



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
First Session

Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, May 27, 2019

Day 3

The Honourable Nathan Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

Cooper, Hon. Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UCP), Speaker
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie-East (UCP), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees
Milliken, Nicholas, Calgary-Currie (UCP), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Hon. Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Strathmore (UCP)
Allard, Tracy L., Grande Prairie (UCP)
Amery, Mickey K., Calgary-Cross (UCP)
Armstrong-Homeniuk, Jackie,
Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UCP)
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)
Bilous, Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP),
Official Opposition House Leader
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-West Henday (NDP)
Ceci, Joe, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)
Copping, Hon. Jason C., Calgary-Varsity (UCP)
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (NDP)
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)
Dreeschen, Hon. Devin, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (UCP)
Eggen, David, Edmonton-North West (NDP),
Official Opposition Whip
Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (UCP),
Government Whip
Feehan, Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP)
Fir, Hon. Tanya, Calgary-Peigan (UCP)
Ganley, Kathleen T., Calgary-Mountain View (NDP)
Getson, Shane C., Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland (UCP)
Glasgo, Michaela L., Brooks-Medicine Hat (UCP)
Glubish, Hon. Nate, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (UCP)
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)
Goodridge, Laila, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche (UCP)
Gottfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)
Gray, Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)
Guthrie, Peter F., Airdrie-Cochrane (UCP)
Hanson, David B., Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul (UCP)
Hoffman, Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)
Horner, Nate S., Drumheller-Stettler (UCP)
Hunter, Hon. Grant R., Taber-Warner (UCP)
Irwin, Janis, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP),
Official Opposition Deputy Whip
Issik, Whitney, Calgary-Glenmore (UCP)
Jones, Matt, Calgary-South East (UCP)
Kenney, Hon. Jason, PC, Calgary-Lougheed (UCP),
Premier
LaGrange, Hon. Adriana, Red Deer-North (UCP)
Loewen, Todd, Central Peace-Notley (UCP)
Long, Martin M., West Yellowhead (UCP)
Lovely, Jacqueline, Camrose (UCP)
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)
Luan, Hon. Jason, Calgary-Foothills (UCP)
Madu, Hon. Kaycee, Edmonton-South West (UCP)
McIver, Hon. Ric, Calgary-Hays (UCP),
Deputy Government House Leader

Nally, Hon. Dale, Morinville-St. Albert (UCP)
Neudorf, Nathan T., Lethbridge-East (UCP)
Nicolaidis, Hon. Demetrios, Calgary-Bow (UCP)
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (NDP)
Nixon, Hon. Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre
(UCP), Government House Leader
Nixon, Jeremy P., Calgary-Klein (UCP)
Notley, Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (NDP),
Leader of the Official Opposition
Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (UCP)
Pancholi, Rakhi, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)
Panda, Hon. Prasad, Calgary-Edgemont (UCP)
Phillips, Shannon, Lethbridge-West (NDP)
Pon, Hon. Josephine, Calgary-Beddington (UCP)
Rehn, Pat, Lesser Slave Lake (UCP)
Reid, Roger W., Livingstone-Macleod (UCP)
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)
Rosin, Miranda D., Banff-Kananaskis (UCP)
Rowswell, Garth, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UCP)
Rutherford, Brad, Leduc-Beaumont (UCP)
Sabir, Irfan, Calgary-McCall (NDP)
Savage, Hon. Sonya, Calgary-North West (UCP),
Deputy Government House Leader
Sawhney, Hon. Rajan, Calgary-North East (UCP)
Schmidt, Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)
Schow, Joseph R., Cardston-Siksika (UCP),
Deputy Government Whip
Schulz, Hon. Rebecca, Calgary-Shaw (UCP)
Schweitzer, Hon. Doug, Calgary-Elbow (UCP),
Deputy Government House Leader
Shandro, Hon. Tyler, Calgary-Acadia (UCP)
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-City Centre (NDP)
Sigurdson, Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)
Sigurdson, R.J., Highwood (UCP)
Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UCP)
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UCP)
Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UCP)
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP),
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader
Toews, Hon. Travis, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UCP)
Toor, Devinder, Calgary-Falconridge (UCP)
Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UCP)
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UCP)
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UCP)
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UCP)
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

Party standings:

United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly

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Stephanie LeBlanc, Senior Parliamentary
Counsel
Trafton Koenig, Parliamentary Counsel

Philip Massolin, Manager of Research and
Committee Services
Nancy Robert, Research Officer
Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of
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Brian G. Hodgson, Sergeant-at-Arms
Chris Caughell, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms
Tom Bell, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
Paul Link, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms

Executive Council

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|----------------------|---|
| Jason Kenney | Premier, President of Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Relations |
| Leela Aheer | Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women |
| Jason Copping | Minister of Labour and Immigration |
| Devin Dreesen | Minister of Agriculture and Forestry |
| Tanya Fir | Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism |
| Nate Glubish | Minister of Service Alberta |
| Grant Hunter | Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction |
| Adriana LaGrange | Minister of Education |
| Jason Luan | Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions |
| Kaycee Madu | Minister of Municipal Affairs |
| Ric McIver | Minister of Transportation |
| Dale Nally | Associate Minister of Natural Gas |
| Demetrios Nicolaides | Minister of Advanced Education |
| Jason Nixon | Minister of Environment and Parks |
| Prasad Panda | Minister of Infrastructure |
| Josephine Pon | Minister of Seniors and Housing |
| Sonya Savage | Minister of Energy |
| Rajan Sawhney | Minister of Community and Social Services |
| Rebecca Schulz | Minister of Children's Services |
| Doug Schweitzer | Minister of Justice and Solicitor General |
| Tyler Shandro | Minister of Health |
| Travis Toews | President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance |
| Rick Wilson | Minister of Indigenous Relations |

Parliamentary Secretary

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| Muhammad Yaseen | Parliamentary Secretary of Immigration |
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STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

Chair: Mr. Gotfried
Deputy Chair: Mr. Orr

Allard
Eggen
Getson
Glasgo
Irwin
Jones
Nielsen

Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Chair: Mr. van Dijken
Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring

Allard
Barnes
Bilous
Dach
Dang
Gray
Horner
Issik
Jones
Reid
Rowswell
Stephan
Toor

Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Chair: Ms Goodridge
Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

Amery
Carson
Ganley
Glasgo
Guthrie
Irwin
Long
Neudorf
Nixon, Jeremy
Pancholi
Rutherford
Walker
Yao

Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

Chair: Mr. Ellis
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Goodridge
Gray
Lovely
Nixon, Jeremy
Rutherford
Schmidt
Shepherd
Sigurdson, R.J.
Sweet

Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Chair: Mr. Cooper
Deputy Chair: Mr. Ellis

Armstrong-Homeniuk
Dang
Deol
Goehring
Goodridge
Gotfried
Long
Sweet
Williams

Standing Committee on Private Bills

Chair: Mr. Ellis
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Gotfried
Horner
Irwin
Neudorf
Nielsen
Nixon, Jeremy
Pancholi
Sigurdson, L.
Sigurdson, R.J.
Vacant
Vacant
Vacant
Vacant

Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

Chair: Mr. Smith
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Carson
Deol
Ganley
Horner
Issik
Jones
Loyola
Neudorf
Rehn
Reid
Renaud
Turton
Yao

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Ms Phillips
Deputy Chair: Mr. Gotfried

Amery
Barnes
Dach
Feehan
Guthrie
Hoffman
Renaud
Rosin
Rowswell
Stephan
Toor
Turton
Walker

Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Chair: Mr. Hanson
Deputy Chair: Member Ceci

Armstrong-Homeniuk
Feehan
Getson
Loyola
Rehn
Rosin
Sabir
Schmidt
Sigurdson, R.J.
Singh
Smith
Turton
Yaseen

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, May 27, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Lord, the God of righteousness and truth, grant to our Queen and her government, to Members of the Legislative Assembly, and to all in positions of responsibility the guidance of Your spirit. May they never lead the province wrongly through love of power, desire to please, or unworthy ideas but, laying aside all private interests and prejudices, keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all. Amen.

Please remain standing, as you are able. Hon. members, as is the custom, we pay tribute to members who have passed away since last we met. With our admiration and respect, there is gratitude to members of the families who share the burden of public office and public service. Today we'd like to welcome members of the Zwodzdesky, Ratzlaff, Ludwig, Dowling, and Anderson families who are present in the gallery.

Mr. Gene Zwodzdesky
July 24, 1948, to January 6, 2019

The Speaker: Gene Zwodzdesky was first elected to the Legislative Assembly of Alberta on June 15, 1993, as the Liberal Member for Edmonton-Avonmore. He was re-elected to the newly created constituency of Edmonton-Mill Creek in 1997. Over the summer of 1998 he became a Progressive Conservative member and was re-elected four additional times in the same constituency. During his tenure he served in many roles, including minister of community development, Minister of Education, minister of aboriginal relations, minister of health and wellness.

Originally a teacher by profession, he led a group of students to Nova Scotia to showcase Alberta multiculturalism in 1979, which turned out to be a turning point for him. He ended up developing teaching resources to promote Alberta's multicultural identity.

Mr. Zwodzdesky's general love and respect for all people has been recognized by many organizations and associations, including but not limited to the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, the Lebanese cultural association, the Sikh Federation of Edmonton, the Council of India Societies, the Congress of Black Women of Canada, and the Pakistan Canada Association.

His long-term association with the Shumka dancers, first serving as a dancer and then becoming the musical director, combined his love of music and culture. He was a dedicated supporter of the recording industry as well as music of all types.

After being elected the 12th Speaker in Alberta's history in 2012, Mr. Zwodzdesky hosted thousands of Albertans on the grounds of the Legislature celebrating its centennial, taking the opportunity to bring awareness to the democratic process of our province.

Mr. Zwodzdesky passed away January 6, 2019, at the age of 70.

Mr. Raymond S. Ratzlaff
April 10, 1931, to February 1, 2019

The Speaker: Raymond Samuel Ratzlaff served as the Social Credit Member for Three Hills from 1967 to 1971. Mr. Ratzlaff served on a number of legislative committees during his tenure. From '69 to '71 he served as the minister of industry and tourism. In 1972 he completed his master's of education degree in

educational administration at the University of Alberta, where he resumed his career in education.

Mr. Ratzlaff passed away on February 1 at the age of 87.

Mr. Albert W. Ludwig
November 14, 1919, to February 16, 2019

The Speaker: A veteran of the Second World War, Albert William Ludwig first served as the Social Credit Member for Calgary-North East in 1959. He was subsequently elected three additional times for the constituencies of Calgary-East, twice, and Calgary-Mountain View, serving until 1975. Mr. Ludwig served as the minister of public works from 1969 to '71. He had a distinguished law career, which culminated with his service as a Provincial Court judge from 1980 until his retirement in 1989.

Mr. Ludwig passed away on February 16 at the age of 99.

Mr. Robert Wagner Dowling
September 28, 1924, to March 4, 2019

The Speaker: Robert Wagner Dowling was first elected as a Progressive Conservative Member for Edson in a by-election in 1969. He was re-elected in 1971 and again in '75. He was appointed the minister without portfolio responsible for tourism in 1971 before he was appointed as Alberta's first minister of consumer affairs in 1973. From 1975 to 1979 he served as the minister of business development and tourism. Mr. Dowling was a veteran of the Second World War and a well-established pharmacist in Jasper. Subsequent to his retirement he was the commissioner of Alberta's 75th Anniversary Commission and Alberta's commissioner for Expo 86.

Mr. Dowling passed away on March 4 at the age of 94.

Mr. Dennis Lester Anderson
August 16, 1949, to March 20, 2019

The Speaker: Dennis Lester Anderson served for four terms as the Progressive Conservative Member for Calgary-Currie, from '79 to '93. Mr. Anderson served as the minister of culture, minister of culture and multiculturalism, Minister of Municipal Affairs, and minister of consumer and corporate affairs. In addition, Mr. Anderson chaired the Select Special Committee on Upper House Reform in the 20th Legislature, that introduced the concept of triple-E Senate. After leaving office, Mr. Anderson became an advocate for mental health, receiving many honours for his work in that field, including the sovereign's medal for volunteers in 2017.

Mr. Anderson passed away on March 20 at the age of 69.

In a moment of silent prayer and reflection I ask you to remember Mr. Zwodzdesky, Mr. Ratzlaff, Mr. Ludwig, Mr. Dowling, and Mr. Anderson, each as you may have all known them. Rest eternal grant unto them, O Lord, and let light perpetual shine upon them. Amen.

Hon. members, ladies and gentlemen, I'd like you to now join in the singing of our national anthem by R.J. Chambers. I'd invite you to participate in the language of your choice.

Hon. Members:

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

The Speaker: Please be seated.

I might just add, in the light of recent sporting events out there, that I think it could be said that we are the north.

Introduction of Visitors

The Speaker: Hon. members, with admiration and respect it is with gratitude to members of the families who share the burdens of public office service today that I'd like to welcome by name the Ratzlaff family, who are present in the gallery, as well as the Zwozdeskys and Andersons and Dowlings. From the Zwozdesky family: Christine Zwozdesky, the former Speaker's wife; Ariana Whitlow, daughter; son and daughter-in-law Myron and Krystal Zwozdesky; grandchildren Joshua, Natalie, and Charlie; sister Iris; brother-in-law Steve; and nephew and niece Michael and Brittany. From the Anderson family: Barb Anderson, Mr. Anderson's wife; brother Brent Anderson and his wife, Mary Jane Tallon; and close friends Melanie and Brian Jobson. From the Ratzlaff family: daughter Jennifer Hauck and family friend Dr. Marguerite Wieler.

I'd invite all members to extend the warm welcome of the Assembly to these visitors.

1:40

Introduction of Guests

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

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour today to rise and introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly the grade 6 class of Tomahawk elementary school and their teacher, Robin Beil, and chaperone Holly Chodak. Tomahawk was a newly added part to my constituency here after this election, but I know that in the past many of these students have come into Drayton Valley and that I've taught many of their parents. As a matter of fact, I'm going to be meeting with them a little later today, and it's going to be interesting to see if I have taught any of their parents and whether or not some of my former colleagues and even some of my former students who now teach in Tomahawk are still there. Could the grade 6 class of Tomahawk please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: I'm not sure if there's anyone in that constituency which you haven't taught, hon. member.

The Minister of Indigenous Relations, please.

Mr. Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly the following staff members from the Indigenous Relations stewardship and policy integration branch. This team makes sure that indigenous perspectives are heard in Crown-led engagements and that consultations about land management, policy development, and regional planning are effective. Could you just stand as I say your names, please: Michael Lundquist, Leah Sheffield, Lance Wilson, Kristin Raworth, Sumita Sharma. From my own riding, Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin: Glinis Buffalo, Kim Yarmuch, Alyssa Metro, Dawna Harden, Kimberly Beaudin, Kailey Imes, Alicia Bradsen, Leslie Treseder, Judy-Lynn Downey, and Peter Kugba-Nyande. I ask that we give them the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Members, there are a number of guests today as well as a ministerial statement prior to question period, so I'd like to keep our comments as brief and as pointed as possible. I know that that sometimes presents a challenge for politicians like you guys, not like me but like you.

The Minister of Finance, please.

Mr. Toews: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you guests joining us today from the Grande Prairie & District Chamber of Commerce executive council. I'm pleased to welcome Mr. Dan Wong, chair of the board; and board members Mr. Larry Gibson, Mr. Tertius Genis, and Mrs. Cris Seppola-Podsada. Please join me in welcoming these guests to the Chamber.

The Speaker: The Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased, to you and through you – in advance of the government using its majority to end a century-long practice of allowing Albertans to see their visit and their names recorded in *Hansard* through the words of their MLAs – to introduce Bridget Stirling, who is the vice-chair of the Edmonton public school board. She represents ward G, my area of the city. She believes in properly funded public schools. I ask her to rise so she can receive the warm welcome of all members of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism.

Ms Fir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly some of my department staff who have joined us today: Kelley Beitel, Lindsay Singh, Sean Graham, Anna Klepaczek, Sara Hansen, and Sarah Pinto. The success of any government and their ability to implement their agenda is dependent on a close working relationship with Alberta's professional public service. Together with these highly skilled and hard-working individuals I'm confident that we will build a better future for all Albertans. I would now like to ask the honoured guests to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: As mentioned, I'd encourage members to keep their comments as brief and on topic as possible.

Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Member Irwin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure to rise today for my first and perhaps my last introduction and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Mimi Williams. Mimi is a mother, writer, researcher, and long-time community activist who works tirelessly to help make the lives of folks living in disadvantage in our communities, particularly women and children, just a little bit better. From playing a key role in securing the initial funding from Premier Klein back in the '90s to launch the Edmonton school lunch program to her work in the labour and women's movements, Mimi has spent decades trying to make the world a better place for her neighbours. Please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, I rise, just noting the time, to request unanimous consent to complete the ministerial statement on the High Level fire prior to question period.

