, and it's just mind boggling, Madam Speaker, why we're actually having to do this. Even in my riding, one of the major roads is called the Coal Trail. Alberta has had a great history of using coal. Again, today we use a lot of coal, and we'll use a lot of coal tomorrow as well. But it's unfortunate that the NDP decided to make this decision.

Again, the \$1.1 billion that they spent to phase out our perfectly good coal-powered plants: it was for an ideology, Madam Speaker. It ultimately made no sense. I would hope that the NDP could see the errors of their ways on this, at least give the information that, again, my good friend from Calgary-Foothills asked for, which is: how much coal-fired electricity is actually coming from the United States? I would hope that through this discussion her colleagues might be able to even encourage her to actually provide this information because I think it makes all of them look like they're hiding from something, and that's unfortunate. I don't think that that is something the members opposite actually want to have done. So I hope that they can come to their senses, Madam Speaker.

I appreciate this opportunity. Thank you.

4:00

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other members wishing to speak? Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre. [interjection]

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I see the hon. member from – I don't know what riding, to be honest, but she seems very excited to hear me talk, which is great. Hopefully, I won't disappoint.

Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to rise and speak to the hon. member's question. I think it was a very reasonable



question. I think my caucus members have articulated some pretty good arguments about why the question should be answered. I thank the hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, who I think in a matter of moments just here in the Chamber was able to find out some of the answer to the question just by using Google. Google is a wonderful thing.

But I don't think it is unreasonable for the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills, who, by the way, is the Energy critic, the shadow minister for Energy, inside this Legislative Assembly, to ask a question. The government's key piece of policy and decision-making process in their time in government in Edmonton is to make decisions that certainly impacted the electricity industry, particularly around coal-fired electricity providers. The fact that we now find out that despite the fact that we see communities like Hanna decimated and other communities in our province go through significant hardship as a result of that decision, we in Alberta are still getting electricity from coal-fired sources despite the fact that basically the whole government's position is that we could not do that any more and it would not work for their environmental agenda, which was the point of carbon leakage that we have expressed in this Assembly.

Now, again, the question is reasonable, and it is a pattern with this government of not answering reasonable questions. As you know, repeatedly I as well as several other colleagues in this place have asked some simple questions about the fact that the government's budget was based on three pipelines being built. Later on they said that it would be okay as long as two of the three pipelines were built. We now know that Keystone XL is gone. We should know that because the Premier was against Keystone from the very beginning. Trans Mountain, the pipeline that they promised would be built, in fact even had celebrations saying that it was a done deal, we now know is on the ropes and very unlikely to be built.

**An Hon. Member:** Spiked the football.

**Mr. Nixon:** Yeah. Spiked the football on first down or – sorry – had a touchdown celebration because they got a first down, as the hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock said today in his statement, which was a great statement and a great point.

When you ask the government, who has lost two pipelines – their entire budget is based on those pipelines being built and based on Alberta oil, quite frankly, being sold for a considerable amount more than it is now. I'm not sure. The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills would probably know the difference between the Finance minister's projections and where we are at right now, but it's significant. It's – what? – about \$30?

**Mr. Panda:** Easily.

**Mr. Nixon:** Easily \$30. Maybe a \$40 difference.

So you ask the Finance minister, who's in charge of our finances: can you stand up and explain to us how that will change your projections, how that will change our deficit, how it will change how much debt Albertans will be on the hook for? He has still not been able to answer that question the entire fall sitting. That's the Finance minister. Now you have the Energy minister, who can't answer a simple question. I actually suspect she can answer the question. I think she's capable of it. That's not my point. My point is that she will not answer the question in the Assembly.

I think Albertans have to be starting to ask themselves: why? Why does this government continue to hide facts from the people of Alberta? The government made a decision to shut down, as the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon pointed out, some of the

cleanest coal-fired generators in the world, if not the cleanest, made that decision, left those communities and the people that are employed in that industry hanging, and then has electricity coming into the market from other coal-fired sources. It's reasonable for Albertans to know that and how much that is. It's a reasonable conversation for this Chamber to have.

But when it comes to the NDP government of the day, they clearly keep showing over and over that being reasonable is just not how they're going to operate. They're not interested in being reasonable, Madam Speaker. They're not interested, certainly, in reasonable questions. Anybody who's ever watched question period of late in this place will be able to testify to that. Today was another example: one reasonable question after another, very simple questions about budget and statistical questions along those lines from the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition. Each time the Deputy Premier got up and did not answer the question, in fact, would not allow the Finance minister to answer the questions about his own budget and his own projections and instead had to answer for him and then gave partisan attacks instead of being able to answer the question.

It's because, as I've said – and I know you know, Madam Speaker – this government can't rely on or defend their record. They can't defend their record. Instead, they will hide things from Albertans. This is another example. Now, I don't blame them for not wanting to talk about this, quite frankly. I think that if we were in government and we had chosen, which we would not have, to go through the process that they did, to just suddenly and rapidly shut down an entire industry and wipe out entire towns in our province and decimate families, we certainly would not want to rise and then point out to them: "Oops. Sorry. We did that, but actually we haven't combatted emissions on the coal side because we still have coal burning."

It's exactly what we said would happen. The jobs left our province because of the carbon tax. We're still creating on the global scale, on this macro issue the same amount of emissions because other jurisdictions are burning coal still. I know that it frustrates the hon. members, but the big neighbour to our south, the United States of America, doesn't have a carbon tax or those types of things. They're not playing by the same rules. That's our biggest competitor and our biggest trading partner. Their most greenest state – most greenest state – Washington, twice now in a referendum has had a carbon tax defeated. If Washington state can't even get a carbon tax in the United States, no state is going to get a carbon tax in the United States.

This government continues to send our industry to have to compete on a global scale with one hand tied behind their back. Emissions continue to still go up or stay the same as they are, maybe lower here. Maybe. We don't know that because there's no reporting mechanism for this government because that's another thing they hide, as the Auditor General pointed out.

Now you've got a government who will do anything to avoid being accountable for their record. So the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills comes and asks a simple, well-researched question – a well-researched question – and the Energy minister can't even be bothered to stand up and answer it in any reasonable way, says that she can't track it, and then launches into a partisan rant. The first clue of politics, for anybody who's followed it for a long time, is that once a government can't even stand up in the Assembly that they hold a majority in and brag about their record or show off their record, that probably means that they have been a complete and utter failure on that issue.

If this is not happening and if this is not a big deal – the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills has not said that he knows for sure; it's why he's asking the question – then the government would be excited to answer it inside this Assembly. Instead, I suspect his

point has been proven. They ran away and would not answer the question, would not be accountable to the people of Alberta. That's who they're avoiding. Madam Speaker, they often forget that when we rise in this place, we rise on behalf of 50,000 or 60,000 people that want a question answered, each and every one of us, just like them. That is our responsibility. When they refuse to answer that question, they're refusing to answer the people of Alberta, because our job as representatives is to ask questions.

The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler has a community inside his constituency that has been absolutely decimated by the policies of this government. Then they find out now that the same product that they produced is probably still being used to produce electricity that we're burning in this province, but the Energy minister cannot be bothered to answer. It's disappointing. It's ridiculous.

As I said before, Madam Speaker, I don't care about the reputation of this government. This government has blown their reputation, and shortly they will face the boss at the ballot box, and I suspect that the boss will fire them. But while they have done that, while they have destroyed their reputation, they have hurt the very people that we were sent here to protect. It's shameful. It's ridiculous, quite frankly. Again, the ministers should take the time and do their job and answer a simple question, because either they can't answer it or they're avoiding answering it. Either way, that's wrong, that's not their role, and it's disappointing.

4:10

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other members wishing to speak?

The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills to close debate.