The Speaker: Members, the Government House Leader is requesting unanimous consent to go past 1:50 to complete introductions, followed by the ministerial statement.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Speaker: The Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to stand in this Chamber and introduce a guest of mine, a close friend of

mine, Mary Thygesen. Mary Thygesen and I have known each other for a number of years. She's a long-time community activist, and she's particularly happy with the record of the previous government. One of the things which was important to her was capping tuition because she has a daughter who's attending the University of Alberta, and she, like me, believes that higher education should be universally affordable and accessible to everybody in Alberta. I ask that Mary Thygesen please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to introduce to you and through you to all members in this Chamber my constituent and husband, Neal Gray. The love and support that we get from our spouses and family are critical, and I'm really grateful to have the opportunity to stand here and say, through you, thank you to the most important person in my life. Later this summer we will be celebrating our 15th wedding anniversary, and I had intended to introduce him closer to that, but given that we may not have the chance, I'm so glad he could be here today. I'd like to ask him to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Congratulations on your 15th anniversary. It's a pleasure to have you today.

Ministerial Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake and Minister of Agriculture and Forestry is rising on a ministerial statement.

Mr. Dreeshen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As my first opportunity, I'd like to congratulate you on your election, and I would like to say that we missed you at our caucus meeting today.

Northern Alberta Wildfire Update

Mr. Dreeshen: As Minister of Agriculture and Forestry I would like to inform the members of this House on the current wildfire situation in northern Alberta. Alberta's forest fire season typically is early in the spring. May is always an active fire month: spring melt followed by hot, dry conditions coupled with deciduous trees, like our aspens and poplars, that have not leafed out. Ground vegetation has also not greened up, and with the last few weeks of little to no precipitation the northern half of our beautiful province is like a tinderbox.

Since March 1 there have been 478 recorded forest fires. That compares to 530 over the five-year average. The total area that has burned is about 190,000 hectares. Most of these fires are extinguished within 48 hours by the brave men and women at Alberta Wildfire. Alberta Wildfire has been doing a great job, co-ordinating with officials from Municipal Affairs, local municipal officials as well as local fire departments.

1:50

While in High Level, it was amazing to see over 30 different municipal fire departments from across the province assisting the High Level fire department, three of which are from my riding of Innisfail-Sylvan Lake: from Red Deer county, Penhold, and Sylvan Lake. Two, actually, are from your riding, Mr. Speaker. I'd encourage all members to reach out directly and to thank their local fire departments that are helping out.

Mr. Speaker, as of today there are four designated out-of-control fires burning in Alberta. They are near Maria Lake, at 300 hectares

burned so far; Manning, over 22,000 hectares; Slave Lake, over 40,000 hectares; and High Level, over 127,000 hectares. The High Level fire, due to the proximity of the town, has made it our highest priority fire. The fire is holding at three kilometres southwest of High Level; however, it has resulted in the evacuation of over 5,000 residents.

Over the last two weeks the government Member for Peace River, the Premier, and I were on the ground in High Level to meet and offer support to the teams battling the fire. Yesterday the government members from Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo and West Yellowhead and I surveyed the High Level fire and engaged directly with Alberta wildland firefighters, local municipal leaders, and first responders from across Alberta.

I would also like to update this House on the incredible determination showed by the municipal leaders in High Level: Mayor Crystal McAteer, Reeve Josh Knelsen, and Dene Tha' Chief Ahnassay. Their leadership, calm, and decisive actions were right, and their co-ordination with the unified command team will serve as a model for best practices going forward.

I also want to offer my heartfelt thanks to B.J. Hinson. He's a farmer south of High Level who has offered his farmyard as a base of operations for the mobile incident command centre. B.J. and so many Albertans who volunteer and sacrifice for their neighbours and friends demonstrate the best in Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, regarding the High Level evacuation, evacuation centres are set up across the north, and approximately 4,284 Albertans have checked in. In High Level there are 573 wildland firefighters, 194 structural firefighters and staff, 46 pieces of heavy equipment, 29 helicopters, and three water bombers available. I'm humbled by the resilience, the courage, and determination from our Alberta wildland firefighters to protect Alberta families' homes, farms, and businesses in northern Alberta.

But, Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, Mother Nature is not on our side. The weather forecast for much of northern Alberta over the next few weeks is hot, dry, and windy. A number of northern communities are and will experience heavy smoke from these fires. Smoke will be an ongoing concern, and Albertans should keep informed of health advisories.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, the Alberta government announced last Friday financial support for evacuees. Evacuated residents will receive a one-time payment of \$1,250 per adult and \$500 per child. Online applications opened yesterday at noon. However, debit cards are now available at reception centres for those who would prefer their payments in person.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank all the wildland firefighters, first responders, and structural firefighters for their efforts on the ground and in the air, and I encourage all members of this House to use their offices to inform their constituents about fire bans, evacuation notices, and smoke advisories. Regular updates can be found at alberta.ca/emergency and wildfire.alberta.ca.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to address this House on this important matter.

The Speaker: Members, for the benefit of all, typically speaking, when the government makes a ministerial statement, the opposition has three minutes to respond to that ministerial statement. For that, this afternoon I look to the Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today on behalf of our entire caucus in support of the residents of the town of High Level, Mackenzie county, Dene Tha' First Nation, and Paddle Prairie Métis settlement. I also want to recognize those impacted by the recent

Trout Lake evacuations. Our hearts go out to every resident and family that has been impacted by these terrible fires. We know this is a time of great stress, anxiety, and fear for many people. Over 5,000 residents have had to evacuate without knowing when they'll be able to return home. Thousands of people are stuck in evacuation centres. Many communities are under boil-water advisories and impacted by poor air quality. And as all of this happens, the fires continue to spread to over 100,000 hectares, with reports that wind, moisture, and temperature conditions will make the fires worse in the coming days.

As I said, this is a scary and stressful situation for many people in our province, and that is why we want all of those who are affected to know that our caucus is here for you and that we stand with you, as do all members of this House and all Albertans. You will remain in our thoughts and our prayers. We'll advocate to make sure you get the support and services you need for your family. We will work with the government and the Premier to monitor the situation and ensure that every needed assistance and resource is being invested to fight the flames and protect your homes, families, property, and businesses.

We are relieved that there has been a very orderly and calm evacuation of communities and that no homes or businesses have been damaged. We offer our sincere thanks and appreciation to the very brave and dedicated front-line emergency responders, firefighters, essential service providers, government staff, and volunteers who have helped to make this happen. I also want to recognize paramedics during National Paramedic Services Week for their service and support during this emergency. All of these amazing front-line and support staff, in collaboration with impacted residents, who have been so calm and strong throughout the evacuations, are deserving of our recognition and our thanks.

Now, just as we have seen during the devastating fires in Fort McMurray and Slave Lake, through this crisis we have seen the true spirit and character of Albertans demonstrated. We have seen Albertans watch out for each other and have each other's backs. We have seen great strength, generosity, and compassion, and I know this will continue in the hours, days, and weeks ahead because Albertans don't sit on the sidelines; we stand up to help each other out. We are passionate doers and givers, and now more than ever we need to stand together, put aside politics, and help our neighbours in this time of need.

Thank you again to all of the firefighters, emergency personnel, and Albertans who are battling the flames and helping to ensure that our friends and family in High Level, Mackenzie county, Dene Tha' First Nation, Paddle Prairie Métis settlement, and Trout Lake get the help they need. We are hopeful that the flames will subside shortly, allowing residents . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

Education Funding

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Last week our Education critic asked the Education minister three times for a simple answer to the question of whether the additional students going to school in September would be funded. The minister refused to answer and at one point displayed a profound lack of knowledge on the subject, suggesting that funding decisions are up to school boards. To the Premier: will the roughly 15,000 additional Alberta kids attending school in September be funded?

Mr. Kenney: I thank the hon. Leader of the Opposition for the question, the important question, Mr. Speaker. It allows me to reiterate the commitment of this government to high-quality public education, which is why in our platform we committed to maintaining or increasing funding for education in Alberta. Now, we haven't yet even been in office for three weeks, so both the Minister of Education and Minister of Finance are still being briefed on the interim supply measures and will be providing information to school boards and other funding partners in the nearest possible future.

The Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Unfortunately, sometimes you've just got to deal with the hand you're dealt, and that means you have to make decisions sooner than you would otherwise like.

Generally school boards are expected to pass their budget and submit them to the province by the end of May, this week. Now, meanwhile what I'm seeing is that boards are bracing for the worst, making plans that will significantly undermine the quality of education received by Alberta's kids, all because the Premier and the minister aren't giving them an answer. To the Premier. As we speak, front-line education is being hurt. Will you or won't you fund enrolment?

2:00

Mr. Kenney: Again I thank the hon. leader for an important question, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we can assure all school boards that, at the very least, current funding levels will continue. As to the specific amounts for transfers, that will be subject to advice that we receive. You know, part of the problem here is that the NDP left behind a huge fiscal mess. They were running the largest per capita deficit in the country. They were headed to \$100 billion in debt. So here's the challenge: we need to deal with that fiscal mess left behind by the NDP while still investing in education.

The Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much. You know, there are 15,000 more students coming to our schools this fall. They will need teachers. They will need textbooks. They will need educational assistants for special-needs kids. If they don't get them, it means all students – all students – will be getting less. To the Premier: can you explain to the nearly 700,000 students learning in Alberta schools why they should be getting less while you hand over billions of dollars in tax breaks to wealthy corporations?

Mr. Kenney: I reject the premise of the question, Mr. Speaker. First of all, Albertans elected this government to create jobs and economic growth and, with that growth, to be able to afford the best-quality public services. One thing I can assure the hon. Leader of the Opposition is that this government will continue to be one of the biggest funders of public education in Canada on a per capita and a per-student basis.

The Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition for her second set of questions.

Ms Notley: Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, we heard this weekend that principals in Calgary are talking about cutting funding in K to 3 schools by over 5 per cent this year alone. The things these kids don't learn in the early years will cost our province in real dollars for decades to come. Once again, why is the Premier so committed to letting 5-year-olds, 6-year-olds, 7-year-olds be the collateral damage to his ideological, multibillion-dollar tax gift to Alberta's biggest corporations?

Mr. Kenney: Well, it didn't take very long to turn back into the anger machine over there in the opposition, Mr. Speaker.

The reality is this. Albertans rejected the NDP's total economic and fiscal failure. Albertans elected a government to restore balance to our province's finances so that we can ensure the long-term future of important front-line services like health care and education. Albertans elected a government to demonstrate that Alberta is open for business and jobs again and to restore economic growth, hope, and opportunity. That's exactly what we're doing.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, they go into ideological talking points, and kids learn less. You know, the government is also planning to ram through the decade-old Education Act, rolling back the rights of students, and adding further budget pressures. CBE says that increasing the age of access to 21 could add 1,700 students in that board alone. This number will be replicated across the province. These students, like others, are going to need – wait for it – teachers, educational assistants, and resources. To the Premier: can you tell us whether you're planning to pay for that, for the new imposition of the old Education Act?

Mr. Kenney: I'm surprised, Mr. Speaker, that the Leader of the Opposition is confused about the Education Act. It is actually a modernization of Alberta education law. It replaces a statute that's been in place for over 80 years with one that was adopted by this place just a few years ago. The Minister of Education will come forward with details on the implementation of that legislation in the very near future. I can assure the member that we're taking into consideration those concerns raised by school boards about additional funding costs implied by the Education Act.

The Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition. Your second supplemental.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I suggest that maybe the Premier should learn a little bit more about the Education Act he wants to bring in. I realize that the Premier is a bit of a back to the future kind of guy, but given that the consultation of the new/old Education Act took place a decade ago, what, if any, consultation does the Premier plan to do with parents, with students, with trustees, and with – I know; it's hard for you – educators before ramming through this outdated Education Act?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the NDP came to office four years ago with the intention of proclaiming into law the new Education Act, but they didn't do it. Why? I'll tell you why: because it placed too much emphasis on parental choice, on school choice, on diversity and pluralism in the system. This government is a champion of school choice, of diversity and pluralism in the education system. To answer the member's question, the hon. Minister of Education has been listening to school boards, to students, to teachers, and to her officials on this matter.

The Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition for your third set of questions.

Ms Notley: Interestingly, the new choice parents are going to be offered is a classroom of 40 students or 50 students, Mr. Speaker.

Worker Overtime Pay

Ms Notley: The Premier has been on the record saying he plans to cut the overtime pay received by working Albertans. This plan will be most painfully felt by the same folks who've been hit the hardest by the downturn in oil prices: energy and construction workers. The

Premier ran on creating new jobs, not on picking the pockets of folks still working in existing jobs. Will he commit today that he will not go after the hard-earned banked overtime of Alberta's energy and construction workers?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the premise of that question is completely ridiculous. This was part of the NDP's fear and smear campaign in the recent election, and Albertans didn't buy it. They rejected the fear and smear. Albertans want to be able to negotiate with their employers to have more flexible shift time, and that is why we were elected with a commitment to restore the rules that existed for three years under the previous NDP government.

Ms Notley: We know that 27 per cent of oil and gas workers earn overtime every week. The Premier's proposed plan to gut banked overtime could cost the average oil and gas worker roughly \$2,700 over every 12-week period. At the same time he's taking billions of dollars from our education and health care to finance his lovely corporate tax cut. Why is his so-called plan to open Alberta for business being financed out of the back pockets of regular working people at the same time he's padding the bottom lines of business owners?

Mr. Kenney: Again, the premise of the question is completely false, Mr. Speaker. When workers are asked to do overtime by their employers, they will continue to be paid at time and a half, as they always have been, but they would only be able to go into a banked time agreement with an employer at their request and with their approval. This is about empowering workers.

Ms Notley: Yeah; that's not the way it's going to work. The employers are going to make it banked overtime, and they're not going to get the money. You know, there's not one province in the rest of the country that grabs the hard-earned overtime pay of working people from their pockets the way this government has proposed to go back to. Should the Premier render Alberta's working people the least protected in Canada, what's next? Will he be seeking advice from labour ministers in Alabama, maybe Wisconsin? Exactly how low is too low, or is there such a thing?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, what we'll be doing with the open for business act is actually restoring workplace democracy in this province, that was attacked by the NDP. We're going to give workers the ability to have a secret ballot vote on whether their workplace is certified. The NDP, of course, legislated a workaround which allows workers to be intimidated and bullied, which is what happened to some new Canadians in the construction industry in Calgary. Shameful that they were made so vulnerable by that NDP change. We're going to bring back workplace democracy.

The Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

2017 UCP Leadership Contest Investigation

Ms Notley: Well, you know, the Premier definitely needs a bit of a workshop on labour law, but let's move on instead to the justice system because I think he needs that there. He refuses to appoint a special prosecutor to oversee the investigations into his UCP leadership election and the Member for Calgary-East's. Now, he won't listen to me, but perhaps he'll listen to his Ottawa buddies. During the federal sponsorship scandal former Prime Minister Stephen Harper brought in an independent prosecutor to, quote, decide every aspect of that investigation and the laying of eventual charges, end quote. Stephen Harper acted to protect the integrity of

our justice system. Why does the Premier think the same rules don't apply to him?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, as I said last week, obviously the police operate independent from government, as does the Crown prosecutor service. We certainly respect their independence, and I hope the opposition does as well.

Ms Notley: Okay. Well, Stephen Harper apparently doesn't work. How about the current federal Conservative leader, Andrew Scheer? Earlier this year that leader said it was unbelievable that the federal Liberals would be investigating themselves when it came to the SNC-Lavalin scandal. The hypocrisy between the Conservative position when it comes to Liberals and the Conservative position when it comes to Conservatives further underlines the need for independent oversight, Mr. Speaker. Why won't the Premier put the needs of Alberta's justice system ahead of his own political interests?

2:10

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, as was the case with her questions on overtime, the Leader of the Opposition is playing rhetorical shell games here. The quote from the federal opposition leader dealt with a political inquiry led by Anne McLellan, nothing to do with police or prosecutors. We respect the independence of the Crown prosecutor service and our very professional police. I wish the opposition would demonstrate the same level of respect.

The Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you. You know, in the last few days more fines have been imposed on the Premier's colleagues by the Election Commissioner. Some of those investigations are linked to the RCMP investigation, so it's clear that the issue is not going anywhere any time soon. Meanwhile, the Premier appears quite unaware of the relationship between Crown prosecutors and criminal investigations as well as the many precedents across the country for doing the right thing in situations just like this one. Given all of this, will the Premier commit to agreeing with our motion for an emergency debate on this matter in this House this afternoon?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, what we hear here is just a continuation of the NDP's failed campaign of fear and smear. Albertans rejected it. They instead gave the largest democratic mandate in Alberta electoral history to this government to focus on creating jobs, on growing the economy, on getting pipelines built, and on standing up for Alberta. We'll allow the police to do their work independently while we as a government will focus on getting the job done for Albertans.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Camrose.

Ms Lovely: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great honour to share with the Chamber a project called Days for Girls that my Camrose Daybreak Rotary Club co-ordinates regularly. Around the world girls and women resort to using rags, mattress stuffing, banana leaves, feathers, and even cow dung to manage their menstruation.

The Speaker: Hon. member, are you asking a question or making a member's statement presently?

The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

Legislature Grounds

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It will be my honour to ask the first puffball question of the afternoon. As government and opposition members take the walk from our offices in the Edmonton Federal Building to the Legislative Assembly, we can't help but notice pink spray paint on the crumbling concrete. Members are also noticing that three fountains are not working as well. To the Minister of Infrastructure: we'd like to know what is going on with the Legislature Grounds.

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, first, this is my first opportunity to thank my constituents who elected me here, and this is also my opportunity to congratulate every member of this House on their election. Also, I would like to thank all Albertans who elected this government to grow their economy, create jobs and fight for pipelines. Coming to this question about the grounds, I will check into that and get back to the Member for Calgary-West.

The Speaker: I think in light of the mix-up of questions today – and I'll keep in mind that it's everyone's third day on the job – we'll offer one supplemental to the Member for Calgary-West, and then we'll proceed to the Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, the character of the Legislature Grounds is very, very important to the people of Alberta. Maintaining the structure of the Legislature Grounds, of course, is paramount to the people of Alberta. I'd like to ask the Infrastructure minister: are there any plans that are currently in place to ensure that the protection of our Legislature goes on into the future?

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, yes. The answer is yes, and we'll conduct the necessary repairs not only to the grounds but also to this building, the temple of democracy. I will update you as well because we have to do some repairs to this building. Thank you.

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Buffalo, please.

Municipal Funding

Member Ceci: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Our government brought in an important piece of legislation, the City Charters Fiscal Framework Act, which, among other things, gave certainty to Alberta's two largest cities about provincial revenue-sharing going forward. The intent always was that that work would shift to the rest of Alberta's municipalities to lock in similar agreements before the current MSI funding deal expires in 2021. My question is this. To the Minister of Treasury Board and Finance: what action has this government taken so far to reach funding deals with these municipalities?

The Speaker: The Minister of Transportation.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity. To the hon. member. The other municipalities, directly and through their agencies, the AUMA and the RMA, have been told that the government will be working with them to put an equitable funding arrangement in place. That has not yet been completed. I think it's a good question the hon. member asks, but we haven't come to a conclusion on that question to date.

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

Member Ceci: Thank you again. To the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board. The rural municipalities that I'm hearing from are

extremely concerned that they have not yet heard or seen any forward movement on this file. Will the minister commit today to reopening discussions on these funding agreements with municipalities immediately?

Mr. Toews: Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to working with municipalities to ensure that there's predictable funding going forward so they can serve their residents in a very focused and predictable way. My question to the members opposite would be: why did their government not get this done in four years?

Member Ceci: You know, focus and predictability is a great thing, but given that some of these municipalities are being told that they're going to have to wait until this Premier's blue-ribbon panel reports back before discussions will continue and given that municipalities can't do long-range planning without some sort of information from this government, will this minister admit today that he really has no plan to support our cities and towns and no timeline to lock in funding agreements with Alberta's municipalities?

The Speaker: The Minister of Transportation.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As my colleague just pointed out, the previous government had four years to get this agreement done and didn't do so, so it's a little interesting that on the third day with the House sitting they are looking for all the answers that they were unable to accomplish in four years. I can assure the hon. member and all members from the different municipalities across Alberta that we know that this is important. We have to get through the financial mess left by the previous government, and as we do, we will certainly work hand in glove with them to let them know what their funding levels will be.

The Speaker: The Member for Lethbridge-West.

Provincial Fiscal Policies

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, puffball questions aren't supposed to be fumbled by ministers, but the Finance minister did exactly that last week when his colleague asked him if he would keep a key campaign promise to balance the budget by 2022. The minister bumbled and mumbled something about economic headwinds but did not commit to 2022. To the Finance minister: was your befuddled answer on Thursday actually a glimmer of clarity that you're actually going to break that key campaign promise?

Mr. Toews: Mr. Speaker, we were clear with Albertans during the campaign period that bringing this province's finances to balance is a key priority, and we will be working to that end. We have inherited a fiscal mess from the previous government, yet we're committed to deliver high-quality services and get this province to balance in our first term.

The Speaker: The Member for Lethbridge-West.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the minister has surely been briefed on the numbers by now and given that one can't balance a budget by blowing a 4 and a half billion dollar hole via tax gifts to the wealthy in said budget, can the minister share with Albertans if it's health care, education, child care, or seniors' care he is targeting for cuts first? Be specific.

The Speaker: The Minister of Finance and Treasury Board.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have been briefed on the mess that we're in today. Again, we're committed to going forward, respecting the hard-earned tax dollars of Albertans. We're committed to going forward to ensure that we're delivering high-quality services to Albertans and bringing this province to balance. We will be delivering a budget this fall to that end.

Ms Phillips: Well, given, Mr. Speaker, that the Finance minister campaigned on a balanced budget by 2022, not '23, without service cuts, will the Finance minister commit to his own constituents in Grande Prairie and my constituents in Lethbridge that he won't cut any health services, any education services, or any municipal funding for mid-sized cities as a result of a reckless tax gift of more than \$4 billion to the already wealthy?

2:20

The Speaker: The Minister of Finance.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are absolutely committed to delivering on fiscal balance in this province, and we're also committed to maintaining education and health care spending. We are also committed to working with municipalities to ensure that they have predictable funding so that they can deliver to their constituents.

Thank you.

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

Addiction and Mental Health Services in St. Paul

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The St. Therese health centre in St. Paul is the designated psychiatric hub for the northeastern region. For the last four years I've been asking for assistance to improve patient care and safety for staff. Over that time we have only managed to have a couple more of the available beds reopened – that's what I've been told – but our ER is often still utilized as a holding area while waiting for a bed to open up. To the Minister of Health: will you commit to a thorough assessment of the unit to ensure that we are providing the best care possible?

The Speaker: The Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

Mr. Luan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the hon. member for raising such an important question. One in 5 Canadians and 1 in 5 Albertans suffer from mental illness. This government has committed very strongly that we're going to put in a \$100 million comprehensive mental health and recovery strategy. We're going to focus on a continuum of care with wraparound services. In addition, we've committed another \$40 million for detox beds. We'll be looking forward to working with you to work on this important issue.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much for the answer, Minister. Given that many patients from other communities are brought into our facility, often by the RCMP, but upon discharge have no means of returning to their home community, sometimes without ID or money, and given that the previous minister's response to local mayors was that that is a municipality problem, Minister, will you work with the mayor and council from St. Paul to come up with a more realistic response to this issue?

The Speaker: The Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

Mr. Luan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The answer is: absolutely right. I'm looking forward to working with the mayor and the council members because they know first-hand the issues in their community.

Thank you for that.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that many of the patients brought in are suffering from addictions and substance abuse and after treatment are simply turned out onto the street with nowhere to turn and often re-enter the system – a facility like this: the patients and community would benefit greatly from some form of wraparound services so patients can get some extra help after being discharged rather than being readmitted within days, putting extra strain on our already stressed system. Are there any programs available that the community could access to help alleviate this situation in the short term?

The Speaker: The Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

Mr. Luan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the hon. member raises a very important question. Yes, it is complex when you look at the different choices for people seeking recovery and treatment, but our government has committed that we're going to look into a comprehensive wraparound strategy. We'll be putting extra dollars into this, and we will make our system accessible for Albertans. Every Albertan who suffers from addiction deserves an opportunity to get well.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Conversion Therapy Use in Alberta

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Conversion therapy is a damaging, hurtful practice that has no place in Alberta. That's why I was proud that our government established a working group to figure out the best way to ban this practice altogether in a way that could withstand legal challenges. We had only just begun our important work when the election was called. Can the minister tell this House whether he and his government agree that the practice of conversion therapy causes real harm to members of the LGBTQ community? Yes or no?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I'd like to just point out to all Albertans that the focus for our government is that we as a government do not condone this practice in any form. No Albertan should be coerced in any way, especially vulnerable children. Vulnerable children deserve to grow up in a loving environment. But when it comes to this committee, I've actually been reached out to by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs. I've agreed to sit down with her to be able to hear from her what any recommendations might have happened with this committee.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that I've heard from people who went through the horrible, horrible practice of conversion therapy and given that Alberta Health Services has received 250 complaints related to conversion therapy since October 2015, to the minister: will you admit that you were wrong

when you said that conversion therapy is not a problem in Alberta, will you commit to supporting the ongoing work of this expert committee, and will you commit to the House that you will implement their recommendations?

Mr. Shandro: Mr. Speaker, just to quote the previous minister, for four years this government was asked this question, for four years this government was asked about conversion therapy, for four years this government was asked if they're going to do anything about it, for four years they said that conversion therapy does not happen in Alberta . . .

Mr. Bilous: Point of order.

Mr. Shandro: . . . for four years they said that there is no conversion therapy, and it wasn't until the eve of the election in February 2019 that this government set up this ad hoc committee to provide advice to the previous minister.

The Speaker: The point of order is noted at 2:26.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that your press secretary, Steve Buick, issued a statement saying that the working group was disbanded and given that you took to Twitter to discredit a reporter for reporting on that statement, can the members of this House and the people of Alberta trust anything that comes out of your office?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, the question was whether the ad hoc group that was set up in February 2019 to provide advice to the previous minister was disbanded by us, our government, or by me. I corrected that and said that it was not disbanded by me, that it was not disbanded by our government. This is a group that was struck in February 2019. They met twice – they met twice – and their last meeting was scheduled to be in April. That was cancelled because of the election that was called by the previous government.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Inclusion

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We use a lot of words in this Chamber, and it's easy for us to forget how important it is to speak plainly so that all Albertans can understand what we say so that they can properly evaluate what we're doing, and are we doing what we said we would do? Based on that premise, I would like to ask our new Premier a straightforward question so that we have a baseline. I and many Albertans would like to know what the Premier means when he uses the word "inclusion."

Mr. Kenney: Of course, Mr. Speaker, I mean an approach to accepting and celebrating the diversity of today's Alberta, including people of all backgrounds and walks of life.

The Speaker: The Member for St. Albert.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since the Premier is clearly still working on that definition, I'd like to ask the Minister of Community and Social Services how she defines "inclusion."

Mrs. Sawhney: I would just like to reiterate what our Premier said, that inclusion embodies Albertans of all backgrounds, all faiths, and all different socioeconomic backgrounds.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Ms Renaud: Thank you. Since the Premier and the minister are still struggling with their respective definitions of inclusion as it relates to their portfolios and their work, I'd like to ask the Minister of Education what she means when she uses the word "inclusion."

The Speaker: The Minister of Education.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. I agree with the Premier and with the hon. minister of social services. Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright, please.

Rural Crime

Mr. Rowswell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the UCP legacy parties took the scourge of rural crime seriously by forming the Alberta crime task force back in March of 2017. The UCP followed this up with a detailed action plan, A Safer Alberta, in July of 2018. Further, our election platform contained a plethora of detailed initiatives to combat rising rural crime. My constituents have become increasingly concerned with the rising rates of rural crime in Alberta. Can the Minister of Justice tell us what the government's plan for combatting rural crime is?

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, I can inform this Assembly that our government is committed to a fairer, faster, and more responsive justice system. In certain rural communities between 2017 and 2018 crime was up over 100 per cent. Our government is going to be making sure we invest in front-line policing by providing \$50 million to ALERT and also hiring 50 new prosecutors.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

2:30

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

Mr. Rowswell: Thank you, Minister, and thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Lloydminster, a city in my constituency, sits on the border between Alberta and Saskatchewan, many of my constituents are worried about criminals moving from province to province. Can the Minister of Justice inform this Legislature what the government's plan for working with our provincial neighbours to combat the rise of rural crime is?

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, early on, when I was sworn in as Minister of Justice, I reached out and talked with the applicable ministers in Saskatchewan. I've also talked to the senior leadership of the RCMP to make sure we reduce barriers, to make sure we, you know, combat this crisis of rural crime across Alberta.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Rowswell: Thank you, Minister, and thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that many of the difficulties in addressing the crisis of rural crime arise from understaffing and poor response rates of police and first responders in rural areas of our province, what does our

government plan on doing to improve police response times and presence in rural communities?

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, we're going to be advocating for changes to the Criminal Code to make sure that they're more reflective of the realities of rural Alberta. In addition to that, we're going to make sure we update the Crown policy manual to make sure that it reflects the realities, again, of people in our rural communities so they feel safe in their homes. Again, as I mentioned earlier on, we're also going to be investing \$50 million in ALERT to make sure that we can respond on the ground, making sure we give people the resources that they need to combat crime.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona and Leader of the Official Opposition.

2017 UCP Leadership Contest Investigation

(continued)

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Just now we are hearing of reports in the media that the RCMP have actually contacted and spoken with the Solicitor General as part of their investigation into the UCP leadership race and allegations that those working on behalf of the Premier may have engaged in fraud. To the Solicitor General: do you not believe that in order to preserve the system of justice or to preserve your job, you must appoint a special prosecutor?

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, as this matter is currently before the RCMP for investigation, it would be inappropriate for me to comment at this time on their investigation. We respect the independence of the RCMP to conduct the investigations as they see fit.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, the adage that it is inappropriate for a member of Executive Council to speak about a matter which is before the courts or before the police arises from the very notion that they cannot be involved in something and exercise any influence over it. It is that very excuse you are relying on, which is why you must either appoint a special prosecutor or step aside.

The Speaker: I might just remind the Leader of the Official Opposition that after Question 4 the use of preambles would not be an acceptable practice here in the Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, I can advise this Assembly that making sure we preserve the integrity and independence of our police and our prosecution is paramount to the justice system. I take that very, very seriously. Again, I would refer the member, if she is looking for a response, to the RCMP for commentary on their ongoing investigation.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that when I asked the Premier about this matter last week he, interestingly, failed to disclose to the House that his Solicitor General had been in conversations with the RCMP around this matter and given that every other jurisdiction and anyone with any knowledge about parliamentary procedure understands that independence must not only happen but it must be seen to happen, why will the Premier not appoint a special prosecutor?

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, I can advise this Assembly that I learned from the RCMP that they wanted to talk to me on Saturday and that I met with them on Sunday for a brief 30-minute

discussion, answered their questions fully, and they had no further, other questions for me.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, continuing on with the fact that we've just learned that the Minister of Justice has been speaking to the RCMP, just for a point of clarity, acknowledging your last statement around speaking to them on Saturday, can you please clarify for us, then, why you wouldn't then seek an independent prosecutor as you are now actually involved in the RCMP investigation?

Mr. Schweitzer: Again, Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned earlier on in my commentary, it would be inappropriate for me to comment on an ongoing investigation by the RCMP. I'd refer the hon. member to the RCMP if they're looking for further questions about this matter.

The Speaker: The Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Ms Sweet: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Minister of Justice repeatedly keeps saying that it is inappropriate for him to comment on the matter of the RCMP investigation, can he please explain to this House why it is not inappropriate for him to not appoint an independent prosecutor?

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, it would be inappropriate for me to comment on the RCMP's investigation. It seems to me that the hon. member has lots of questions about this leadership race, a leadership race, I'd like to remind this Assembly, that our Premier won a resounding mandate in, a resounding mandate to get Albertans back to work. He then went on to win a resounding mandate from all Albertans, with 55 per cent of the vote. Over a million Albertans are looking for us to restore confidence again in jobs and our Alberta economy.

The Speaker: The Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Ms Sweet: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the comment again from the Minister of Justice, are you saying now that because you've won the election, you are actually above the law? Should we not be having emergency debate and an independent prosecutor?

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, again, we respect the justice system. The police and prosecution are independent. We respect the independent process, and we will rely on them. I'd again refer the hon. member to the RCMP if you have further questions on this matter.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Chuckegg Creek Wildfire Evacuee Supports

Mr. Williams: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'm honoured to rise for the first time in this House on a nonpartisan question. As you know, the communities of High Level, Meander, Bushe, Chateh, and Paddle Prairie and parts of Mackenzie county have been under mandatory evacuation because of the Chuckegg Creek wildfire. Will the Minister of Community and Social Services please update this House on what the government is doing for these evacuees?

The Speaker: The Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mrs. Sawhney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Peace River for that question. I know part of this has

been covered by Minister Dreesen, but as we're all aware, evacuation centres have been established in Slave Lake, High Prairie, Peace River, La Crête, Grande Prairie, Fort Vermilion, and the K'atl'odeeche First Nation east of Hay River. I'd like to thank the local volunteers who have helped evacuees find food and other essentials at the evacuation centres, and further to this, my colleague the Minister of Municipal Affairs announced last Friday that our government would be providing emergency payments to evacuees to help cover the cost of . . .

The Speaker: Thank you to the hon. minister. For the benefit of all members of the Assembly it's inappropriate to refer to a member's name or a minister's name, as you did. I know that the minister of agriculture did a fine job in his statement today, but we might refer to him as such.

The Member for Peace River.

Mr. Williams: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the answer, hon. minister. As far as everyone knows, evacuating your home can be a very difficult and burdensome situation for individuals and for families. Can the minister please provide updates on how these evacuees can access these financial supports the government is providing?

Mrs. Sawhney: Mr. Speaker, as of yesterday those forced to leave their homes due to the mandatory evacuation order can apply for a one-time payment of \$1,250 per adult and \$500 per child. These funds may be deposited by an e-transfer or by obtaining a prepaid debit card at an evacuation centre, and it's our hope that this financial assistance will provide some peace of mind for residents during this very stressful time.

The Speaker: The Member for Peace River.