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to thank all of my colleagues on this side of the House who tried again because – if you look at this, I brought this up at the budget estimate stage, asked those questions. No answers. I asked the same question again in QP, and the minister didn't answer those questions, and that's why I gave it by writing and asking a written question and asked this. Probably today – how many of us spoke here? – eight members of the opposition spoke in this House again asking the same question. Is it really that difficult?

Madam Speaker, we are in 2018. It's not that difficult to identify the electrons that flow through that tie-in line. If there is a will, there is a way – I always say that; my dad used to say it – but they don't want to. Why? Because they want to hide that information, because they implemented job-killing policies in Alberta because of their ideological reasons. Now they realize their mistake. The reason they banned coal-fired electricity in Alberta is to reduce emissions whereas just south of the border the electricity is flying through this tie-in line generated through the same source, which is coal-fired. The government has no answers, so they're trying to hide this information, but at some point the truth will come out.

Albertans are realizing that this government has devastated Albertans and Alberta economically because of their ideological policies. It's Whac-A-Mole policy, we call it: to fix one policy, then they have to bring in another policy. To support their climate change leadership plan, they phased out coal first. They accelerated. They say: okay; the Conservative government federally, the Harper government, has brought in that. Yes, but that was in 2030. The Alberta NDP government accelerated the coal phase-out, including the new plants, which have very low emissions, which have a very high benchmark for clean energy. Those plants are also closed.

As a result, this government is on the hook. They made Albertans pay \$2 billion to settle those coal phase-outs and then another \$2 billion on the power purchase agreements because they haven't

turned back those – when they brought in this climate change plan so that they became unprofitable to some of those coal-fired electric generators, that triggered the returning of power purchase agreements. This government, if they were wise, could have cut the losses for Albertans. They would have accepted that. But because they want to prove someone else wrong, they found this silly Enron clause, and the Deputy Premier stopped the returning of those PPAs. As a result, now we are on the hook for \$2 billion more to settle those PPA losses. Two plus two: how much is it? Four billion dollars.

Now, we recently found that U.S. miner Westmoreland, who is producing coal-fired electricity for Alberta, took us to court under NAFTA, so they have a claim filed. That is another \$500 million. It's adding up: 4 and a half billion dollars and counting just on this electricity file, and this government still has the nerve to stand up in this House and blame us, that we will fire 4,000 teachers and 4,000 nurses. What would this 4 and a half billion dollars do for Albertans? Madam Speaker, I leave it to you. Even a kindergarten student will know that this government is misleading Albertans. They have blown up 4 and a half billion dollars just on electricity.

On the pipelines – that's the next subject we'll talk about – my colleague from Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre talked a little bit on that pipeline, too. So this government put all their eggs in one basket and said: okay; we are not going to support Keystone or Northern Gateway, but we'll get the Trans Mountain expansion built. They celebrated many times . . . [Mr. Panda's speaking time expired]

[The voice vote indicated that Written Question 4 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:15 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Hunter	Schneider
Dreeshen	Loewen	Smith
Drysdale	Nixon	Stier
Fraser	Panda	

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Goehring	Nielsen
Babcock	Hoffman	Payne
Bilous	Horne	Phillips
Carlier	Kazim	Piquette
Carson	Kleinstauber	Renaud
Ceci	Larivee	Sabir
Coolahan	Littlewood	Schmidt
Cortes-Vargas	Loyola	Schreiner
Dang	Malkinson	Shepherd
Drever	McCuaig-Boyd	Sucha
Eggen	McKittrick	Sweet
Fitzpatrick	Miller	Turner
Ganley	Miranda	Westhead
Totals:	For – 11	Against – 39

[Written Question 4 lost]

### Motions for Returns

[The Acting Clerk read the following motions for returns, which had been accepted]

### David Suzuki Foundation Correspondence

M13. Mr. Panda:

A return showing copies of all correspondence between the government and the David Suzuki Foundation from May 1, 2015, to May 15, 2018.

### STAND Correspondence

M14. Mr. Panda:

A return showing copies of all correspondence between the government and the organization known as STAND, or stand.earth, and formerly known as ForestEthics, from May 1, 2015, to May 31, 2018.

### Leadnow Correspondence

M15. Mr. Panda

A return showing copies of all correspondence between the government and the organization known as Leadnow from May 1, 2015, to May 31, 2018.

### Dogwood Correspondence

M16. Mr. Panda:

A return showing copies of all correspondence between the government and the organization known as Dogwood from May 1, 2015, to May 31, 2018.

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

### Electricity Price Cap Documents

M17. Mr. Panda moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of all documents, including tables and graphs, prepared between May 5, 2015, and May 31, 2018, in connection with the projections and forecasts used by the government to determine the 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour price cap on electricity.

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Albertans are not getting the true picture of the cost of their electricity. It's being hidden behind the 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour price cap. We know from the budget estimates that \$74,310,000 has been set aside for 2018 and 2019 to help cover the costs of the regulated rate option price on electricity for consumers. I want to know how the government of Alberta came to decide that just over \$74 million was enough money to subsidize power bills for 2018-2019, and I want to know how the government came to decide that 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour was the magic price to implement the cap. Meanwhile the higher taxes the consumers are paying in the form of the carbon tax are being used to help pay these power bills. It's a shell game. You take from one pocket of the consumer and make it look like you're helping to pay from the other pocket.

From page 95 of the 2017-18 annual report of the Department of Energy:

On November 22, 2016, the government announced a four-year price cap to protect families, farms, and small businesses from volatility in electricity prices as the province makes necessary reforms to the electricity system. The program runs from June 2017 to May 2021. During this period, consumers on the Regulated Rate Option (RRO) will pay the lower of the market rate or the government's ceiling rate of 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour.

Madam Speaker, I have even looked at this year's business plan, and there is no mention of this in that business plan. It was buried in the climate leadership plan. I want the government to show me the mathematics and the economics they used to come up with this

\$74.3 million expenditure at the rate of 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour. There are some very smart people working for the government, and it would not be like them to make up some numbers out of thin air. I would like to see the evidence used to come up with this rate for the cap and if they looked at a higher price, especially for the REAs, the rural electrification associations, who needed a different set of rules to implement the cap, or if they looked at a lower price, which would have cost the taxpayers even more. Showing the homework to me allows me to understand the drivers: carbon tax revenue to spend, renewables coming online and coal being phased out, electricity price volatility, and the classic NDP shell game of robbing Peter to pay Paul and driving up the deficit, the debt, and the taxes in the process.

Madam Speaker, I don't know why they rejected my motion for a return. There is a pattern on this side of the House. I've been using all the avenues like the budget estimates and question periods to ask for information. This particular Department of Energy is supposed to be transparent in providing information to Albertans, but I don't see a reason why they are hiding this, because they know that this 6.8 cents is an artificial cap. Their actual cost is much more, but they don't want the ratepayers to pay because they think that they will lose votes if the power prices are higher. That's why they're making taxpayers pay. But it's the same. Ratepayers and taxpayers: they're all the same. I don't know how long this government can hide the information from Albertans. They're trying, but people are smart enough to understand.

We asked the Finance minister today about his budget deficit, how much it is going to rise and how much the debt is going to go up. The budget is based on about a \$15 to \$20 per barrel differential, but today the differential is about \$45 U.S. per barrel. That makes a big hole in the budget estimates of this government. But the Finance minister wouldn't answer. He just goes on attacking and calling us – what's that?

**Mrs. Aheer:** Drunken sailors.

**Mr. Panda:** Drunken sailors. Nice of him. He's probably still high from yesterday's game; I don't know.

But that's not fair, Madam Speaker. Albertans are asking their questions through us. As Official Opposition it's our job and as a critic for Energy it's my job to hold this government to account and get the answers for Albertans. But this government is not giving us the correct information here and is misleading Albertans. That's why I asked for this information one more time using this legislative tool to get answers for Albertans.

4:40

With that, Madam Speaker, I trust that the hon. Government House Leader or the Minister of Energy will allow me to inspect the department's homework so that I can understand the thought process of the government to bring in this additional expenditure on top of the billions of dollars of other expenditures in electricity. When I say other expenses, I already talked about \$2 billion that Albertans are on the hook for for PPAs and \$2 billion for the coal phase-out and then another \$500 million, that NAFTA claim that a U.S. miner has placed on Albertans. With this, Albertans are paying on so many accounts, and this government is hiding that. When we ask for clarification on behalf of Albertans, we are called drunken sailors. That's not fair.

With that, I leave it there. I'm hoping to hear some answers from the minister through me to inform Albertans and through this House. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Our government is protecting Alberta families, farms, and small businesses from high electricity costs through a four-year price cap of 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour. This protection gives Alberta families . . . [interjections] Did you want to listen to this or not?

**Mr. Nixon:** Point of order.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** This protection gives Alberta families and entrepreneurs the certainty that they need to live . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. minister, we have a point of order.  
Go ahead, hon. member.

#### Point of Order

##### Addressing Questions through the Chair

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Again, we've spoken about this many times. Standing orders are clear, as you well know. I'd encourage the minister to speak through the chair, please.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Anyone wish to speak to the point of order? Banff-Cochrane.

**Mr. Westhead:** Yeah. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I think it's just a little rich for these members on the other side to be calling this out. You know, they talk across the aisle on multiple occasions. So I think that there's no point of order here. It was a slip-up on the part of the minister, and I would encourage us just to get on with the debate.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to the point of order. I think my hon. colleague referenced language that was likely to create unrest, in 23(h), (i), and (j), as you know, Madam Speaker. I also know that he had some concerns about not speaking through the chair. In this particular case I think the minister very specifically and directly efforted to reprimand members on this side of the House, which is very clearly your role in adjudicating the duties of the chair, and very specifically referred to members on this side of the Chamber with: do you guys "want to listen to this?" She was not referring to members of the opposition by their appropriate titles or by the fact that we, too, are as equally elected as she is. I think that it would be very reasonable and prudent for her to withdraw and apologize for the comments and get back to the business at hand.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Madam Speaker, I'm happy to withdraw my comments. Should I be allowed to continue, I would hope that there'd be people on the other side listening.

This protection gives Alberta families . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. minister, before you continue, I just wanted to add that it's helpful for all of us to keep in mind speaking through the chair, and I encourage everybody to continue to do that.  
Go ahead, hon. minister.

#### Debate Continued

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** I'll continue. This protection gives Alberta families and entrepreneurs the certainty they need to live their lives and build their businesses without worrying that their electricity bills will spike without warning. In past years we've seen the RRO spikes as high as 15.3 cents per kilowatt hour, and they have regularly risen over 8 cents, 10 cents, and even breaking 12 cents

more than once in the past years. I've said before and I'll say it again: these kinds of price spikes are not acceptable. It's not reasonable to expect families to afford those sorts of energy prices. It's not reasonable to ask families to live from month to month afraid that their energy prices will spike suddenly and without warning. It's not reasonable to ask families to plan and budget with this sort of uncertainty. I would note that we have not seen electricity prices come anywhere close to the levels Albertans suffered under the previous government in 2011, 2012, 2013, and 2014.

Yes, there is a cost to the program, and we've been transparent about reporting the costs in months where the costs to providers exceeded the RRO cap, but our government is not going to apologize for providing protections to Alberta families and businesses, who continue to fear the return of the price spikes and volatility that they experienced under the Conservatives' energy-only market. We are not going to let this happen. While we're taking the necessary time to build an electricity system that works better for Albertans, we will continue to protect Albertans from price spikes.

What we cannot provide, however, is sensitive information that was used to inform a decision by cabinet, particularly when we have an electricity market made up of commercial operators. Therefore, I'm afraid we have no choice but to deny this request.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to this particular motion for a return and to specifically address the minister's comment with respect to what she is or isn't going to do. You know, the minister, through you, Madam Speaker, to her, took some significant period of time in her remarks talking about what she's not going to do. She's not going to stand for price fluctuations – be very careful with that particular word in the House – and price variances, with them being all around the map.

But this motion for a return has absolutely nothing to do with those factors that are inside the marketplace and has everything to do with how and why a government would come to a decision, which may or may not be arbitrary, of 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour. All that my good colleague from Calgary-Foothills . . .

**Mr. Panda:** An outstanding riding.

**Mr. Cooper:** Yes. All that my colleague from the fantastic riding of Calgary-Foothills is trying to ascertain and to get to is: how and why did they make this decision around 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour, not 7, not 6.5, not 3, not 12 but 6.8? He was asking for some clarification around this. We know that this government does all sorts of things that aren't based in reality or fact, so all that he was asking for was some clarity or proof that that was the case here with the 6.8 cents.

It kind of reminds me, Madam Speaker, of the carbon tax: why did they arrive at \$50 a tonne and not, say, \$300 a tonne, as some of their friends and allies suggest it will take to change behaviour, \$300 a tonne? Now, I'm certainly not advocating for that. In fact, I think they should do away with the \$50-a-tonne carbon tax. But just like they didn't do any research on or certainly at the time were unwilling to provide evidence of the economic impacts that that arbitrary number would have, here too we see them picking a number, 6.8 cents. As far as I could tell from the comments of my hon. colleague from the fantastic constituency of Calgary-Foothills, he wasn't asking about the politics around creating a cap. He was merely asking about why and how they arrived at 6.8 cents.

The minister came to the House to provide some very, very, very soft, weak explanation based on shields, if you will, for what we can only assume is their lack of research. We're not asking for proprietary information. We're not asking for information that's going to negatively impact any of the businesses that are in the power market. We're only asking: what data did they have to show that 6.8 cents was the appropriate measure and not 7.5 or 3.8 or whatever number would have made sense?

4:50

So it's more than a little disappointing to see the government continue a lack of transparency, continue a lack of respect for the marketplace, particularly when it comes to proving their economic data and legislating at the same time. What we've seen time and time again is this government that legislates and then asks questions later. All we're asking for is the information that led to that path for this decision, and again the government has elected not to. I am more than a little disappointed that the government wouldn't allow this information to be released. I'm not altogether surprised because of the track record that this government has with respect to hiding the facts, particularly on the economic side of the equation.

They like to roll out facts in all sorts of different areas, but when it comes to the economic side or the impact of their decisions, how they will be applied, they time and time again refuse to provide that information. Madam Speaker, I think it's important to remember that it's not that they're refusing to provide that information to the opposition, because, frankly, not a whole ton of folks are overly passionate about politicians, broadly speaking, but it's that they are refusing to provide the information to Albertans.

It is Albertans that deserve the right to have a better understanding about this particular piece of information. It's Albertans that have a right to know about the ways that this particular decision may have an impact on the nuances of the capacity market. I'll be the first to say that there is very little about the electricity market that isn't complicated, but more information is always better than less information, and Albertans deserve that information. If this government wants to try to re-establish any sort of trust on this particular file, they would be well served to answer the question. It's not a hard question. They must have the information, so they should stop hiding behind the minister and provide the information to not just this side of the House but to all Albertans.

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

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I want to just throw out these numbers again. The hon. member from the amazing constituency of Calgary-Foothills . . .

**Mr. Cooper:** Fantastic.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Fantastic. Sorry. Thank you.

. . . spoke about \$4 billion in the boondoggle plus \$500 million as a result of coal miners in Montana who, through the NAFTA agreement, will be seeking remuneration from Alberta for that. So we're at \$4.5 billion. I keep thinking that if we go back to the pipeline discussion where we were just talking today, one of the ministers was saying that we're losing \$80 million a day in product not getting to the coast, not getting into the global market. I mean, the cumulative burden of dollars that are being misspent and being lost through policies that this government has helped create is mindboggling and, actually, a little bit nauseating.