Mr. Williams: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Could the minister also provide the House with an update on how many residents have been evacuated and how many have received the different supports that we're offering from the government?

Mrs. Sawhney: Mr. Speaker, I can report that as of 7 a.m. today 4,386 people had registered with the evacuation centres. Additionally, as of last night 2,228 people have accessed the emergency payment systems through the e-transfer system. I'd also like to offer a heartfelt thank you to the CSS staff for all their hard work and long hours this past week.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The Member for Sherwood Park has a question.

School Class Sizes

Mr. Walker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Education. Under the previous New Democratic government class sizes in Alberta increased while math and reading scores declined. Parents in my riding of Sherwood Park are concerned about the impact that these increased class sizes are having on their children. Our government was elected on a mandate to address this issue. Can the minister please explain to the House what our government is doing to address increases to class sizes? [interjection]

2:40

The Speaker: The Minister of Education has the floor.

Member LaGrange: Thank you for the question, Mr. Speaker. In our platform we committed to an audit of class sizes. My

department is already undertaking this important work. Our government is committed to strengthening education by working with our students, our parents, our teachers, our principals, trustees, and other education stakeholders, and as Minister of Education I am focused on strengthening our education system and delivering on our platform commitments.

Thank you for the question.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Mr. Walker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Back to the minister: given that in 2017-2018 the NDP invested \$293 million into the small class size initiative, a program designed to help reduce class sizes – however, as we all know, class sizes continue to increase – can the minister please tell us what steps the government is taking to ensure that funding used for class size reduction is having positive outcomes?

The Speaker: The Minister of Education.

Member LaGrange: Thank you for the question, Mr. Speaker. The office of the Auditor General reviewed and reported on the administration of the class size initiative in 2018 and recommended monitoring and reporting processes be improved. As such, my department is auditing and will determine how previous funding was dedicated to class size reduction, and I will look forward to having more to say. As those results become available, I'll look forward to sharing them.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Mr. Walker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for confirming that the government is looking into how this funding was used. It's very important.

Mr. Speaker, given that in our platform we committed to working with parents, teachers, principals, and trustees to improve educational outcomes for our students, can the minister please explain how she is engaging our education sector to advance this very important objective?

The Speaker: The Minister of Education.

Member LaGrange: Thank you for the question. Alberta is home to some of the brightest minds in the country, from educators to trustees and from students to their parents. It is important to me as Minister of Education to maintain an open line of communication with everyone who has a role in our province's system. Additionally, I've also met with the Minister's Youth Council, and I'm looking forward to hearing their perspective as I meet with them in the near future on this issue and on other issues.

Thank you for the question.

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

Environmental Programs in Indigenous Communities

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many indigenous communities live at the forefront of climate change, and many are taking leadership in combatting it. Under the indigenous climate leadership initiatives of our government we funded nearly \$85 million in investment in things like renewable energies, energy efficiency, and climate leadership capacity building. To the Minister of Indigenous Relations: can you reassure indigenous communities that these investments and these jobs will remain under your government?

The Speaker: The Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Mr. Wilson: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government is committed to empowering indigenous Albertans to take charge of their own destiny. As part of this commitment to Alberta our government will work towards partnering with indigenous communities to share in the economic prosperity of our resource wealth and to strengthen social conditions. That's why our government is proposing the indigenous opportunities corporation. It'll provide indigenous communities access to capital, thereby removing an important barrier to ownership of resource projects.

Mr. Feehan: It looks like they just lost \$85 million.

Anyways, given that remote indigenous communities like Fort Chipewyan are not connected to Alberta's electricity grid and rely on burning diesel fuel for heat and power and given that in an effort to reduce diesel use in the northern communities, the nations formed the Three Nations Energy committee with a \$3.3 million grant from the Alberta climate leadership plan so that the community itself could own and operate the largest off-grid solar and storage project in Canada, to the same minister: will you honour this investment and commit to maintaining these kinds of investments as well?

Mr. Wilson: Mr. Speaker, again, our government is committed to a path to reconciliation and shared prosperity with indigenous peoples by advancing economic opportunities and promoting environmental stewardships through a stronger economy. Indigenous communities should have the chance to benefit from the economic opportunities generated from resource projects, and project ownership creates wealth that in turn creates opportunities for indigenous people to reinvest in their communities.

Mr. Feehan: Oh, Fort Chip just got colder.

Given that these grants will help the communities reduce greenhouse gas emissions, make energy bills more affordable, and support local jobs and given that for this community alone the solar panels are expected to generate 73.4 megawatt hours yearly and prevent almost 980 tonnes of greenhouse gases from entering the atmosphere – I'd love to have a climate leadership response to this one, by the way – can the minister please explain how his government plans to support indigenous communities who may lose these jobs and see the utility bills increase in the absence of the climate leadership plan?

The Speaker: The Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Mr. Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is time to give a real voice to those First Nations who want to be partners in the environmental response resource development so they can move their people from poverty to prosperity. This government is committed to helping the indigenous peoples.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud is rising with a question.

Daycare and Children's Services

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The NDP government took action to protect children and support Alberta families. We introduced measures to improve the child intervention system. We introduced \$25-a-day daycare, a project that we intended to expand and make universal over time. In last week's throne speech there was not a single mention of the Children's Services ministry in that

speech. To the minister: what are you actually working on, and were you disappointed to be left out of the throne speech?

The Speaker: The Minister of Children's Services.

Ms Schulz: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In April Albertans gave us a strong mandate: to get people back to work and to strengthen our economy. We know that jobs allow people to provide for their families, and a strong economy provides supports for those vulnerable Albertans who need it the most. We spent the last year listening to Albertans, and what we heard is that quality and accessibility in child care are important, but so too are choice and options for parents and families.

The Speaker: Members, we heard the question; we will hear the answer.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that when asked by the media about giving each minister a mandate letter the Premier said their mandate was set out in the UCP platform and given that there is not a single mention of children or the work of Children's Services in that platform, again to the minister: is it that you have no mandate, or is it that your work is just not important to the Premier?

Ms Schulz: Thank you very much for the question. As I said before, we are very much committed to supporting those most vulnerable and ensuring that children and youth get a good start in life, whichever that may be. Part of that is ensuring that families have the supports they need to raise their children and ensure that they get a good start.

The Speaker: The Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that you don't seem to have a clear mandate but given that we continue to hear a great deal of support for the \$25-a-day daycare program as a way of ensuring that Alberta families have access to affordable and high-quality child care, to the minister: are you prepared to assure Alberta families, children, and child care centres that this \$25-a-day daycare program will continue and that you will commit to further expansion of this program in the fall provincial budget?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Schulz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a working parent I understand the challenges of finding the right fit for child care for working families. We were very clear during the campaign. We understand we're in the middle of a pilot project for early learning and child care centres, and we will continue that pilot through. However, what works for one family may not work for another. Over the last year we heard that Alberta families are looking for choice in child care as well.

The Speaker: In 30 seconds or less we will proceed to Members' Statements.

Members' Statements

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

Alberta's Industrial Heartland

Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When Alberta's energy industry thrives, so does the great province of Alberta. My constituency of Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville has

benefited tremendously from Alberta's energy products, as does the rest of the world. I'm immensely proud to represent the hard-working Albertans that have built our Industrial Heartland into Canada's largest hydrocarbon processing region. I'm proud to live in a region that produces so much for our community, our province, and our country.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Tragically, there are people out there who do not see all the good that our energy industry does. Whether it be Hollywood celebrities flying their private jets to our province to boycott oil and gas or foreign-funded groups misrepresenting the great people of Alberta to the world, we are just not being treated fairly. Our province and our economy are under siege.

2:50

I'm proud of all the good my constituents do for Alberta, Canada, and the world. I'm proud of our Premier standing up for and stating the truth about our great province. He has been fighting back against the economic damage caused by our Prime Minister, the carbon tax, Bill C-69, Bill C-48, and the never-ending assaults on Alberta.

Thankfully, we have an ally on the federal level that has Alberta's back. She is my constituent and local Member of Parliament, Shannon Stubbs. She has been a stalwart advocate for the world-class resource development in my constituency and in our province, and I am honoured to be in such good company.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I wish to advise the Assembly that pursuant to Standing Order 7(8) that the daily Routine may continue beyond 3 o'clock p.m.

The Deputy Speaker: The Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Voting in the Legislative Assembly

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The UCP has proposed to allow MLAs to abstain from using their democratic responsibility when it comes to voting on legislation. Democracy is about participation. Our responsibility as citizens is to be engaged, to debate, and recognize, no matter the political affiliation, our role in the democratic process. We must always be engaged and vigilant to the issues that impact our neighbours, Albertans, and Canadians.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Now is the time to acknowledge our Constitution and the right that allows all of us here in this Chamber and for all Albertans, for it grants all of us the freedom to be a successful and caring society. We cannot abstain from these debates to allow others to tell us the views that we should hold. To restrain ourselves from doing the right thing, for being the voice for the most vulnerable exploited in the name of the economy: this fails the people of this province and this country. We are the leaders of this province. We were elected to be the voice of the people no matter the lines of partisanship because it's our duty.

Everyone has the following fundamental freedoms: the freedom of consciousness and religion; freedom of thought, belief, opinion, and expression – including the freedom of the press – the freedom of peaceful assembly; and, of course, the freedom of association. As we move forward into this 30th Legislature, let us remember the rights as we debate them. For although the majority will decide the outcome, our responsibility in this House is to protect the voice of the minority. All of us in this Chamber must hear them and ensure

their rights are protected because we are the lawmakers of Alberta. Let us own this responsibility and participate through respectful debate and vote with the voices our constituents elected us to use.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain.

Energy Industry in Spruce Grove-Stony Plain

Mr. Turton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour to rise in this House for the first time on behalf of the people of Spruce Grove and Stony Plain. The riding I have the privilege to represent is young and diverse with strong connections to our agricultural and natural resource sectors. A major job creator in my riding has always been the natural resources that provide thousands of jobs in our area. The organizations that run our nearby power plants are not just corporations that a handful of workers rely on to pay their bills; they are involved in helping build our community. As an example, we have the TransAlta Tri Leisure Centre, which receives well over a million visitors a year.

However, as a result of the actions of the previous government these job creators are struggling, and as a result, the families in my riding are struggling to get by while policies like the accelerated coal phase-out and the carbon tax make it harder for families to pay their bills. But for those families the throne speech presented by the Lieutenant Governor represented hope on the horizon. While coal was not specifically mentioned, the Speech from the Throne made clear that this government's priority is fighting for our energy sector, creating jobs, and making life more affordable for families through the carbon tax repeal act. To the people of Spruce Grove and Stony Plain, this government is fighting for you.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Camrose, please.

Days for Girls International

Ms Lovely: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You can tell by my eagerness that I'm very excited about giving my very first member's statement.

It gives me great honour to share with the Chamber a project called Days for Girls that my Camrose Daybreak Rotary Club coordinates regularly. Around the world girls and women resort to using rags, mattress stuffing, banana leaves, feathers, and even cow dung to manage their menstruation. Days for Girls provides a safe, beautiful, washable, and long-lasting alternative along with vital health education.

Days for Girls International is a grassroots not-for-profit creating a more dignified, humane, sustainable world for girls through advocacy, reproductive health awareness, education, and sustainable feminine hygiene because no girl should go without. Our vision is that every girl and woman in the world will have ready access to quality, sustainable hygiene by 2022. My local Rotary Club, working through a network of nearly 900 chapters and teams, has reached over 640,000 girls and women in over 100 countries.

In the past two months I personally have purchased over 1,000 pairs of briefs to assist with the project. Every washable feminine hygiene kit gives back six months of living in just three years of use, which equates to 180 days of education, health, safety, and dignity. Items we collect regularly are hotel-sized bars of soap, colourful washcloths, and large zip-lock freezer bags. The Camrose Daybreak Rotary Club has made 2,792 kits over the past four years. Please help me congratulate them on their worthy project.

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

Indigenous Relations

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For years under Conservative governments the First Nations people of Alberta were simultaneously mistreated and ignored. The consequence of 100 years of oppression has been the devastation of once healthy communities. Where once there were multigenerational families living together with positive societal structures that enhanced well-being, they were replaced with multigenerational trauma from the results of residential schools, the '60s scoop, and the Indian Act.

One pernicious tool in this destruction of healthy people was the institutionalized neglect of the Alberta government from the use of jurisdictional divide arguments. Rather than respect First Nations as Albertans, indigenous people were repeatedly told that they were, quote: not part of the problem for the Alberta government; go talk to the feds. End quote. When schools were inadequate: go talk to the feds. When houses were inadequate: go talk to the feds. When alcohol and drugs began to devastate the communities: go talk to the feds.

And here we are again in 2019. A fire rages in the territory of the Dene Tha' and the Beaver people, and this is the post of Chief Trevor Mercredi. Quote: "The First Nations are not a priority when it comes to the governments. Where is all the support for First Nations communities? We are carrying a lot of weight and receive no support. Where are the sprinklers, fire departments, water for protection? Where is the funding for heavy equipment when we need fire guards? Where is the support to help our displaced people that are caught up? Nobody is going to protect us. Red Cross should be here. Canada should be here. The province should be here."

It is time that Conservatives stop their systematic neglect of First Nations. It's time that Conservatives recognize First Nations people as Albertans and treat them as such.

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

Agricultural Education in Drumheller-Stettler

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before I begin, I'd like to congratulate you on your recent election. I'm confident you will excel in the role. You've been very helpful to us rookie MLAs, and your respect and love of this House and its traditions are contagious, so thank you.

Mr. Speaker, as I rise to speak in this House for the first time, it would only be right to thank the wonderful people who sent me here. I'd like to thank the people of Drumheller-Stettler for putting their trust in me. I'd like to thank the many volunteers, donors, and friends, new and old, who made this election part of their life for a time. It was extremely humbling, and I'll be forever grateful.

Mr. Speaker, in a riding like Drumheller-Stettler, with a bigger footprint than Belgium, we have our fair share of issues and struggles, but I wanted my first statement in this House to highlight a positive local story. A small school in Altario, not far from the Saskatchewan border, is doing a great job of bringing agriculture into the classroom. The Altario school has actively embraced its agricultural roots, and over the past years has moved towards including an educational component in the school that focuses on agriculture. This year that included four days on ag education, a large community garden, and the raising of two beef cows.

This past week Altario school received their own barn as an agricultural learning centre. The vision for this centre is for students to work with the different farm animals so they understand what's on your plate. Further to this, the school is creating a residency for students throughout the Prairie Land regional school division and eventually the entire province to come to Altario for a period of

days to camp in the hills surrounding their town, to tour agricultural facilities, and to work in the ag learning centre with the different animals. As 'advocates', Altario school believes it has an awesome opportunity to grow an appreciation for agriculture and education throughout our province.

We need to do a better job educating the world about our agricultural sector, Mr. Speaker, and it starts with our own kids.

3:00

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The Member for Edmonton-Manning and the deputy House leader is rising on a notice of motion.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to provide notice that at the appropriate time I'll be moving the following motion pursuant to Standing Order 30.

Be it resolved that the ordinary business of the Legislative Assembly be adjourned to discuss a matter of urgent public importance; namely, the need to discuss the critical need for a special prosecutor to oversee all aspects of all outstanding investigations into alleged voter fraud and irregular financial contributions in order to ensure investigations proceed with the utmost transparency, integrity, and free from the perception of bias.

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Labour and Immigration.

Bill 2

An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business

Mr. Copping: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 2, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business.

This bill introduces changes to workplace rules that will restore prosperity, get people back to work, and let the world know that Alberta is open for business again. We are reducing burdens on job creators by returning to the previous general holiday pay and banked overtime rules. We will restore democracy in the workplace by returning to mandatory secret ballots for union certification and providing support and assistance to employees seeking information on their rights as a union member. We are also strengthening rules that co-ordinate workplace complaints when these complaints involve multiple bodies such as the Human Rights Commission and the Labour Relations Board. With these proposed changes we will restore fairness and balance to the workplace, stimulate job creation, and get Albertans back to work.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 2 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: Edmonton-City Centre, please.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just in response to your request from my debate last Thursday on Government Motion 6 I would like to table the appropriate number of copies of two articles: first, Tories Blasted for Handbook on Paralyzing Parliament, from the Canadian Press; and the second being a similar article on their obstruction handbook that was published in the *Star*.

The Speaker: Are there others?

Hon. members, I have a tabling today. It is a letter from the office of the Ethics Commissioner dated May 24, 2019, to myself.

Tablings to the Clerk

The Clerk: I wish to advise the Assembly that the following document was deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of the hon. Ms Pon, Minister of Seniors and Housing, pursuant to the Government Organization Act the office of the Alberta Seniors Advocate annual report 2017-18.

The Speaker: Points of order. The honourable – check that. The Official Opposition House Leader.

Point of Order

Language Creating Disorder

Mr. Bilous: I see that you want to restore me to my old position, Mr. Speaker.

I'm rising to speak on the point of order at 2:26. Mr. Speaker, I rise under Standing Order 23(i) and (j). During question period the Minister of Health accused our party or, when we were in government, our government of saying that conversion therapy wasn't being practised in Alberta and that it didn't exist. There couldn't be something further from the truth. The reason why I'm rising is because not only is that statement patently false; we in this Chamber need to ensure that something that was either misspoken or incorrect factually stands corrected immediately because we know that Albertans do pay attention to not only question period but to what is said in this place.