When I think about it, actually, I don't really actually know how to put my head around the amount of lost money that is leaving this

province. Then on top of all that, the government is leaving the ratepayer and the taxpayer with the burden of their mistake. I mean, if you just added that up for a minute on a weekly, daily basis, what have we been looking at? This year country-wide we're looking at a \$5 billion loss, right? I'm absolutely flabbergasted.

You know, the minister had said that this is about creating certainty. How, then, do you explain that every company that we're speaking to, anybody who's looking at Alberta potentially – and I hope so much that people are looking at Alberta – to invest here is running away because the market signals are not there? The government has actually taken away the signal that allows companies to know: oh, this is a good time to buy in because the signal tells you to do so. There isn't one anymore.

To be clear, the other question I have, too, is that the Member for Calgary-Foothills brought up the fact that we're just wanting to understand that 6.8 cents was not plucked from the air. How can that be a sensitive discussion? The minister said in here that due to the sensitive nature of the discussions she cannot discuss how she came to 6.8 cents. Why? Madam Speaker, do you not believe for one moment that Albertans deserve to know? This is impacting them.

You know, to be fair, there have been spikes in the electricity, and I am the first one to admit that. However, the rate riders went extremely low, too. There was a balance there. To be clear, the energy-only electricity market was debt free. The minute that the government came in and blew up the PPAs, we were immediately – immediately – \$750 million in debt to the Balancing Pool, when we came from a debt-free situation, where we had no electricity debt. We had no debt.

**Mr. Hunter:** Positive.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Yes, we were positive, in fact, because the rate riders reflected what was going on in the province at that time.

The whole reason that the MSA was there was to watch those spikes. When those things happened, those companies were held accountable by those people. All that accountability is gone now. On top of that, they will not answer to Albertans on how they got to the 6.8 cents. How can that be a secret? I mean, for months and months we heard about how there was this secret Enron clause and how it was a disaster and that the government was coming in to save us on a white horse of 6.8 cents, saying that that was all secretive, saying that that happened behind closed doors, that nobody knew about it.

They were informed right when they got into government about the PPAs and about that section and about what was going to happen should they prove to be more unprofitable. This is even worse because this has happened on their time under the auspices of wanting to help Albertans. Yes, there may be less volatility, but you're just going to let those prices rise slowly? And you believe that Albertans are just going to buy into that?

If this week of seeing Albertans fight back about pipelines has not taught us anything about how Albertans fight back, none of us has learned anything in here. The government should take responsibility and look at how Albertans fight back for their energy resources and for what they need in this province. They will not stand for this. It will not happen. I can guarantee you that the minute that people understand all of the things that the NDP government is trying to put through under a cap of 6.8 cents and slowly, slowly, slowly raising that, pretending that there's no volatility, pretending to have the backs of Albertans, when we know that the prices are already going up – that is absolutely ludicrous.

Like I said, take a look at what happened in downtown Calgary this week when the Prime Minister came and how Albertans reacted

to people who do not understand the energy industry and are actively working against our prosperity. Take a note because, let me tell you, Albertans are not going to stand for this. They will not sit by and let a government pretend that they have Albertans' backs when we see those energy costs going up. It's a cumulative burden: \$2 billion to pay out, \$2 billion to buy back the PPAs, \$500 million because the government didn't understand the NAFTA agreement with the coal-fired people. And to even suggest that we're buying coal-fired from the United States when our own families in this province, who the government had to compensate for shutting down coal-fired in the first place, now no longer have jobs. But you're willing to buy it from across the border? In what world is this okay, Madam Speaker?

Albertans will not understand. They will be standing up. They're going to be mad. They're going to be so angry when they find out that that's what this government has done and that somehow they believe that they are doing a favour for Albertans. I guess, Madam Speaker, the government knows better than everybody else, don't they?

If anything, I hope this government has learned that this province is savvy. The folks that work in this province: they're savvy, they're smart, and they're resilient. They know what's going on. And I'll tell you that the folks on this side have spent the last three and a half years being educated by those people. We sit with them because those are the experts in the field, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I hesitate to interrupt, hon. member, but the time allotted for that portion of business has now elapsed.

#### 5:00 Motions Other than Government Motions

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

#### Utility Organizations

507. Mrs. Schreiner moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to strengthen partnerships with rural electrification associations, REAs, and other co-operatively organized utility associations by developing policies that promote the long-term viability and sustainability of REAs and other co-operatively organized utility associations.

**Mrs. Schreiner:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It is an honour to bring forward Motion 507 on behalf of the tremendous Albertans who persevered to build and support our great province, the agricultural sector. This motion speaks to the future sustainability of our co-operatively owned associations, which contributed significantly to this province's success. Fellow members, I am speaking to the rural electrification associations and gas co-ops and the rural Albertans who depend on them to meet the needs of their families and businesses outside of our urban centres.

The dawn of REAs occurred in the 1940s and gas co-ops in 1973. These necessities contributed to the great success of our agricultural sector and are paramount to the competitive advantage that we experience today. We know that Alberta's oil and gas have driven the economic prosperity in this province and in this country. Alberta's agriculture industry has also played a significant role in driving that same economic prosperity. There is little doubt that the establishment of REAs was an important factor in that success.

In the late 1940s REAs came about as those in our agricultural sector looked for more efficient ways to run their businesses. With electricity available in urban centres but not in rural communities, people took initiative to meet their own needs. Within a decade of the introduction of the rural electrification program almost 90 per

cent of Albertan farmers took advantage of this. Like all business owners, farmers look to maximize efficiency, and bringing electricity to rural Alberta helped them do just that. REAs were established as not-for-profit co-operatives of at least five members who jointly owned the assets, equipment, and other technology. Governed by the Rural Utilities Act, they distributed electricity from the Alberta interconnected electric system to each member.

Within Canada, REAs are unique to Alberta and were originally commissioned as a way to provide rural Albertans with electricity to meet the personal and business needs of the agricultural sector. The early models of REAs were differentiated as self-operated REAs, which manage the co-op and conduct their own maintenance, and operating REAs, which manage the co-op but hire contractors to maintain and service their lines and equipment. Examples of both are still around today but in a reduced form as compared to the initial REAs of 70 years ago. The two distinct models illustrate the unique character of REAs and the unique needs they meet, but both were built on a foundation of collaboration. Working together, rural Albertans recognized the value of investor-owned utilities in some cases which were able to operate according to the needs of rural Albertans.

We cannot dismiss the needs of those who supported this innovation. Their vision was the foundation of an advantage in the competitive farming industry, and our rural partners stepped up to the challenge. Without efficient electricity farm families faced more hazards and found it more difficult to maintain a livelihood. With REAs, farmers could eliminate the dawn-to-dusk limitations that previously dictated when they could work, which also helped them to harness help from their families, which are the very fabric of Albertan society.

Madam Speaker and fellow members, I am bringing forth this motion for many different reasons. Our REAs are vulnerable as a result of historic regulations and agreements that remain static and impede their growth. Alberta has changed significantly since the late 1940s, when REAs were established. Rural Alberta has shifted, and as a result many areas that were once farmland have evolved into urbanized areas. This has diminished the ability of REAs to serve their mandate due to regulatory barriers.

The Rural Utilities Act, which governs REAs, was enacted to support a growing province and the need to help agricultural producers develop and enhance their operations. Community-based REAs evolved in response to community-based needs, but there are many changing dynamics that have affected our rural regions and our REAs' ability to maintain their market share in rural Alberta: Alberta's population growth since the inception of REAs, increased urbanization of Alberta's population, changing trends in the farming industry such as many farms getting larger and others dissolving, the reduced number of REAs as a result of amalgamation or sale to investor-owned utilities, and changes in technology.

While change is inevitable over the course of 70-plus years, it's important to remember where we have come from. REAs have served to promote the growth, viability, and sustainability of our agricultural sectors. Like investor-owned utilities, REAs have evolved to serve the growing needs of our province. Right now over 40,000 Albertans belong to the 32 REAs that still exist, down from the peak of 381 active REAs. It is crucial to consult with stakeholders about how we can best support the future sustainability of these important institutions.

It was my pleasure to meet with the Alberta Federation of Rural Electrification Associations, Equis, and Fortis. Our conversations helped form the basis of this motion. This motion seeks to open the dialogue about the changes taking place in rural Alberta and their impact on REAs. We cannot influence Albertans' choices on where

to live, but we can seek to preserve REAs and the services they provide to the 40,000 rural Albertans who rely on them. The result of shifting populations is that there are areas where both REAs and investor-owned utilities operate, and REAs are losing market share.

Madam Speaker and fellow members, I would also be remiss if I did not mention the many community organizations that REAs support. Many choose to reinvest in the communities they co-operatively serve. This is true of many investor-owned utilities as well, and we can conclude that both types of operations can bring value to their communities.

In the case of REAs, I have heard from many groups about the positive impacts that REAs have had. For example, Wettstein Safety Strategies and co-op concurs.

REAs are an integral part of rural Alberta and contribute meaningfully as both community builders and electricity [and other resource] distributors. These member-owned cooperatives have a long and proud history of distributing electricity to our communities and investing in organizations such as ours.

Another example is the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada, who said:

We have been fortunate to find a strong partner in . . . AFREA. Their generous support of over \$300,000 for the past 12 years has allowed us to support individuals affected by MS in more than 30 rural communities across Alberta.

The different needs of REAs vary depending on a number of factors. Agreements made at the outset of the REAs served to meet the rudimentary needs of early REAs but may or may not serve present or future needs. Nominal changes in government may or may not balance the changes that have taken place over the last 70-plus years. That's why it's so important that we begin this dialogue.

I welcome the opportunity to further debate our support for policy development that will encourage stability, viability, and sustainability of these important co-operatively owned associations. Thank you.

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

5:10

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to thank the hon. Member for Red Deer-North for bringing in this motion and for also inviting the representatives of the industry. I support the spirit of this motion, but when we talk about the viability and sustainability of REAs, I want to go a little bit into those details.

As you all know, Albertans, particularly rural Albertans, know that the UCP has got their back. [interjections] Yeah, yeah. You can laugh. We will see. I wouldn't be surprised, Madam Speaker, through you – we'll see next time. You won't believe how many rural seats the UCP will be honoured to represent. This is coming from a Calgary guy who travelled in all those rural ridings, including the one of the member on the other side who is laughing. I was in her riding, too. And I was in your riding, too, Madam Speaker, if you remember. It was an honour.

But I want to bring in how we got here. This NDP government and caucus just doesn't know when to stop when it comes to meddling with Alberta's electrical system. The whole afternoon today we talked about electricity. First, we had the coal-fired generation phase-outs, both the federally mandated one and the end-of-life mandated one, and then the NDP imposed a provincial one on assets that were not clear end-of-life. So a real waste of capital, Madam Speaker. Then we had the power purchase agreement debacle, the hundreds of millions of dollars it will cost the taxpayers to bail out the billions of dollars the Balancing Pool lost, and then the capacity market debate because the generators needed money to replace the old coal plants with natural gas based and keep prices stable.

Thankfully, the new wind generators under the renewable electricity program are not getting the capacity payments because that would make the capacity market a simple political sop to the NDP's world travellers. And now we find out that the Balancing Pool was behaving in a nonconsultative, noncommercial manner and has cost the privately owned generators an estimated \$2.9 billion. Is the Crown about to be sued for that amount? I know that I would. All of these scandals were around the generation component of the electricity system.

The NDP never touched transmission, and the NDP never touched distribution until now. The motion before us reads:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to strengthen partnerships with rural electrification associations . . . and other co-operatively organized utility associations by developing policies that promote the long-term viability and sustainability of REAs and other co-operatively organized utility associations.

At one point there were nearly 400 REAs in Alberta. As of November 2016 there were 31 REAs grouped across 11 REA districts, comprised of 40,838 customers. On average, each REA has 1,317 customers. The largest REA is Equis, spanning 26 municipal districts and counties, with over 11,550 members and 28 per cent of REA customers from Barrhead to the U.S. border.

REAs are surrounded by ATCO Electric and FortisAlberta Inc. as competitive investor-owned utility distributors and electrical equipment owners. REAs are locked in the market share turf war with private companies, and it seems that the market is not set out with level playing fields for the REAs. By not having a level playing field, the REAs are out there calling for a monopoly on distribution to customers who consume less than 500 kilowatts per annum and want to compete for customers that consume more than 500 kVa. They also want a monopoly on their service area.

I'm a capitalist, Madam Speaker, and that makes me believe in competition. Can an update be made to enable the REAs better competition powers? I think the case can be made. After all, if someone can leave Equis for Fortis, then someone should be able to leave Fortis for Equis. But this is the NDP that we are talking about here, and knowing the NDP, they will try and damage anyone that makes money. If the NDP can harm power generators like they have, then the NDP can harm power distributors like REAs, too.

We all know that the NDP have no leg to stand on when it comes to the electricity file. Witness the evidence of holding on to the power purchase agreements longer than needed. When the companies moved to cancel the PPAs because they had been made more unprofitable by the NDP, the Balancing Pool held on so that the NDP could try and sue itself. Witness the Balancing Pool treating those PPA assets in a noncommercial manner, losing \$750 million and taking out loans from the government of Alberta, and witness the Balancing Pool losing \$745 million from January 2017 to September 2018 and costing other generators \$2.9 billion over the same period of time.

We know that the NDP have been manipulating electricity prices through the 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour rate cap, the PPA cancellation delay, the Balancing Pool's noncommercial behaviour, the numerous subsidies and programs to backstop wind and solar, their indifference to geothermal, and the early closure and phase-out of practically brand new, high-efficiency coal-fired generation plants at Genesee and Keephills, which, I will add, will create a fly ash shortage for the construction sector for anything built with concrete. With the NDP's record on electricity, how can we trust the NDP to resolve the issues with the REAs?

I want to back the truck up here and talk about the 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour. The REAs cannot find the efficiencies to make that 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour price for their members. They have to

charge a higher rate. Why? Membership. They do not have enough members to enable large electricity bulk buys to pass those savings on to their members. REAs can charge a billing rate that is in excess of the rate cap of 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour. This is distinct from the large regulated rate option, RRO, suppliers, who are capped at 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour.

When asked about this at the budget estimates in April 2018, Assistant Deputy Minister David James explained that the reference rate was created using the RRO prices of EPCOR, Enmax, and Direct Energy and adding 10 per cent. In that way, the REAs can be reimbursed for prices above the 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour. This creates a situation in that the REA members may switch to another distributor in order to get a lower rate and affect the long-term viability of the REAs.

Madam Speaker, while the NDP put forward nice motions and promises to REAs, the NDP government has no credibility on the electricity file. I thank you for the opportunity to address Motion 507.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

**Ms McKittrick:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I always find it entertaining when the Member for Calgary-Foothills talks about REAs. I'm hoping that maybe after I finish speaking, he'll understand some of the background of REAs. I also have to ask the question: why was it that under the previous government nothing was done to support the REAs and enable them to be more viable and to resolve some of the issues that came about because of some of the changes in the urban and rural divide? That's my first question.