What I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, is that what we have said about conversion therapy – and it was actually the former Minister of Health, the Member for Edmonton-Glenora, who said, and I quote: conversion therapy is a damaging, hateful practice that has no place in our province; Albertans deserve to trust that any measures to end this practice are as strong as possible, that they will withstand legal challenges and have the support of those who need them most. Now, I will table what I've just read from, which was a group that was struck to explore banning conversion therapy.

But I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that the current Minister of Health in his response in question period today tried to indicate that we have said in the past that it doesn't exist or isn't practised. That couldn't be further from the truth. We know that to be untrue, so to resolve this point of order, we simply ask that the Minister of Health withdraw his comment and apologize.

The Speaker: The Government House Leader.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you. While we're talking about quotes on this point of order, I will refer you to a quote from the former Health minister, who the current Health minister was referring to in question period. I think that's not in question. I quote: the colleges are not aware of any regulated members performing reparative therapy; these professional colleges have accountability mechanisms in place to discipline members if they were to learn otherwise. On September 29, 2017, in a letter from the then Minister of Health's office she says to tell us that they were assured that these colleges are not aware of any of their regulated members performing conversion therapy and have accountability mechanisms in place to discipline members if they were to learn otherwise.

Further to that, in the Legislature, in *Hansard*, on December 13, 2017 – I was there when this conversation happened – the former Minister of Health said, "There is no billable service related to conversion therapy." Further to that, in the Legislature, also present for this one, Mr. Speaker, as I'm sure you were, on December 13 the Minister of Health said, "Alberta Health in no way covers this practice." Going on with that, now let's just throw one more former

minister's quote in for the heck of it. The former Education minister said to the CBC on September 11, 2018, that they are not aware of any Alberta schools that prescribe conversion therapy. On and on and on, there are quotes.

But with that said, Mr. Speaker, that probably isn't that relevant. I just wanted to answer the quotes with quotes. What is relevant is this, that this is clearly a matter of debate and is not a point of order.

The Speaker: Thank you to the Opposition House Leader for what I can only imagine would be very intriguing further interjections. However, I am prepared to rule on this point of order at present unless there's anyone else who has new information other than yourself.

To be clear, Member for Edmonton-Glenora, I'm not looking for your opinion on this particular issue. What I'm looking for is new information that would give an indication that the language used is likely to create disorder. We are not debating the issue of what you may have said or what he may have said but language he used likely to create disorder. Here's your big chance.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Absolutely, I'm happy to speak in that regard. What the member said – and I don't have the Blues in front of me, but the member said “and I quote,” and then he went on to say a bunch of stuff that I absolutely did not say. The member was accurate in saying that I talked about health professionals being part of colleges that govern their practice and that there was no billable accountability. But when the hon. Minister of Health said “and I quote” and then said a bunch of things referring to it not being an issue when I had over 250 letters to my office, letters that are absolutely available through ARTS, that the hon. minister absolutely has every right to access as they're part of the institutional memory – I in no way ever said that. Saying “and I quote” and then going on to say a bunch of things that fly in the face of reality and fact is absolutely intended to enrage outrage in this House and cause disorder.

The Speaker: Thank you to the hon. member for your interjections.

I think what is clear here is that this is a matter of debate. While we may not agree with the opinions stated by members from the opposite side or perhaps from time to time on our own side of the House, what we can agree on is that it's quite possible that there will be times in this Chamber when there are two sets of facts around the same issue. I would suggest to all members of the Assembly that that is exactly what we have here today. It is a disagreement on the facts. As such, there is no point of order.

3:10

Let us proceed . . . [interjections] Members, I think you'll find that I have ruled on the previous point of order. The interjections from Edmonton-McClung are not appreciated.

Let us proceed as I am prepared to rule on the point of privilege from last week. Following that ruling we will proceed to the SO 30. I see the Member for Calgary-Mountain View is very excited about providing her comments with respect to that.

Privilege

Obstructing a Member in Performance of Duty

The Speaker: Hon. members, I've had the opportunity to consider the arguments made with respect to the question of privilege raised by the Official Opposition House Leader on Thursday, May 23, 2019. You may find these comments – and I'm sure you've all reviewed them – on page 34 to 36 of *Alberta Hansard* for that date. Since we're at the beginning of a new Legislature and a number of you have not had the opportunity to see questions of privilege raised

and argued in this Assembly, I would like to make a few initial comments in this respect. As I noted Thursday, questions of privilege are serious, serious matters, and therefore they should not be taken lightly.

Questions of privilege are dealt with under Standing Order 15. The Official Opposition House Leader met the procedural requirements of that standing order to provide notice of the question at least two hours prior to the commencement of the afternoon sitting by notifying my office at 11:11 on May 23, 2019. I can also confirm that May 23 was the first opportunity available to the Official Opposition House Leader to raise this matter before the Assembly as the press conference which he referred to in his arguments took place on May 13 and last Thursday was the first regular sitting day following the news conference.

In addition to reviewing the arguments of the House leaders, I have reviewed the video broadcast of the press conference and have conducted some additional research, and therefore I am prepared to rule on this matter. The facts of the matter are contained within the press conference held by the hon. Premier and the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance on May 13, 2019. At the news conference the Premier mentioned bills that would be forthcoming during the First Session of the 30th Legislature, including Bill 1, the carbon tax repeal act. The Premier made specific reference to Bill 1 at approximately the 13-minute mark of the news conference, wherein he stated in response to a question, quote: first of all, Bill 1 of the new Legislature will be introduced on Tuesday next week and will be called the carbon tax repeal act, and it will be passed with an effective elimination by May 30th, so by May 30th there will be no longer an Alberta carbon tax. End quote.

The Government House Leader confirmed this statement in his remarks made to the Assembly on Thursday. Likewise, the Official Opposition House Leader paraphrased his remarks in his argument. Therefore, the basic facts of the matter are not in question with respect to the Premier's comments.

The Official Opposition House Leader contends that in speaking with the media about the ultimate disposition of Bill 1, the Premier presupposed a decision of the Assembly in that that decision would occur by May 30, 2019. The Official Opposition House Leader also made representations that the Premier's statements constitute an affront on the institute of parliament. He's essentially arguing that in presupposing a decision of the Assembly, the work of members debating Bill 1 has been prejudged and, therefore, impeded.

Hon. members, it should be pointed out that the matter before the Assembly is technically a purported contempt of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta. I note for all members, as indicated on page 81 of *House of Commons Procedures and Practice*, third edition:

There are . . . affronts against the dignity and authority of Parliament which may not fall within one of the [specified] defined privileges. Thus, the House also claims the right to punish, as a contempt, any action which, though not a breach of a specific privilege: tends to instruct or impede the House in the performance of its functions; obstructs or impedes any Member or officer of the House in the discharge of their duties; or is an offence against the authority or dignity of the House . . . In that sense, all breaches of privilege are contempts of the House, but not all contempts are necessarily breaches of privilege.

This is not the first time in the recent past that this type of purported contempt has been raised in the Assembly. Most recently a question of contempt was ruled on on November 1, 2016. In addition, a question of contempt was dealt with in the 28th Legislature on December 2, 2013. The House leader of the Official Opposition argued that the matter before the Assembly now is similar to both of these matters in that in all three the government

of the day committed a prima facie case of contempt by presupposing a decision of the Legislative Assembly.

In November 2016 Speaker Wanner found a question of contempt when the government aired radio advertisements and published a website advertising the details of its climate action plan in spite of the fact that the enabling legislation had not yet been passed by the Assembly.

In 2013 Speaker Zwozdesky ruled that the government advertising brochures, The Building Alberta Plan, constituted a prima facie contempt because the advertising presupposed a decision of the Assembly.

I'm not convinced that the matter before the Assembly today is substantially similar to either of these prior matters. In both previous questions of contempt significant details of government programs were communicated to the public through advertising campaigns, leaving the impression that the proposed legislation enabling programs was already law. This, of course, was not the case. In the current matter, the Premier's statement on Bill 1 was contained within a response to a question put to him. It was the equivalent of two sentences within the overall context of a 35-minute news conference.

Moreover, at the outset of the press conference, at approximately the three-minute mark, the Premier stated, discussing Bill 3, the Job Creation Tax Cut (Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment) Act: the job-creation tax cut will be Bill 3 of the Legislature that will convene next week, subject to the approval of the Legislature; I'm pleased to announce today that on July 1 we will drop the general business tax rate from 12 to 11 per cent, and then it will go from 11 to 10 per cent on January 1 next year.

Through saying "subject to the approval of the Legislature," the Premier rightly acknowledges, albeit in the context of Bill 3, that it is the Legislature, not the Premier or Executive Council, that determines whether or not bills come into legislation.

I can understand that the new government is eager to commence its legislative program and to announce and work towards implementing programs and policies. It is right for the government to announce and inform the people that they serve on their policies. As former Speaker Gene Zwozdesky noted in the ruling of contempt on November 7, 2013:

We all know that governments across the greater Commonwealth will make announcements . . . policy statements . . . [and] funding announcements . . . and they are well within their right to do that. That's what governments are elected to do. They can do it any time they wish provided that some of our conventions, rules, and authorities are observed.

You can find these remarks on page 2845 of *Alberta Hansard* for that day.

While I recognize that one sentence referenced from the press conference might, when taken on its own, assume Bill 1's passage, it cannot be taken out of the overall context, it is evidence that the Premier was not attempting to presuppose a decision of the Assembly in answering the question at the press conference. I find, therefore, that there is no prima facie case with this question of privilege.

However, as we embark on a new Legislature with a new government and many new members, I do wish to impress upon the members of Executive Council and all members that we must take care to uphold the dignity and institution of parliament by respecting its traditions and its constitutional authorities. One of the key principles is the concept of responsible government, in which the executive branch is responsible to the legislative branch of government. As Speaker Kowalski remarked on May 1, 1997, on page 319 of *Alberta Hansard* for the day:

The principle of the executive being responsible to the Assembly is the cornerstone of responsible government in this country.

In his text *Constitutional Law of Canada*, third edition, by . . . Peter Hogg, Mr. Hogg goes so far as to say: "Responsible government is probably the most important non-federal characteristic of the Canadian Constitution."

In the matter before us, responsible government is realized by government introducing proposed legislation and the Assembly, not the government, deciding on the bill's ultimate fate.

Hon. members, let us all be mindful of these vital parliamentary principles and play our part in being guardians of them. The matter is now closed.

Now on to Standing Order 30.

3:20

Request for Emergency Debate

2017 UCP Leadership Contest Investigation

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As noted earlier, I rise to propose a motion under Standing Order 30. I should note before I begin that written notice was provided to the Speaker in accordance with Standing Order 30(1) and has met the conditions of 30(7). Pursuant to Standing Order 30 the motion reads as follows:

Be it resolved the ordinary business of the Legislative Assembly be adjourned to discuss a matter of urgent public importance; namely, the need to discuss the critical need for a special prosecutor to oversee all aspects of all outstanding investigations into alleged voter fraud and irregular financial contributions in order to ensure investigations proceed with the utmost transparency, integrity, and free from [any] perception of bias.

Mr. Speaker, this issue meets the conditions of Standing Order 30(7).

(7) A motion under this Standing Order is subject to the following conditions:

(a) the matter proposed for discussion must relate to a genuine emergency, calling for immediate and urgent consideration.

Mr. Speaker, just this week the Election Commissioner issued another \$22,000 in fines related to the UCP leadership scandal. It was also revealed today that the Solicitor General himself was questioned by the RCMP with respect to this matter. Ultimately, these \$22,000 in fines mean that a total of \$67,500 in fines has been levied since February of this year. Given that these latest penalties are the largest amount of fines ever issued in a single day by the commissioner, given that there are ongoing RCMP investigations into this matter, and given that the members of Executive Council have dual roles in this investigation as members of the public co-operating in an ongoing investigation as well as ministers of the Crown responsible for the administration of the law under schedule 9 of the Government Organization Act, time is of the essence when it comes to ensuring the independence of the oversight of this process. Every day that we further delay risks the integrity of the investigative process.

Mr. Speaker, I don't question for a moment that the RCMP is independent of government – I'm well aware of that – but in these complex investigations it's quite normal for the RCMP to regularly consult with Crown prosecutors for legal advice, particularly in cases where the individual officers may not have seen a case of this type before. The Premier and the Minister of Justice can request to be briefed on any information within the ministry, which includes the Crown prosecutors, on the status of the matter. No other witness or defendant in the province would have such an opportunity. The equality of all Albertans under the law must be preserved.

Continuing under section 30(7), Mr. Speaker, I believe the conditions in (b) through (e) are met. I will not list them now unless you would like me to. Okay. Subsection (f): the discussion under

the motion must not raise questions that, according to the standing orders, can only be debated on a notice of motion. As you know, this issue is not before the House in the form of any bill debate. *Beauchesne's*, on page 113, says as follows:

The Standing Order is clear that the question be specific and must require urgent consideration. It must deal with a matter within the administrative competence of the Government and there must be no other reasonable opportunity for debate.

I would call that a three-part-test. This matter is well within the administrative competence of government, the Attorney General obviously having the ability to appoint such a special prosecutor.

Mr. Speaker, as indicated, during any complex case, especially cases where similar ones have not come before the investigator before, officers are likely to engage in precharge consultation with the Crown prosecution service. Now, obviously, I'm aware that we're not a precharge screening jurisdiction, but still there's a considerable amount of consultation, and best practice in this case would dictate that the investigating officers should be in regular contact with the Crown. This is entirely appropriate and within the bounds of justice. It does, however, mean that even at this moment consultations may be occurring and may occur under the oversight of the Solicitor General.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to make it clear that I'm not suggesting that there is no independence in the RCMP or the Crown prosecutors; quite the contrary. There are many ways, in situations similar to this, to preserve the independence of the Crown prosecution service, and an independent prosecutor is one of those ways. That's exactly what we're calling for.

I'll quote now *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, and this is referring to the fact that this has been ongoing for a while. It says:

In one exceptional circumstance, an application was approved for an emergency debate on "the sudden and unexpected revelation of events which [had] taken place in the past, in that they might precipitate a course of conduct which, if allowed to continue unchecked, would certainly classify itself as an emergency and a matter of urgent consideration.

Mr. Speaker, should these investigations unfold such that the Premier, the Minister of Justice, or indeed any member of Executive Council or their advisers had direct knowledge of breaches of the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act – and, to be clear, I'm not implying that any member has such knowledge – should that ultimately be the finding of the investigation, it will be too late at that time to appoint an independent special prosecutor.

Mr. Speaker, let me be clear. This topic has come up in question period. However, I would suggest that a 35-second question and answer, especially given the complexities of the legal and ethical duties of the Solicitor General in this particular case, is not the best time to discuss such a matter, and I think that ultimately such an important matter as ensuring that all people regardless of their role in the system, especially the Minister of Justice, are viewed to be equal before the law is something that would certainly raise concerns amongst the public. Our leader and our caucus have been calling for a special prosecutor to be appointed since this government was sworn in. The fact that both the Premier and the Minister of Justice were participants in the leadership election from which the scandal which is alleged before the RCMP was perpetrated reinforces the need for a special prosecutor.

We know that this case has been referred to the RCMP for investigation by the commissioner, we know that several of the individuals involved in the scandal face potential jail time or even large fines for their involvement – just today we've learned that the Solicitor General himself has been questioned by the RCMP on this

matter – and we know that the UCP has terminated employees or fired candidates for their involvement. Albertans expect their justice system to be impartial, fair, and unbiased. This issue remains an emergent issue as demonstrated by the issuance of the additional \$22,000 in fines and the fact that the investigation is clearly ongoing since the Solicitor General himself admits that he was just questioned on Sunday.

Mr. Speaker, in addition, obviously, this is a complex matter. The role of the Attorney General is itself complex. I would just like to quote, maybe not at length but briefly, from the code of conduct for prosecutors. On page 4, for instance, it says:

Having independence and discretion does not mean that the Attorney General is not accountable. In fact, accountability might be considered a further fundamental concept.

As the "chief law enforcement officer," the Attorney General is accountable to the Legislature and society for the process through which justice is administered . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member, as you know – and perhaps you're concluding your remarks now; I'm not a hundred per cent sure – under Standing Order 30 it is your role here to briefly identify why this is an emergency, not the substance of a significant debate. I think I've been fairly lenient. Are you close to wrapping your remarks up?

Ms Ganley: I am very close to wrapping my remarks up, Mr. Speaker.

I would just say, to end this point, that it isn't just the case that justice must be done; it must be seen to be done. And particularly in the case of the Solicitor General, it's critical that he be at arm's length to an investigation, particularly an investigation in which he made some of the allegations that are of substance.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would call on all members of the House to allow for an opportunity to debate the relative merits of a special prosecutor in this particular case. Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

I see the Government House Leader rising on this same point, Standing Order 30.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Thank you. First of all, it's disappointing to see that the Official Opposition would rather continue with fear and smear than debate Motion 501 on making adoption more efficient, but that's where we're at.

Mr. Speaker, I will draw your attention to *Beauchesne*, sixth edition, on page 113, point 387, which says:

The Standing Order is clear that the question be specific and must require urgent consideration. It must deal with a matter within the administrative competence of the Government and there must be no other reasonable opportunity for debate.

I highlight the last portion for you, Mr. Speaker, because clearly the NDP has forgotten that the Leader of the Official Opposition had time to debate this today and, in fact, debated this very matter with the Premier on Thursday, May 23, where there were six questions about this very issue and several more today.

3:30

Also, for your reference again, Mr. Speaker, page 113 of *Beauchesne's* states:

390 "Urgency" within this rule does not apply to the matter itself, but means "urgency of debate", when the ordinary opportunities provided by the rules of the House do not permit the subject to be brought on early enough and the public interest demands that discussion take place immediately.

On page 26 of *Hansard* the Leader of the Official Opposition – sorry, Mr. Speaker; I should be clear that that was on Thursday – said:

To preserve public trust in our... system, the Premier must appoint a special prosecutor. Why won't he?

The Premier then, in turn, responded:

Mr. Speaker, obviously, the police and the Crown prosecutor service operate independent of any kind of political direction from government, be it this government or the former government, and we respect that independence. We will always preserve and protect it.

And indeed we will.

Now, perhaps the NDP doesn't see how those questions connect to the request for emergency debate. Well, let's read again from the letter provided to the Speaker's office by them. It says:

Be it resolved that the ordinary business of the Legislative Assembly be adjourned to discuss a matter of urgent public importance; namely, the need to discuss the critical need for a special prosecutor to oversee all aspects of all outstanding investigations into alleged voter fraud and irregular financial contributions.

That sounds like exactly what the Leader of the Official Opposition asked in question period on Thursday and again today. Clearly, this isn't a new or emergency issue, and the Official Opposition has had the opportunity to raise the matter. In fact, I wouldn't be surprised that the NDP already know full well that this does not fit with emergency debate and just want to grandstand and attempt to distract Albertans. I hope that's not the case, Mr. Speaker.

I will close with this. Page 695 in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, states:

As one Speaker noted, an emergency debate should be on a topic "that is immediately relevant and of attention and concern throughout the nation."

It goes on to state:

Topics considered highly partisan in nature are not as readily approved.

In fact, considering that all this opposition is interested in is an internal party matter and not a matter of government policy, I would further fail to see how this topic is supposed to be considered in order with Standing Order 30.

The Speaker: Thank you, members. With respect to Standing Order 30, Standing Order 30(2) provides that

the Member may briefly,

with some leniency of the chair,

state the arguments in favour of the request for leave and the Speaker may allow such debate as he or she considers relevant to the question of urgency.

And it's the role of the chair to

rule on whether or not the request for leave is in order.

Hon. members, your chair is prepared to rule on whether the request for leave for the motion should proceed under Standing Order 30(2). The Member for Edmonton-Manning has met the requirement of providing at least two hours' notice to the Speaker's office by providing the required notice at 11:19 this morning. The motion reads as follows:

Be it resolved that the ordinary business of the Legislative Assembly be adjourned to discuss a matter of urgent public importance; namely, the need to discuss the critical need for a special prosecutor to oversee all aspects of all outstanding investigations into alleged voter fraud and irregular financial contributions in order to ensure investigations proceed with the utmost transparency, integrity, and free from the perception of bias.

As has been mentioned, the relevant parliamentary authorities on this subject are pages 695 to 704 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, and *Beauchesne's*, paragraphs 387 to 390.

Members, let me begin by pointing out that the question of urgency under Standing Order 30 deals with whether there is urgency of debate, not whether the issue itself is important or urgent. I, for one, have difficulty finding in this case that other business of the Assembly should be set aside, particularly as this issue is not particularly new or urgent. In fact, as some members have said, this issue was before the House last week. It was before the House again today. Although I disagree with the member's position that question period is not the place for it to be debated, the assertion that it is not available to be debated would not be correct, and as such there are many other avenues or ways in which this issue, albeit important to members of the Assembly, can be brought up before the Assembly.

I would also refer to page 699 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, which states that the subject matter being proposed in this type of motion "should not involve the administration of a government department." In this case this particular issue is ongoing and will remain ongoing. As such, what is determined to be an emergency today may or may not be determined an emergency tomorrow. This issue will likely proceed over a number of days. Accordingly, the chair does not find the request for leave in order, and the question will not be put to the Assembly.

Before I conclude, and for the benefit of all new members, I would like to note the types of matters that have been considered urgent in the past, which have included: matters of imminent health risk and safety of the public as found in the ruling of Speaker Kowalski on October 25, 2010, which is available on page 918 of *Hansard* for that day; emergencies or matters that cannot be brought before the Assembly within a reasonable timeline such as the decision of the Federal Court of Appeal to overturn the National Energy Board's approval on Trans Mountain pipeline, a discussion of which you can find in *Hansard* on October 29, 2018, page 1622; and matters in which there is a general wish of the Assembly to have an emergency debate such as the ongoing oil price differential, which was ruled urgent by Speaker Wanner on November 21, 2018. While this list is certainly not exhaustive, I hope it provides all members some clarity with respect to how Standing Order 30 has traditionally been treated.

With that said, this concludes the matter.

Orders of the Day

The Speaker: I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar rising on a statement.

Member's Apology

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Thursday I made some remarks, and I just want you to know, Mr. Speaker, that I apologize if you were offended. Of course, I want you to know that my position on the election of Speakers has evolved significantly since Thursday, so I unreservedly apologize to you and withdraw those remarks.*

The Speaker: Accepted and withdrawn.

The Government House Leader is rising.

*See page 42, right column, paragraph 3

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask for unanimous consent in order to immediately proceed to private member's Motion 501.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Motions Other than Government Motions

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain.

Adoption Processes

501. Mr. Turton moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to take all necessary measures to make the process for all forms of adoption more efficient and timely for families.

Mr. Turton: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, thank you for allowing me to rise and speak about the importance of increasing the efficiency and timeliness of the adoption process here in Alberta. It is my privilege today to rise and speak on this issue, one that I believe is immensely important and has a deeply personal connection to me and my family.

At this point, Mr. Speaker, I would like to tell this Chamber about the challenges that my family has had with the adoption process and the reasons why I believe this process must be improved. After our first child was born, our desire was to have another child and make our family complete. However, due to medical issues, we were unable to have another child of our own, so we turned to the adoption program so that we could complete our family and give another child a home.

3:40

Mr. Speaker, for years as my wife and I tried to navigate through the adoption process, we experienced what so many Albertans have gone through, with endless streams of red tape, paperwork, excessive costs, and constant delays. As the process dragged on and on, we had to deal with having to answer tough questions as parents to our six-year-old son every night as we tucked him in, when he would ask us why he couldn't have a brother or sister like everyone else he knew. After the initial application with the social worker, we then started a two-and-a-half-year waiting period. This is when our family had to meet with a social worker every six months for an update and fill out a long refresher form, at a cost of over \$1,000 each time for a 20-minute visit, to simply state that nothing had changed from the previous visit.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

One of those home inspection visits stands out in my mind, when our family was told that if we did not remove a bird bath from our backyard, we would no longer be eligible to adopt a child as this posed a clear and present danger as a drowning hazard for the prospective child. I would have had a hard time getting my hand wet in the bird bath as it was so small, but it showed that the goal of helping a child find a home was becoming secondary to justifying endless levels of paperwork and red tape. We had to wait for months to have our paperwork processed at the Children's Services offices. During this time I remember having their number on speed-dial as we kept calling almost weekly for updates to see when our paperwork would be looked at by the agency and could be processed so that we could be placed at another step in the queue.

However, Madam Speaker, after experiencing three years of waiting and starting to lose hope, my wife and I were finally told by the agency that a young birth mother had picked our family and

that a baby boy was available. Within days of that phone call we finally boarded a plane to meet with the newest addition to our family. I remember very clearly that when we were going to pick up our new son from the hospital, we woke our oldest son up in the hotel room and he jumped out of bed and said: "This is the best day of my life because I'm finally going to be a big brother. What's his name again?"

I am pleased to say, Madam Speaker, that my family is blessed with a positive ending to this story. We have an amazing little boy who will experience all the love in the world. However, as I have told this story over the years, I have met with many parents who continue to wait and wait and cannot afford to participate in a prohibitively expensive and time-consuming journey.

Madam Speaker, the reason I want to give my personal story is because all over this province, in every riding, there are families just like mine that simply want the ability to have a family. There are countless moms and dads that simply want the ability to provide a forever home for a child. I know that there are countless parents that I have talked to and shared my personal story with that know the pain of explaining to their kids why they don't have a sibling yet. That is why I'm putting my motion forward today.

The reality, fellow members, is that the demand for adoption services in Alberta is continuing to go up. It has been rising steadily since the early 2000s. Wait-lists full of parents seeking to adopt have nearly doubled, and the wait time for domestic adoption placements has risen significantly. In the last data we have, the wait time has gone from 18 months, on average, in 2008 to three years in 2016. International adoptions take even longer and provide a huge toll on parents wanting to explore this route.

Despite the steady growth of demand for adoption, the number of adoptions actually taking place in Alberta has fallen by 25 per cent over the last 11 years. This is harmful to all parties. It's harmful to the child, whose lack of a permanent support is damaging, despite the best efforts of social workers and foster homes. It's hard on the adoptive parents, who are brought through a cycle which is expensive, time consuming, and exhaustive. It's hard on foster parents, who sacrifice years of their lives doing everything they can to make a child feel at home while promoting them for adoption and are put through long processes with an inefficient adoption service in need of rework. Social workers need to be considered as well, who spend long hours working closely with children and families looking for a child and have to justify to prospective parents why they must continue to wait and wait and wait.

Madam Speaker, the system must become better. The fatigue of watching both children and families spending years going through a long and extremely complicated process, hoping that one small thing, one small administrative point or a bird bath, doesn't throw it off, would be too much for many people. I have personally met with countless prospective parents who simply tossed in the towel and deemed that the emotional toll from a process made endlessly complex was not worth it. It's important for everyone here to remember that every time this happens, a child is denied a home.

Over the years a lot has changed in adoption policy around the world. Where it used to be a very secret process, with some adopted children never hearing anything about their birth parents or even knowing that they were adopted, today the birth family is welcomed into the process. In most cases birth families even get a say in who gets the opportunity to adopt the child.

I've had the privilege of meeting both the biological mom and biological dad of our son. Twice a year we write a letter to them giving them updates about how our six-year-old son is doing here in Alberta, and we plan on doing this till he is an adult. To this day I'm thankful that our son's biological parents made the courageous

decision to find a forever home for their child. As we met with the biological mother, I will never forget her looking down at her one-week-old baby boy and letting him know that he was going to have a better life with his new adoptive family and that she would never forget him as she said goodbye for the very last time.

Madam Speaker, I'm sad to think that our inefficient processes deny children to have a better life with forever homes. It is time for the government to continue updating and modernizing the adoption process here in the province. While we place no blame at anyone's feet for the problems plaguing our system, I do believe that something as critical as adoption can and must do better for the families and children in the system.

Madam Speaker, we all recognize that the best possible result for children is for them to end up with a loving and caring family they can call their own, whether they were born into it or not. This motion calls on the government to do everything they can to see that adoption becomes a reality in the best and most efficient manner possible.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: I will recognize the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Madam Speaker. As this is my first time rising formally in the Assembly other than in question period, I'd like to say thank you to everybody for their warm welcome to all the new members. It's a great privilege to be here.

It's also a privilege to speak to this motion brought by the hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain. I'd like to thank him for bringing this motion forward as well as for sharing his very personal story. I'd like to congratulate your family on your child and on your growing family. I appreciate you sharing this personal story with us today.

I'd like to rise in favour of supporting this motion. I do believe it's very important that we do take all steps and measures we can, Madam Speaker, to improve the adoption processes, because we all know that this is really about the best interests of children. The children who are seeking adoption are, of course, children who are in need of a loving and permanent, stable home, and we should encourage all things possible to place those children in loving families who are opening their arms to do that. I have been very privileged to know many people in my personal life who have chosen and have taken the courageous and often arduous journey to adopt a child, whether it be through private adoption or international adoption. I know how gracious those parents are, how hard working they are, and how hard they work to create their family and to open their family. I think it's a really admirable thing that they've done, and I support that.

As we know, in Alberta there are three different ways of adopting children. There are three different processes to go through in this province. There is, of course, the adoption of children in care, and those are children who are in permanent government care. We need to be aware, of course, that those children often have many special needs. They come from a background that if they are in permanent government care, they are often in situations where there is drug abuse. There may be neglect. There may be special needs, either, you know, behavioural, physical, mental, developmental. So we need to be sure that those children are being placed in appropriate homes. We need to make sure that those adoptive families are prepared for the specific needs of the children that they're bringing in.

I appreciate that that process can be sometimes quite long, but it is important, of course, to make sure that both the family and the child are supported as much as possible. We know that that work to

place those children in government care in homes is often done by Children's Services staff – right? – front-line staff who are doing the assessments, that are doing the trainings, that are going through the application processes, that are conducting orientations with prospective adoptive families. For those workers, if we do want to speed up our processes, if we do want to ensure that more children are placed in loving homes as quickly as possible, we need to make sure that those employees are supported and that we continue to support front-line workers both in resources, in training and not to cut their funding so that they can actually process more applications, support more families, and encourage more placements of children in homes.

3:50

We also know, of course, that in Alberta we have private adoption. Those private adoption agencies are regulated by Children's Services or licensed adoption agencies. Of course, they have their own processes and costs that are associated with that. Sometimes we deal with private adoptions when it is family members that are taking in maybe a stepchild or adopting a stepchild or a family member's child into their family. Those are the private adoptions.

As well, we also know that there are international adoptions. Two of my dear friends have adopted internationally, and I know they waited upwards of three years to adopt, and that did cost them quite a bit of money. I believe, according to the Children's Services website, estimates for international adoption are somewhere between \$15,000 and \$40,000, and that is a lot to ask of these families. But, of course, there are challenges on the Alberta government's ability to govern or change international adoption processes. You're often dealing with some countries that have signed onto the Hague protocol, some that have not. They've got their own processes, their own screening times. There are immigration concerns to deal with with the federal government. International adoption is a lengthy process. There's no doubt about that. I do have a bit of a concern about how much the Alberta government can influence that because of the fact that so much is done with the federal government and with agencies outside of the country.

I think that when we're looking at this, we do need to be conscious that the overall objective is to place more children in loving homes. That is always the number one objective. That's the best interest of the child, and we need to make sure that that happens. I'm not surprised, but I'm disheartened to hear that there are loving adoptive homes who want to adopt a child who are discouraged and maybe do throw in the towel because it just takes too long. I imagine the emotional toll it takes on them is quite extensive. If there are families that are willing to open their homes to an adopted child and to take that child in as one of their own, we should be doing everything we can to encourage that.

So I do support this motion. I do believe it's important that we take all those measures, but I do think we need to be cautious because at the end of the day we're talking about children, and these are sometimes the most vulnerable children. We need to make sure that there are the appropriate safeguards in place, that we are making sure that they're going into homes that are both prepared and supported to provide these children with the supports that they need so that it can be a successful story for everybody all around.

Yes, let's speed up processes where we can, and I would encourage the member who has introduced this motion as well as the Minister of Children's Services that we can work together to find efficiencies and to find ways that we can cut unnecessary steps that discourage families while also making sure that we're taking appropriate steps to protect the safety of those children and to

support those families to make sure it is a successful match. Ultimately, I think this is a great motion. Thank you to the member for introducing it. I do think we all benefit when more children are in safe and loving homes.

Thank you.

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

Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's an honour today to rise to express my support for Motion 501, which urges the government to "take all necessary measures to make the process for all forms of adoption more efficient and timely for families."

I would like to make it perfectly clear, Madam Speaker, that the United Conservatives do not blame our incredible front-line workers for the issues within our system. The incredible social workers who work day and night to unite families and children are not the problem, but there is a problem. We all know that adoption is by far the best situation for a child born into difficult circumstances to have a chance at success, yet the majority of children who grew up in foster care or group care will age out of the system with no permanent family or safety net. This affects children for the rest of their lives, placing them in economic insecurity and often preventing them from pursuing further education. We all see this as a problem and one that especially hurts young women.

Thousands of Alberta children have been saved from these issues by generous parents who are willing to open their homes to children and youth who do not enjoy the same privileges and stable family situation that many of us take for granted. When there are three couples, on average, seeking to adopt a child who is placed and 7.7 for each infant, there is no excuse for our adoption system taking north of three years for an adoption to take place, but unfortunately the story told by the hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain is not an uncommon one.

There are families willing to open up their homes and merely waiting on a broken system. There are also families who have already opened up their homes to foster and for whom excessive regulation and red tape is preventing a child who is already a part of their family, who cannot reap the rewards of full adoption because of regulations put in place even about their siblings.

As the member presenting the motion has mentioned, the system has to be better for all parties. While the wait is excruciating for both children and families, the cost of watching the disappointment and frustration of both parties must weigh heavily on the workers tasked with this difficult work. We aren't just fighting for families and children with this motion but for every participant in the system.