5:20

Madam Speaker, my question today is really: how many MLAs in this Assembly have ever pondered the uniqueness of the rural electrification associations? Do you all know that Alberta is the only province that has them? This is a very unique thing that was created by the farmers of Alberta. Our rural electrification co-ops, that I'm going to just call the REAs, and our gas co-ops are only present in Alberta, and I think it really speaks to the uniqueness of our agriculture and the tendency of our agriculture sector to realize that they needed to meet their electricity demands, and because the government wasn't interested in helping them access electricity, they all got together to form these REAs.

Another question that I think we need to ponder is how close our farmers in the 1940s came to not having electricity. It was only because these farmers got together and invested their own funds that our farmers got access to electricity. I think we often talk about the investor-owned utilities, the IO utilities, and the fact that we think they're the greatest thing, but I want to reinforce the fact that when the farmers needed electricity, those big companies did not want to support the farmers because it was going to be too expensive. This is why the farmers followed what had happened in other provinces and formed the co-operatives, which we now call REAs.

It's also interesting to note that the farmers in Alberta didn't only form REAs and water co-ops and later on gas co-ops. By forming REAs, they joined the growing diversity of co-operatives formed by rural Canadians, like mutual insurance. Most farmers in the past were insured through a mutual. A mutual is a co-operative; it's just a different name. Most of the mutuals have now been demutualized.

There are the agricultural stores like the UFA, which is one of our biggest co-operatives, which has had such importance in the history of Alberta. There are the water co-operatives, the gas co-ops, and the credit unions. Without these co-operatives, which the

REAs are a part of, our rural economy, our farmers and so on would have been really challenged to provide as much to the economy of Alberta as they have. They're really the backbone of our economy, and they maintain to be the backbone of our economy.

I just read an interesting report around REAs, that I'll be happy to table tomorrow. It's called the Toma and Bouma report. This report is kind of interesting because it demonstrates that under the former PC government, that many of the members are very closely linked to, there were opportunities then to do something about the REAs, to help them and support them, and nothing was done. I'll be happy to table it in the future.

I also think it's quite interesting to find out the history of co-operatives. Again, I'm wondering how many knew that the co-operatives sector in Alberta was started by two Catholic priests. Did you know that Moses Coady and Jim Tompkins out of Antigonish, Nova Scotia, were the two Catholic priests who, following a Catholic social teaching, started the co-operatives? If you know anything about rural Alberta, you would also realize that a lot of the farmers who were very involved in the co-operatives sector were from the Dutch Reform church. So our co-operatives movement has strong Christian roots, initially from the Catholic movement and, especially in Alberta, from the Christian Reformed church. These priests were interested in forming co-operatives because they realized that there were a lot of inequalities among the farmers and the fishers, and they needed to find a way to make sure that people had access to a good price.

I just wanted to quote a little bit from that time. The movement advocated reforms that included forming co-operatives because on the social issues it really was a need to make sure that people had access to good wages and all the tools that they needed to be able to, in this case, farm or be able to sell their product. Those two priests, Moses Coady and Jim Tompkins – and maybe some of you have seen the Coady institute, which is still very important in Antigonish and throughout the world – believed implicitly in the power of people to accomplish anything if they could but awaken to the opportunities of the moment and use their collective energies in a determined effort to improve their status.

One of the things that I appreciate so much about the REAs, not only their histories but up to the present day, is that this is what the REAs are all about. People have collectively put their efforts, they collectively put their money to make sure that they had access to electricity, that they could build the poles and connect them to the main grid and work together to do this. This is why I think it's very important for all of us to support the REAs to ensure their viability.

The other part that really interests me about the REAs is: did you all know that the REAs have been really interested in renewable energy? They have been involved in various committees and various efforts to explore the way that as REAs, because they have the infrastructure, they have the administration, and they have the members, they could work with our government to form a community renewable energy project or to support farmers installing solar energy or wind energy. They really understand that the face of energy is changing in Alberta, that they can participate in that and use their power of membership and locally made decisions to work with the government to be involved in renewable energy.

One of the things I really appreciate about the REAs and the gas co-ops and the UFA and other institutions that the farmers have started in Alberta is that by forming a co-operative, as members they can make decisions over the goods they produce or, in this case, over the way that electricity is going to be distributed and how their organization is going to be covered. I think it's very, very powerful.



Myself, I can't belong to an REA because I live in an urban centre, but I actually belong to an electricity and gas co-operative that is modelled after the REAs, and my electricity and my gas are distributed by this co-operative. It's called ACE co-operative, and it's based on the same principles, where I as a member share all the risk and I share all the benefits and I have the ability to make decisions.

I think that while we look at the REAs as being rural – and in my own municipality of Strathcona county we have an REA in our rural areas – it's important to understand their viability and the importance they have in ensuring that our farmers have electricity but also the importance they have when looking towards the future. What can be for them in the future in terms of rural energy or other aspects of the electricity system is very important. It's applicable to everyone in this House.

I wanted also to thank the members of the FREAs.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Little Bow.

**Mr. Schneider:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Once again, it's always a pleasure to rise in this Legislature to discuss legislation that's important to all Albertans, and today is certainly no exception as we discuss private member's Motion 507, which reads:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to strengthen partnerships with rural electrification associations... and other co-operatively organized utility associations by developing policies that promote the long-term viability and sustainability of REAs and other co-operatively organized utility associations.

Now, that is a mouthful.

5:30

Well, Madam Speaker, I have to confess that I'm not quite sure where the motion would come from. I'm not of any understanding in the last 30 minutes that I have sat and listened, any understanding where the REAs in Alberta are necessarily concerned about their partnerships with the government of Alberta. I certainly didn't hear any outstanding reasons from the member that introduced the motion nor the last speaker.

It could be, to me anyways, that the concern stems from the fact that Alberta has had no substantive updates or changes to legislation impacting REA operation in over 40 years. That's 40 years. Now, that's 40, for those at home. That's pretty significant if you ask me, Madam Speaker. So it would appear that as a result of this, this stale state of legislation, Alberta's REAs have been unable to expand market share or attract new membership in any substantial way. Because of this, almost a third of REAs that were around in 2012 have since been sold to investor-owned utilities.

I've certainly been wrong before, and I suspect I'll be wrong many times yet before my time here is done, but that certainly would make me think that REAs could be in a bit of trouble for their sustainability; in fact, that the trends seem to be that REAs could end up being absorbed by these investor-owned utilities in a decade or so. That should give us, especially those in rural Alberta, a slight cause for concern.

What I know for sure is that historically rural electrification in Alberta started in the 1940s. At that time in Alberta's history utilities first began providing electric service to farms that happened to be close to the transmission lines, transmission lines that were carrying power to larger urban centres. That was working out just fine for the farm sites that happened to be located in the right spot, but obviously there were farms located far from existing lines that energy travelled through. A quick determination was that the costs associated with the possibility of connecting a delivery system for those farms made serving them uneconomic.

In the late '40s the Alberta government created legislation that allowed in part the creation of farmer-owned, not-for-profit rural electrification associations. The legislation also provided for loans to the REAs that were guaranteed by the government so that the associations could finance the capital costs of constructing a distribution network. After construction the associations could take ownership of and also operate the lines, transformers, and substations. Over the years since these basically made-in-Alberta, unique creations were formed and up and running, certainly, government was involved with varying subsidies.