More initiatives must be sought out in order to improve the access to adoption services in Alberta. This should be done in two main ways. The first is by benchmarking our system and then importing best practices from other jurisdictions. The second is by reducing the red tape burden on families and workers, who are merely doing their best to unite children and loving families.

Our United Conservative caucus has already worked to make the adoption system work better in the 21st century. The current Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women in 2017 as an opposition member in the 29th sitting of the Legislature passed a private member's bill that allowed families to post their profiles online. This gave mothers considering adoption easier access to view the prospective families in which your child might have a greater chance for a better future. We believe that legislation

like this, which opens up our adoption system, is incredibly important.

One of the main issues we run into when attempting to do work on this file is the complete lack of benchmarking in our system. The last time any statistics were put out about adoption in Alberta was a report from 2016-2017. Before that, there was a 10-year gap. It is critical that this system can be examined to see where we can implement best practices from around the globe. The motion urges the government to continue in this vein and further reduce the red tape and bureaucratic nightmares that too many Albertan families face when considering adoption. When a bird bath in a backyard can prevent a child from going to a loving family, the red tape has gone too far. The priority has slipped from helping children to protecting a bureaucratic regime.

Far too few children are adopted in Alberta. In fiscal year 2016 there were only 298 adoptions in Alberta while wait-lists have grown. In a province of over 4 million people the system is clearly broken. This is not an attack on adoption agencies, who do great work, or many fine social workers and civil servants who administer the system, but instead it's an admonishment of the antiquated legislation and red tape that hinder children from reaching loving adoptive families. With no comprehensive changes to Alberta's system of adoption since 1984, there is work to be done here.

The previous government was always intent on bringing up divisive issues relating to the private moral convictions of Albertans. Our caucus wants to address the very real and glaring social problems Albertans face and actually get government working to address issues within the child welfare system. It's disappointing that no government in decades has undertaken substantive reforms to ensure that Alberta's children are being taken care of. We have a chance as Albertans to adopt best practices from other provinces and from around the world. We have a chance to bring stability to thousands of children and joy to thousands of families who would like nothing more than to have a child. Child welfare is one of the most difficult areas tasked to us as provincial legislators. I believe it is also one of the most important.

I urge all members of this Assembly to vote in favour of Motion 501 and begin pushing for a plan to modernize our antiquated adoption system.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

Mr. Carson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's an honour to rise today for my first time as well, and I would like to congratulate you on your election as the Deputy Speaker as well as the Speaker and everyone else in the House.

I'm very excited and honoured to be able to join in on this conversation today. I would like to thank the Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain for bringing Motion 501 forward. I appreciate his connection to the issue as well, and I appreciate that he brought his personal story to the House. I think it is an important issue considering that there were around 7,329 children in care in Alberta in 2018 according to the Alberta human services website.

4:00

Now, whether we're talking about adopting a child in government care or a private adoption, which has been brought up in the debate so far, it is incredibly important that we do work to make these programs as efficient as possible, but I think, more importantly, it's incredibly important that we do our best to create a transition that works in a positive manner for both the children and the families going through this experience.

I would also like to thank the current Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women, who has already been thanked, but I would like to thank her in her role as a member in the 29th Legislature for her work on Bill 206. Of course, Bill 206 sought to amend adoption laws to allow families looking to adopt to post their profiles online, making it easier for the birth mothers to choose the family that would eventually care for their child. During the debate I think that overall our caucus supported that motion. I think we moved to put some preamble in it, just recognizing that we need to protect the privacy and safety of both sides. So we were able to work together to pass that bill unanimously.

I would like to reiterate now what was said back then. It is of incredibly high importance that the safety and privacy of both families come before finding efficiencies in the process. I do have grave concerns that finding efficiencies to this government means something quite different than what it means to me. I think that we can all agree that adoption is not something that should be rushed. It's an incredibly sensitive topic, and whether a family decides to adopt a child in care or go through a private adoption, we need to ensure that safeguards are in place to protect all parties and ensure that everyone is as satisfied as possible with the adoption process. Further to that, I think there is a larger discussion that needs to be had that goes beyond making the process go faster and more efficiently.

I want to bring up a news article that was done by the CBC in 2015, which I will of course table tomorrow, which describes an Alberta family who adopted two children in care. This may be a unique circumstance, or it may not be, but within two weeks of meeting the children, the couple moved in with them and became their foster parents. The couple noticed behavioural issues early on but thought that the children just maybe needed some time to settle in and that maybe once the situation was more permanent, things would work themselves out. About a year into the adoption of the children they found out through medical assessment that the children had FASD. From the beginning of the process the couple made it clear that they would not be able to care for a child with FASD. These children required 24/7 supports, which this family was unable to provide.

Of course, this is just one story, and they don't always go that same way. This family went on to put one of the children into a group home, I believe. That was after. Through the fostering process they tried to give the children back. Of course, that is not an easy decision either, but they from the very beginning said that they did not have the ability to support two children with FASD.

Once again, this is just one story, but it highlights the need to have strong communication from the very beginning between families and the caseworkers or adoption agencies through the entire process. Finding positive matches and families that are able to properly provide for these children on a case-by-case basis should be more important than finding efficiencies in the process.

When we talk about making a process like adoption more efficient, I have concerns that this means cutting corners. I have concerns that this means adding more files to our already overburdened front-line workers. If you want to make the process more efficient, cutting red tape, which we've already heard several times in this debate, isn't the answer. Adding more caseworkers is the answer. Taking the time to properly evaluate children and their potential adopters is the answer. I don't think that this motion necessarily addresses either of those issues. If we really want to help those parents, the adoptive parents, and the children through this process, we need to ensure that when cases like the one I described arise, we are saying, "Yes, we will support your family in raising these children; yes, there are supports for this child with FASD,"

that we're not closing the file and saying, "This is your problem now." That is essentially what happened. When the evaluation came through after the children had been adopted already, there were no supports for these children because they weren't originally diagnosed with this FASD.

Now, I do understand that it's much easier to say that you want to make the process more efficient without recognizing the fact that there needs to be a major overhaul, which was mentioned, and I would be happy to chat more about that. I think it's important that we find real, concrete solutions to this. Of course, you can only put so much in emotion, but finding efficiencies is very high level, and I think that we should dig deeper into this issue.

I think that we need to do some major overhauls in how we assess and support these children with disabilities and children in care. The fact is that there is a statistic that 30 per cent of children in care have FASD. How this motion is going to help them: I would love for somebody to address that question. Until we look at properly funding these children and until we find better tools to assess and support these children, really, to me, it's all lip service.

I understand that the member that brought this forward maybe was looking at a different instance than I am. I'm looking at children in care with complex disabilities, maybe not the same instances as he was talking about, but it is a question that I have.

Now, I think that if you want to make the adoption process more efficient for families and you want to reduce the number of children in care, which is a big concern for me, then it's important to properly fund these families. Programs like the Alberta child benefit, \$25-a-day child care, school nutrition programs, higher minimum wages even for parents who happen to be under 18 years old, and better supports for children with or without disabilities will support that vision.

To be clear, I do plan to support this motion, but I am very interested in hearing some concrete steps about ideas that the member or other members have in making this process more efficient. An instance was brought up where there is a bird bath in the home in the backyard, which sounds like a silly hurdle for a family looking to adopt, but I would like to know how that policy was implemented in the first place. Was there an instance or many instances where this actually became an issue, where a child was hurt because of a bird bath in the backyard?

Those are questions I have, and that's really my biggest concern with some of the conversations that are being brought forward by the members of the government when we talk about cutting red tape. Many of these policies got there for a reason, and until you can prove that they're redundant or they're not helping, then I'm not going to sit here and support saying that we need to find efficiencies in every department, saying that we need to cut red tape in every department. In many instances it's the regulations that move these processes forward quicker, maybe not specifically in this instance, but it becomes an even longer and bigger task when there aren't processes in place. We need to look at that.

Overall I support the idea of finding efficiencies in ministries, but like I said, I don't think it means the same thing to me as it means to the members on the other side of the House. With that being said, I do appreciate the member bringing Motion 501 forward. I do plan to support it. I would love to hear more about his or any member's ideas about how we can strengthen this process for adoption.

Thank you very much for the time to speak, and I appreciate everyone's ears today. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Mr. Williams: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I also would like to congratulate you on your election, and the Speaker himself as

well despite being absent right now. I'm also very pleased to rise to speak on this point, the second time a nonpartisan point with co-operation. I'm sure the members opposite are hoping that there is wherewithal for this co-operation, just as I am, all the way to the end of this session.

I do appreciate the comments made by the members opposite on the need for regulation and process and also by the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud about having appropriate safeguards in place. I think that in no way would this motion be in opposition to that. Really, what we're looking for is a true evaluation of where those safeguards are appropriate, where the regulations are truly needed. We have to remember today that we're talking about the livelihoods of children, children who, we all know, by almost every single metric we can evaluate are better off in homes with loving parents and a stable home. So the sooner we can move these children into those stable homes, the better it is for those children.

Those children have an interest, but so do we in this House. As the representatives in government, as the state we have an interest in healthy families, an interest in healthy children continuing to go on, so if there are burdens in the way when it comes to red tape, when it comes to problems with adoption, we have an obligation here to look very seriously at those and see where they're needed.

Before we get into the particulars that were mentioned by my hon. colleague moving the motion, I want to speak about a dinner that I had a few months ago with a couple in La Crête who went through the adoption process. They did not have a very good time with it. They tried to make an adoption process application here in Alberta; there are not opportunities to adopt easily between provinces within Canada. This is one of the first hurdles they ran into. Here in Alberta they were told that they were looking at seven years' wait time before they could be parents. Now, anybody who is an expecting parent, anybody who is a parent, a mother or father, for the first time is ecstatic and overjoyed about that situation. Instead, this opportunity brought them anxiety. Instead, they were wondering for year upon year: have we been chosen yet and were just not made aware after the child was born? The concern of not knowing puts a huge emotional weight on these families. Perhaps they were chosen, or maybe they were never going to be over these seven years and were waiting in vain.

4:10

The cost itself is burdensome. We're looking at tens of thousands of dollars, as the member before me already mentioned. These are not burdens that average families can maintain easily, and their desire, with this high cost of tens of thousands of dollars, is simply to love children, to bring children into this world with a safe home, one where they can continue to grow and be constructive citizens of our society after they leave that home. That is what they've chosen to pay this cost for.

If there are ways in which we can try and limit those burdens, we need to make sure we do that, first and foremost. As much as I recognize those concerns from the members opposite – and I want to work with those members, and I appreciate their constructive concern – we have to take very seriously any red tape or any burdens that are not needed that only make it more difficult.

Now, one thing I really want to focus on today is the problem that we're having particularly with domestic adoptions here. If we're looking at domestic options in Canada, they're far, far lower as a percentage rate than they are in the United States. In the United States we're looking at somewhere in the neighbourhood of 85 per cent of adoptions being domestic. Now, we're also looking here in Canada at domestic adoptions being around 54 per cent of adoptions.

It's also true that the first adoption laws were brought in in the United States in the 1850s. By comparison, the first laws in the books that I'm aware of – and I stand to be corrected – were in the early 1920s here in Canada. So it's fine for us to look to our neighbours to the south to see ways that they have found innovations within their jurisdictions to make sure that these children with that highly urgent need do get the homes that they desire and that I think we have an obligation to provide for them.

We're going to do our best here. I'm going to do my best to make the case that we need to look to other jurisdictions for innovations within our system, not just the United States but across the world where they have a high standard of regulation and supports, to make sure that those children have their needs met but also that are not burdensome to the point where a bird bath, perhaps, as the member before me stated, could potentially be a reason to not have these children in a loving home.

We can look at lots of the work done previously. If we look at what the United Conservative caucus did in 2017, listening to advocates when we pushed for Alberta to end our ban on posting adoption profiles online, the last of its kind in Canada. These are concrete steps that we can take, and that, for example, again, passed with multi-party support, unanimous support within this House. I am genuinely hoping sincerely that we can find co-operation on this point and others so we can continue to find efficiencies, yes, and co-operation where these children are more quickly and readily placed in that stable, loving home.

Where America has had the most success is necessarily on those domestic adoptions. It's not necessarily more than any other country. Many other countries have also made many advances as well when it comes to reducing the regulations around it.

We also have to look, as mentioned by the members opposite, at the foster to adopt your child to care program that we have here in Alberta. These are people who reach out and provide a stable home for these children. As the Member for Edmonton-West Henday mentioned, many of these children have fetal alcohol syndrome and other behavioural issues through no fault of their own that make adoption a lot more difficult. We have to make sure that there are supports there. Contrary to what folks might believe, it is still not in the best interests of those children with those particular challenges to end up remaining in those foster care homes until they, quote, age out. This is the worst-case scenario for many of these children. What we do need to do as best as we can is make sure we find ways to move those children into those loving, secure, and stable homes with the supports that they need.

I would encourage members to take a look at this motion seriously as a moral imperative that we have in this House to support it. Every time that we have a child aging out in foster care or we have a child that ends up going into foster care because they were not readily adopted initially or a couple who are looking to adopt and end up going international at a huge personal expense of their own, we are doing a disservice to those children, those who are most vulnerable in our society.

It's for this reason that I support the member's motion, Motion 501, and I implore everyone in this Assembly to do the same. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. government deputy whip.

Mr. Schow: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It is with great pleasure that I rise in this House for the first time in my early tenure as the MLA for Cardston-Siksika, and I'd like to take a moment to congratulate you on your election as Deputy Speaker.

Last month the United Conservative Party was elected with a strong mandate to protect families, and a large part of that is the children that are a part of those families. I think I speak for everyone in this House when I say that I believe every child deserves to grow up in a loving and caring home. There aren't many more daunting or important files tasked to us as provincial legislators than that of adoption. That is why it is such an honour to have an opportunity to address you in favour of this Motion 501.

I'd also like to thank the Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain for sharing his personal experiences with adoption. It was certainly a heartfelt story and was not lost on this member.

I'd like to take a look for a moment at the costs associated with adopting a child. The process itself can take north of six months while a wait for a healthy infant in Alberta can take between two and seven years. While this is shorter for children with health issues or other children who may be up for adoption later in life as a result of family situations, typically involving the government in actually separating a child from their family, the process is, in any case, quite long. In addition to time, which includes filling out long applications, going through a long and invasive home study, and often hearings, the prospective family must pay thousands of dollars for the home study and even \$250 simply to file the documents, and often you have associated legal fees. By no means is this easy for any family. It is significant, it is difficult, and it's an emotional investment.

That is why, Madam Speaker, I believe it is so important that we look at what can be improved within this file. It is not serving people the way we would like it to or could hope for. This motion makes it very clear where the priorities should be. We need to promote our prospective families and make this an easier decision to step into. The daunting nature of the process is discouraging for many families, who are opening their homes to children and fulfilling this invaluable role in society.

We can do this by reducing the red tape burden on families who are seeking to adopt. At the end of the day, there should be very little that can prevent children from joining a loving family who genuinely wants what's best for them. After all, the impact of missing out on family is far worse than that of a child growing up in a family where the basic dangers of childhood would be.

Families who are opening up their homes to adopt should not be prevented from doing so by having items that surround their house that would not be given a second thought by biological parents. We do not ask families to remove bird baths, which has been referenced several times in this discussion, when a child is born to them, so why would that stop people who are looking to adopt?

Madam Speaker, there are children who are currently being kept from loving and supporting families because of excessive regulation. This is unacceptable. We know that sometimes government needs to just get out of the way, so I urge my fellow members of this Chamber to vote in favour of this motion for the sake of children and parents stuck in this system.

Much of my own life has been dedicated to service. Behind the crusty facade of a former athlete with bad knees, I spent a lot of time overseas, and part of that was spent living in the former Soviet Union, Russia, between the years 2004 and 2006. My time there was spent serving and helping people to quit addictions, teaching English classes, and helping people better their lives, but some of the most rewarding time that I spent was in the service working with children and trying to provide a better life for them, creating sports environments and addiction programs. But I also spent time in maternity wards cleaning up, where many babies were born every day, some of which would go directly into orphanages and others to loving parents. Those that were lucky enough to go to loving

parents would leave, and those that were not would go to orphanages, where sometimes conditions were substandard at best.

4:20

I encountered what I believe to be a product of this system one day when I was coming home from teaching an English class. After getting off the bus, going back to my apartment, I encountered a young boy. He couldn't have been any older than nine years of age. He was dirty, and he was asking for money. Madam Speaker, it broke my heart because this boy did not ask for this plight. He did not ask for this circumstance in life. I sat down with him, and rather than just give him money, I wanted to hear his story. I said, "Where's your mother?" He didn't know. I said, "Where's your father?" He didn't know. "Do you have any brothers or sisters?" "Yes, but I don't know where they are either." The best I could do was sit down and listen and offer him a can of Coke and a chocolate bar. He looked to me like a kid who hadn't had one in a while.