Now, my grandfather left Scotland by ship and landed on the east coast of Canada in 1904. He worked his way across Canada on the Canadian Pacific Railway. He ended up in the western town of Stavely in 1908 and paid \$10 for a quarter section of land some 50 or 60 miles to the east of where he was standing, land he'd never seen, but he was so happy to be in a country where land was available that it didn't matter. He made his way to the Armada area, which is east of Vulcan. I'm not sure how he got out there. He was Scottish. He worked for four years to get his way out west, so I suppose it's possible that he had enough wherewithal to purchase a horse to ride, possibly a workhorse. At any rate, no pun intended, he got to his land, he proved up, and he was given the adjoining quarter section. He was well on his way to becoming a successful homesteader in early Alberta. He met my grandmother sometime before 1920, and they married. Now, she was English. So they together were, shall we say, frugal but not so frugal that they lacked of the conveniences in life that were becoming available.

For power on their farm, that was certainly a long way from the future distribution lines, they had a windmill that charged batteries, and I remember the generator that they had purchased sometime after they were part of rural electrification to provide power when the lines were down. When power went out in those early days, it was sometimes out for days or weeks at a time. A heavy snowstorm could take down lines in a huge area. Wind could take lines down. It was the infancy of electricity in rural areas in Alberta.

At any rate, my grandfather and his two sons were part of rural electrification at the time of the area. They helped to install power poles, string wire to areas within their specific geographic boundaries. So while I've never been part of an REA on my own operation, I have always felt that I have a small connection to the history of rural electrification.

But to the present, Madam Speaker, what we have here is a group of REAs basically at a sort of crossroads in their existence. As of November 2016 there were 31 REAs grouped across 11 REA districts, comprising some 40,838 customers. Now, that gives us on average 1,317 customers per REA. The largest REA is Equis, spanning 26 municipal districts and counties, with over 11,550 members. That number represents 28 per cent of REA customers in Alberta, from Barrhead to the U.S. border.

Now, to me, where the trouble lies is that these REAs are pretty much surrounded by ATCO Electric and FortisAlberta Inc. as competitor distributors and electrical equipment owners. In the fall of 2012 FortisAlberta interpreted some rulings to mean that customers could choose to not be members of an REA and therefore would become customers of FortisAlberta by default, regardless of the usage of the electric service. REAs are of the opinion that this cuts two ways: if a customer can choose to not be a member of the REA, they can also choose not to be a customer of FortisAlberta and be a member of an REA. What's good for the goose is good for the gander.

As a result, the Alberta Federation of Rural Electrification Associations has been advocating for legislative change to support the sustainability and, hence, the membership base of REAs. Compounding the issue was a critical development that occurred

this last summer. What happened was that the Alberta Utilities Commission decided that Fortis should have exclusive rights to distribute electricity in the lands annexed by four municipalities, municipalities with which they already had a pre-existing franchise agreement. What this meant was that the four REAs affected by these annexations could not coexist with Fortis within these lands and compete for distribution. This only further weakened the province's REAs.

I guess the purpose of this motion is to make sure that REAs continue to exist and remain a viable option to rural customers. Now, I can certainly get behind that, Madam Speaker. As you are well aware, the people in this party that's represented by this caucus are big believers in open and fair competition. Options are always good. I just find it odd that the government is championing this, when it wasn't too long ago, under another bill – I believe it was during Bill 13 debate for a capacity electricity market – that the NDP put some amendments forward into the Gas Utilities Act giving the Alberta Utilities Commission the power to order a specified penalty against a retailer like the Northern Lights Gas Co-op in Mackenzie county for failing to deliver natural gas. As we've brought up several times in this House, for two winters now that gas co-op has had trouble maintaining line pressure, and it will take them probably close to a decade to raise the capital needed to effect repairs and address their rapid growth, while the NDP solution was to set the AUC on them and penalize them for it. Not exactly standing up for Albertans.

The bottom line is that these REAs could play a much larger role as a trusted partner with the provincial government in economic development activities if government would simply allow them to. But until that day we will have to treat this motion as an important step in the right direction. So I will be supporting this motion.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

**Ms Littlewood:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to be able to rise in the House and speak to the motion from the Member for Red Deer-North asking the government to strengthen partnerships with rural electrification associations, otherwise known as REAs, and how we can look at promoting the long-term viability and sustainability of REAs and, of course, other co-operatively organized utility associations because, as the discussion today focuses on REAs, we have other co-operatives in rural Alberta that are quite important. In my community especially we have a water co-op, we have gas co-ops, we have UFA: companies that are able to do an incredible job of keeping money local, keeping jobs local, keeping investment local, and keeping decision-making local, which is, of course, the most important thing.

5:40

In my own constituency of Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville I have the pleasure of supporting and representing a few different REAs. We have the Lakeland REA, we have the Battle River co-op, and we also have the Zawale REA. When I have been in conversations with people from my neighbourhood as well as the executive of the AFREA, I've been learning a lot about what those services are that are delivered and how it is that they came to exist in the first place. As was elaborated on a bit earlier by our MLA for Sherwood Park, it was neighbours and farmers coming together in the absence of government and business.

I was on my way to a Lakeland AGM the other day, and I was thinking about how to draw some sort of parallel with my own life

because I do live in an investor-owned utility-served area. One night I was on my way home from Tofield, from visiting with the high school awards recipients, and I was headed north on highway 34. I came upon a deer, and the deer did not survive. I took it on with my truck. By the time I turned around, it was certainly in the middle of the road, no longer with the life that I had come upon it with, the point being that I came upon it and I didn't know what I was going to do. I knew that I was going to call Fish and Game and call AMA and try and figure out how to take care of my truck and the carcass.

I was thankful because I threw on my four-ways and a neighbour came upon me and the accident. They pulled up beside me, and they had actually recognized me from the high school awards because one of their children was a recipient. The husband was able to offer his assistance. Thankfully, the deer was in one piece, so he was able to help and take the deer off the road by its legs. That was something that I was thankful to have happened because that was a need that I had, to make sure that the area was safe and that my truck was okay. It took neighbours. You know, with probably a three-hour wait for fish and wildlife and a three-hour wait for AMA, in the absence of government and business it was neighbours and farmers coming together. It was actually a farm owner from just a couple of miles over that helped me out in that moment.

That is how the entire province was electrified. It's incredible that people were able to come together for a very important cause. They knew that there was a need with developing agriculture to be able to serve that industry as it grew, and really that's a major reason why we have a strong farming industry today.

There have been quite a lot of changes that have taken course over the last number of years, including urban drift that has come out of rural areas, amalgamated farms, subdividing into acreages. All of these things start to pose a challenge when it comes to having enough customers to be able to pay for the things that keep the REA sustainable and viable and thriving. That, along with some changes in technology and those issues, is why we're talking about this today.

It's why the AFREA and the REAs that I represent came and met with me basically as soon as I was elected. They knew that we shared values of co-operatives and having local, democratic decision-making of member-owned businesses. They have been asking the government to undertake looking for ways to help them help themselves. They're not asking for a handout; they're just asking for someone to be a good partner.

It has been great to see some of the announcements that have come lately, including the intermingled electricity study that Alberta Forestry and Alberta Energy have been undertaking in order to analyze pricing, financial information, how we can promote economic growth. We hope to see the results of the study soon. As I do understand, it should be coming in short order. That will give us some of those answers.

In the meantime the ability of our REAs to be great partners in community generation with renewables is absolutely incredible. The announcement at the rural municipalities association convention last week that announced \$200 million in community generation would help groups that can take this on as a project and a means of economic means, including ag societies, schools, community groups, neighbours, and co-operatives. We know that REAs want to be a partner in doing this. That \$200 million is backed by the price that we are applying to carbon as part of the climate leadership plan, so we need to have those funds available to do good work, to reduce greenhouse gases but also diversify local economies in rural Alberta, because the more that we can do that, the more that rural

Alberta becomes more sustainable and viable into the future. I know that that's what everyone agrees with.

Going forward, I know that there are more opportunities that REAs are discussing, and I certainly hope to hear more in the conversations of possibly Internet and broadband development in rural areas that could be delivered by REAs because that is the way of the future. That is how we are going to hang onto students that need to be able to do their studies, businesses that need to be connected with a global market, and emergency services. So I'm definitely hoping to hear some more of that work that might be going on right now so that we can potentially collaborate on those solutions because we are working towards the same ends on that. Alberta has been trying to get better Internet service in all of our communities in rural Alberta, especially northern Alberta and indigenous communities, for years. If these groups were able to electrify the entire province, I don't see why they can't help connect it as well.

I'll end my remarks there, Madam Speaker. I just want to thank all of the work that the MLA for Red Deer-North has done and my fellow MLAs, both urban and rural, that are supporting REAs and our co-operative values moving forward.

Thank you so much.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Nixon:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. There is little time and much to talk about today, so I will try to be as efficient as possible. I do want to start off by just quickly responding to some comments from the member for Vegreville-Viking.

**Ms Littlewood:** Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

**Mr. Nixon:** Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville: that neck of the woods out there in northeastern Alberta.

Just to be really clear, this REA member is looking forward to the carbon tax being gone, for sure. This REA member also has some questions about why we are only seeing a motion in this Assembly. First of all, I want to start off by thanking the member from Red Deer. I think she has good intentions with this motion. She's brought it here in good faith, and I believe – in fact, I know, Madam Speaker, that she's spent considerable time interacting with REAs, including REAs that I represent. I think she is doing the best she can as a private member of this Assembly to bring this important issue to the floor of this Assembly.

But, Madam Speaker, you and I both know that this motion is toothless. I will certainly support it, and this side of the House will certainly support it, but this motion does nothing to help REAs with the problems that they're facing. This motion assumes that the government will act on it. I can't remember the last time that this government acted on a private member's motion in this place, which begs the question: why is there no bill before this House? Now, the hon. member, who obviously thinks this issue is important – and good for her – probably only drew a private member's motion, and she probably was only able to use that as her mechanism to bring that to the Chamber, to bring this issue to the forefront. Good for her.

This government has been in power for almost four years. How come that agriculture minister right there has not stood up in this Chamber and brought forward a piece of legislation to deal with it? As the hon. member from Vulcan – Little Bow: that's where he's from; Vulcan is there, though – brought up, this is decades-old legislation, and this government has refused to address it, so it's a little bit rich for government members to stand in this Chamber and

then say that they're being able to champion this issue on behalf of REAs when they know as well as I know that this motion will do little to move forward REA issues.

5:50

In addition, talking about co-operative issues, this side of the House has some concerns. This government, back under the Bill 13 debate on the electricity capacity market – at that time we found out, as you know, Madam Speaker, that the NDP put forward some amendments to the Gas Utilities Act where the AUC can order a specified penalty against a retailer like Northern Lights Gas Co-op in Mackenzie county for failing to deliver natural gas. Now, for two winters that gas co-op has had trouble maintaining line pressure, and it will take them 10 years to raise the money needed to effect repairs and address the rapid growth in the communities, and the NDP dared to just send the AUC on them and penalize them for it.

This government is not concerned. There are some private members within this government that are concerned about dealing with issues like REAs, but this government as a whole is not concerned about it at all because, again, like so many things that they do in this Chamber, their lack of action shows more than their words.

It's okay to stand in this Chamber and give the history of REAs, which is very important. I don't have enough time to deal with that before we hit the clock to have to vote on this. It's important. Without REAs we wouldn't have this province, particularly the areas that most of us on this side of the House represent. The history of REAs is fascinating. I think it's one of the great stories of our province, and I think REAs have a role, certainly, to play in the future of our province. I actually represent the largest constituency as far as REA members considered numerically in the province. REAs have a role to play.

When members want to stand in this Chamber and act like they're going to champion this issue but then sit with a government that refuses to address it at all – I know for sure that REAs have come and met with the government for several years, trying to get the agriculture minister to move on this, and again no action from this government. We see it on so many other issues. The examples are long, Madam Speaker, as you well know, everything from pipelines, carbon tax, all those types of issues, but on this specifically, again no action. The question has to become for the private members on this side why the government won't truly take action.

Again I want to stress in the little time that I have left – I'm watching the clock because I know you'll call it – that the hon. member from Red Deer has come here in good faith, which is why I will support this. I think that she has taken a considerable amount of time on this motion, and I completely support it – but I do want to outline that it has no ability to make the government act, and the government has refused to act so far. So the members on that side who are attempting to champion issues of REAs: the most important thing they could do is talk to their cabinet, talk to the members of the government. The private member from Red Deer is not a member of the government. I recognize that, but she is a member of the party that is the governing party at this moment. She could talk to cabinet to find out why they won't address this issue once and for all, bring forward some legislation to be able to deal with it.

You know, when I first heard about this from my REAs, from the Rocky REA, they thought this was a bill. They thought this was going to be something that was significant to move this forward. When I explained to them what a private member's motion was, I think they were probably disappointed. They were still excited that

their issue was being discussed – that’s important – but they really thought something would happen about it.

I think it’s important to be clear that the NDP government went out of their way over and over not to address the REA issue and instead has buried it to make some of their private members be quiet or to appease them in the backbench instead of taking action on it, and those private members should start to hold their government accountable for that action.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Red Deer-North to close debate.

**Mrs. Schreiner:** Thank you again, Madam Speaker. We can all agree that our REAs have invaluable contributed to the success and prosperity of our agricultural sector and were key in the progress that our farming industry was in great need of. It is important to note as well that this innovation also reinforced the ability of rural families to enjoy time that may not have been available without innovation and efficiency. I am proud to know that we are willing to acknowledge the historical contributions that REAs have brought to our agricultural industry and continue to provide today. I appreciate the thoughtful debate and discussion from colleagues here in the Legislature.

Our discussion today brings realization of our pledge to support those who put food on our tables. We are all committed to supporting rural Albertans and our agriculture producers. We are committed to finding solutions to support our rural electrification associations and all co-operatively owned associations as they aim to serve Albertans, even if we don’t always agree on the exact way to provide that support.

The dynamics within rural electrification models suggest that thoughtfulness is required when looking to support the future of their sustainability. There is much capacity within the REAs themselves, and I am glad to know that governance training has been offered and provided to those boards that wish to maximize and make efficient use of the resources within their means. It is this kind of dialogue that will lead to the effective policy direction that will provide the best outcomes for REAs and the rural Albertans who rely on them.

I just want to emphasize once again the kinds of changes taking place in rural Alberta that are challenging our REAs: Alberta’s population growth since the inception of REAs, the increased urbanization of Alberta’s population, the changing trends in the farming industry such as many farms getting larger and others dissolving, the reduced number of REAs as a result of amalgamation or sale to investor-owned utilities, and changes in technology.

While there have been in the past hundreds of REAs all across the province, that number has since dwindled to 32, but those 32 REAs provide an invaluable service to over 40,000 rural Albertans who depend on them. As I mentioned earlier, there are many not-for-profit organizations that benefit from this province’s REAs as well. These co-operatively organized utility providers reflect some of the very best about what it means to be Albertan. As Albertans we work together to overcome the challenges our environment has presented to us, and we give back, supporting those among us who need it.

Before we vote on this motion, I want to once again encourage all of my colleagues to support it. We need to develop policy that will encourage stability, viability, and sustainability for these important co-operatively owned associations. They are part of our history, and it would be a shame to lose them. We must make them part of our future.

Thank you.

**Cortes-Vargas:** Madam Speaker, just seeing the time, I ask that we make the bells for this motion to be one minute.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Red Deer-North has proposed Motion 507.

[Motion Other than Government Motion 507 carried]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

**Mr. Westhead:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Seeing the time and the progress that we’ve made, I would move that we adjourn the House for the time being and reconvene at 7:30 this evening.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:59 p.m.]





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