This, I believe, is where kids could end up if not put into a loving, caring, safe home. This is where children can end up if not given the opportunity that many others are, like we are fortunate enough to have ourselves, growing up in this wonderful country or places abroad with loving family. I would do anything to help, and I urge this House to help find ways to reduce regulation, the barriers to those looking to find a child.

I speak in favour of this Motion 501 because I have seen the other side. I have seen the conditions that some live in in orphanages overseas, and I hope that we can reduce the burden on their systems by adopting more children here in our country. There are many other stories like the one I just told you, and if we intervene and find ways to make adoption more feasible for families here in Alberta, I'm certain that we can benefit the lives of many children, and our own society will see the benefit of their contribution later in life.

I'd like to thank the member opposite, Edmonton-Whitemud, for mentioning overseas adoption and the need to improve that system as well.

As a father of two, with another child on the way, I love my role as a father. I love it. There's no greater calling than being a parent, and I would feel remiss if I stood in the way or if this House stood in the way of someone else who had that same desire but couldn't do that on their own. So I ask members of this Chamber to vote in favour of Motion 501.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any other members wishing to speak to the motion?

Mr. Loewen: Is there somebody else?

The Deputy Speaker: Nobody is standing right now. I will recognize the Member for Central Peace-Notley.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Yeah, I would like to take a moment to talk about Motion 501, the motion to "urge the government to take all necessary measures to make the process for all forms of adoption more efficient and timely for families." It was interesting listening to the member that proposed this motion and to his personal experience with adoption and how we can make this process better and more efficient and, I guess, a better experience for all the people involved, including the children.

While I was sitting here, I just opened up the Alberta adoption web page, looking at the profiles of some of the children here that are available for adoption right now. I have to say that it's somewhat heartbreaking to think of these children that don't have a home right now and are looking for that opportunity to have loving

parents and to think that there are loving parents out there right now that are going through this process and are somewhat burdened by the process they have to go through to be able to adopt a child.

I think it's important to remember that the number one thing is the safety of the children. We need to make sure that this process provides these children with an opportunity to go to a safe home and a loving home and that they have that opportunity to live, I guess, a life similar to what other children have that have parents in their lives right now, to have that opportunity to live like that.

I think what happens a lot of times in government is that things progress over time and that regulations and rules and paperwork get developed, and there are probably situations that maybe lead to the increase of those documents and those forms and the things that are asked and the things that become rules and regulations. But, unfortunately, far too often we find in government that nobody actually reviews the process and the paperwork at some point and decides: "Okay. Is this still relevant? Are we accomplishing what we need to accomplish with this process?" I think that's what this motion does. It gives us an opportunity to reflect and review this process that's the adoption process here in Alberta, to have a chance to review it and make sure that it's fulfilling what it needs to do. I think we owe that to not only the children, but we owe that to the potential parents that want to take advantage of the adoption process.

Now, I know several family members and some good friends that have been through the adoption process, and a lot of times adoption, of course, is one of the most rewarding and beautiful experiences that a married couple or a couple can go through. That's great. That's perfect. That's what it's supposed to be. It's supposed to be a beautiful and rewarding experience for both the parents and the child, but it can also be upsetting and depressing. I know different parents that have been through the adoption process and who have sat on the waiting list and answered all these questions and really had to open up their hearts and their lives and everything to go through this process and then to be sitting and waiting and not knowing year after year, waiting for a child to be chosen for them.

I think that, as much as we can, we need to make sure that this process is more like the first instance, where it's this beautiful and rewarding experience. I think we need to aim towards that, and I think that by removing some of the barriers and some of these things that maybe just don't make sense today as much as when they were first implemented in the process as far as forms and regulations and that sort of thing – we need to make sure that we can look at these and have that opportunity to review.

When I think of parents that are willing to go through the adoption process, these parents are obviously people that are willing to open up their lives, open up their home, open up their hearts for children that they didn't conceive and bear themselves. You know, it takes a great amount of love and a great amount of openness to be able to make that decision and get into that place in their lives where they're doing this. We just owe it to these people to have this so that it's a streamlined process that protects the child but also makes the experience for the potential parents as positive as possible.

Again, you know, for anybody that has a chance, just jump on the government website and look at these children here that are looking for homes and are looking for placement. I mean, just look at the pictures, and look at these children. It's kind of heartbreaking to think that these children are in this situation in their lives where they really are looking for a home, and they really need to have that opportunity to be in a home with loving parents.

Again, I want to thank the member for proposing this motion. I think it's an important motion. I think it's something that we need

to support and pass in this Legislature and, like I say, make this process better for all involved.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any other members wishing to speak?

Seeing none, I'll ask the hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain to close debate.

Mr. Turton: Yes. Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's been an honour and a privilege to listen to everyone here today and to take in the important viewpoints offered by many of the hon. members. Specifically, I'd like to reference the comments from the members for Edmonton-Whitemud and Edmonton-West Henday.

I truly believe that this is a nonpartisan issue. You know, adoption is a powerful force for incredible good, and I don't think anyone in this House would argue that it isn't important to make that as accessible as possible while protecting and ensuring the safety of the children.

4:30

As this debate draws to a close, I would like to urge all of my hon. colleagues to support this motion. Frankly, it's too important for us not to because at the end of this motion there are children waiting for a forever home. While I'm sure that there are still many matters of difference between us and even in how this ought to be carried out, I hope we can all come together in a firm affirmation that adoption should be as timely and as efficient as possible.

Thank you very much.

[Motion Other than Government Motion 501 carried]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd like to ask for unanimous consent to waive Standing Order 8(1) to allow us to move to Government Bills and Orders so that we may begin maiden speeches.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Consideration of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor's Speech

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

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

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

Ms Glasgo: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Sorry.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat.

Ms Glasgo: Thank you, Madam Speaker. As you can see, I'm very excited, and it's a tremendous honour to move the acceptance of the throne speech presented by Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor of the province of Alberta. I would like to thank Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor for setting forth this vision for the Legislature. I would also like to thank the hon. Premier for the opportunity to move this Speech from the Throne.

The Speech from the Throne outlined our government's detailed and ambitious plan to get Albertans back to work. It outlined our

commitments to making life better for Albertans, to get Alberta's fiscal house in order, and to stand up to those who would have Alberta treated as a doormat for Ottawa rather than an equal and co-operative partner in Confederation. It also outlined our commitment to honour the dignity of this institution that we all fought to be able to sit in. As members we have an opportunity to participate in democracy and represent the voices of our constituents thoughtfully and with reverence. Overall, one could suggest that the Speech from the Throne demonstrated a marked shift towards optimism, a focus on the things that matter to Alberta families, the people who built this province, and the next generation that will carry our vision into the future.

I am humbled to stand here today as the newly elected Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat. I have the privilege of representing over 50,000 people from Hilda to Bassano, Scandia to Medicine Hat, from Redcliff to Brooks, just to name a few. On April 16 I was elected with 65 per cent of the vote and earned the trust of over 13,000 Albertans who are inspired by our government's positive vision for renewal and prosperity. I could not be more grateful to those who have supported me and continue to offer their kind words of encouragement and guidance. Whether you believed in me in the nomination, knocked on doors, made phone calls, delivered lunches, scrutineered, entered data, or offered your prayers, know that your support means everything to me, and this is just as much your seat as it is mine.

I come from a very tight-knit and supportive family who has taught me from a young age very important lessons that I will take with me into my career in public service. The first lesson is the importance of standing up for what you believe in. This was impressed upon me very early on in my life, and if you ask my mom, speaking up has always come perhaps a little too naturally to me. The second is to never book anything in November because that's rifle hunting season, and as a family that time is sacred, and we can't miss any opportunity to put meat in the freezer. But the third of these lessons, and perhaps the most important, is to always leave things better than when you found them. I truly believe that within the Speech from the Throne this message is expressly articulated.

Renewal is exactly what is needed for the constituents of Brooks-Medicine Hat. Over the past few years – and it was very obvious while I was door-knocking – people seemed to have lost that hope. Whether I was in Medicine Hat talking with young families about the erosion of choice in education or in Bassano talking with seniors about the need for predictable funding for health care, in Scandia talking with farmers about the need for protection of their property rights, or in Brooks speaking with some of the many oil and gas workers who are unemployed or underemployed, the takeaway was the same. The people of Brooks-Medicine Hat, by and large, felt as though our common-sense rural values had been betrayed by a coalition of governments who seemed more concerned with appeasing the ivory towers of so-called green, foreign-funded activists than meaningfully consulting everyday Albertans. They felt as though their governments were working against them, and they ultimately felt like their representatives had forgotten who put them there in the first place.

Brooks-Medicine Hat is a brand new constituency made up of the county of Newell, Cypress county, the city of Brooks, the city of Medicine Hat, the town of Bassano, and many charming places in between such as Hilda, Schuler, Duchess, Rosemary, Scandia, Millicent, Patricia, Rolling Hills, Tilley, CFB Suffield, Ralston, and Redcliff, just to name a few. Although the boundaries themselves are new, the history is as deep as the coulees and as humble as the First Peoples who were the original stewards of this land. The constituency has a rich history of agriculture, farming, and ranching

– the ultimate act of environmental stewardship – as well as many greenhouses that serve as job creators to our local economies. Further, Brooks-Medicine Hat has a robust tradition of being a leader in the oil and gas industry, with many companies, both large and small, having roots in the area.

I had the pleasure of growing up in southern Alberta. I was born in Medicine Hat and went down the road to university in Lethbridge. I decided to run in Brooks-Medicine Hat because I believe in the common-sense work ethic and generous nature of the people that call this place home alongside me. I firmly believe in the good of everyday Albertans, who know how best to care for their families, communities, farms, and businesses without the ever-encroaching hand of government. In southern Alberta we are the kind of people for whom, if you look someone in the eye and shake their hand, well, that might as well be a contract, and you treat that handshake like a bond. We do not expect much of government, but we do expect that governments and politicians will be accountable to the people that they represent and follow through on their election promises.

I am proud to be a member of this United Conservative government's caucus, that is already demonstrating to Albertans near and far that we are willing to do what is right and follow through on the election platform that received a resounding majority from Albertans just last month. It is a great privilege and responsibility that has been bestowed upon myself and all of my colleagues to sit in this Chamber. This privilege has been given to fewer than 1,000 people in our province's history, and I am proud to be the very first member of the Legislature for Brooks-Medicine Hat and grateful to have had the opportunity to move Her Honour's Speech from the Throne today.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Banff-Kananaskis.

Ms Rosin: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is truly a privilege to rise in the House today for my first time to second the motion to accept the Speech from the Throne. It is also my absolute pleasure to offer my comments and consideration to the Speech from the Throne.

Perhaps I am biased, but I am of the belief that the riding of Banff-Kananaskis is without a doubt the most beautiful place in Alberta and possibly all of Canada. In the north we begin with Lake Louise, whose bright turquoise waters are a phenomenon known world-wide. In fact, a quick Google image search of "Canada" will bring up numerous photos of this stunning location, further proving the notion that Lake Louise is a destination known to those all across the world as the face of our country.

Travel 60 kilometres south to Banff national park and you will find yourself in yet another internationally recognized Canadian town. In the summer the town is abuzz with tourists scurrying on the sidewalks and hiking, biking, and climbing up or down the towering peaks above. In the winter the tourists put on their woolies and head to the slopes as the sun glistens off the snow and turns the mountains into beautiful, snow-swept marvels.

A short 20-minute drive away and you hit Canmore, a town so famously known for its smaller town feel and the Three Sisters, which might be the most famous set of mountains of all time.

Heading further south, you will drive through Dead Man's Flats, Lac des Arcs, Exshaw, and the stunning Kananaskis Country, created and protected for us by the late Peter Lougheed.

But our riding isn't all mountains. Just past Kananaskis Country is the place that feels most like home to the Saskatchewan-born girl in me. Our riding is blessed to not only encompass the mountains but also to encompass the bald, beautiful prairies, where the skies

come alive. We'll continue our riding tour through Springbank, the ideal place for those who want a downtown job but a country lifestyle full of dogs and big backyards, not to mention with Calaway Park in the backyard.

A few kilometres down and past the roundabout is Redwood Meadows, a tight-knit community situated on Tsuut'ina land, where the trees and their many tree worms are as hardy as the people who live there.

4:40

A little further up the road is Bragg Creek, known for their western culture and their trails and campsites. People, including, I'm sure, many who are listening right now, travel from all over Alberta to get a taste of camping in the wide open with the mountains in the distance.

Further up the road we have Millarville and Priddis, communities known for their fruitful farmers' markets and their thundering horse races in the summer.

Our riding also includes two First Nations communities. The first is the Stoney Nation, comprised of the Bearspaw, Wesley, and Chiniki bands, where the wild horses gallop freely along the Trans-Canada highway. The other is the Tsuut'ina Nation, who has long been a champion of economic prosperity and independent social services such as their women's empowerment centre, which they are currently in the process of building.

What this virtual tour is to say is that Banff-Kananaskis is a riding much more diverse than its name would imply. It is diverse in landscape but also in economy. Both halves of the riding have entirely different economic drivers than the other, each with their own advantages and challenges.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

One half is essentially solely reliant on tourism. In fact, tourism constitutes 93 per cent of Banff's GDP every year. Combined, the towns of Canmore and Banff welcome more tourists each day than they have permanent residents. This influx can at times make the local infrastructure burden difficult to bear on those who reside within. These areas are also situated in environmentally sensitive areas that are covered with dense coniferous forests, oftentimes prone to wildfire, and home to critters of all shapes and sizes. The tightrope between preserving natural beauty and ensuring our great outdoors can be enjoyed and support a thriving tourist industry is one that must be carefully walked to ensure the sustainability of the industry.

On the other side of the riding are nestled some of Alberta's most breathtaking cattle ranches. Situated on the flat prairie with the Rocky Mountains distant in the rear view, we live in what has recently become a scary time for those working in agriculture as forces from both government and private industry spread fear and misinformation to further the agenda of what they may consider newer, more hip industries. Ensuring that the positive stories and the factual truths behind our farmers, ranchers, and agriculture industry are heard is something that must not be taken lightly.

This side of the riding is also home to many hard-working Albertans whose livelihood has been provided for either by employment in or related to entrepreneurship in or innovation in our world-class energy industry. It is no hidden secret that this industry has suffered insurmountable blows over the last few years, from a lack of pipeline capacity, uncertain regulatory environments, increase in targeted taxes, and a global campaign to land-lock the oil. This industry, too, has sure seen its hardships.

Another industry that is quite unique to our riding is the film industry. Walt Disney, Pixar, Universal Studios, and Warner Bros. are all companies that frequent the lands of our riding. Productions

such as *Inception*, *The Revenant*, *Interstellar*, *War for the Planet of the Apes*, *Brokeback Mountain*, *The Bourne Legacy*, and *Superman* were all filmed right in the heart of Kananaskis Country. Notable TV shows include both *Heartland* and *Game of Thrones*.

But times have been tough lately. Many businesses in the mountains have seen their visitor numbers up but their sales dollars down as Albertans have lost consumer confidence in their province and have lost the ability to spend their money as lucratively as they once could. Many ranchers have seen their property rights threatened. Many an oil executive or experienced engineer in Springbank have found themselves suddenly without work and no prospect of future employment on the horizon, and many a film production has moved to other jurisdictions, where the incentives to produce far exceed those we have here in Alberta.

That is why, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Deputy Chair of Committees, I am pleased today to support the throne speech, which so eloquently and clearly outlined our government's priorities to get Alberta back on track and to help the people of Banff-Kananaskis. I am proud to support our plans to restore and grow our energy industry in an environmentally friendly way through a royalty guarantee, a commitment to investing in new innovations and technology, and a mandate for heavy industrial emitters to focus on emissions reduction. I am proud to support our plans to bring back investment and to diversify our economy through the job-creation tax cut, which will see our corporate business tax rate cut to the lowest in Canada and most of North America. I am proud to support our plans to ease the burdens on small-business owners and empower them to continue creating jobs for others by enacting our open for business act, which will in the coming days bring in labour reforms that will both protect our employees and also grow the accessible job market for them.

I'm proud to support our plans to help families and seniors living on fixed incomes to have more discretionary income at the end of each month, to save, shop locally with, or travel with by repealing the carbon tax, a move that will put \$1.4 billion back in the pockets of Albertans. I'm proud of our plan to double our tourism industry by 2030 while ensuring environmental protections stay in place, and I am proud to support our film industry by converting our quarterly accessible grant to a continuously accessible tax credit. I am proud to support and be a part of the mandate of this government.

My political roots began back in Saskatchewan. I grew up in the lovely city of Regina, a city named after Queen Victoria Regina. Ironically, the city was granted its name by Princess Louise, Duchess of Argyll, also more commonly known as Louise Caroline Alberta, who our great province was named after.

Still in Regina, my father was and is the hardest working small-business owner I've ever met. Throughout my life he instilled in me the importance of meticulousness, integrity, thankless hard work, and the value of personal relationships. By the time I was in grade 2, he'd already helped me create my own first set of business cards and helped to mentor my best friend and I in starting our own small café out of my own kitchen, with a completed foldable food menu, at which we sold creative but not so tasty food selections to my parents and family for 10 cents apiece. From a young age my dad believed that I could be whoever and whatever I wanted to be as long as I gave it my all.

My mother, on the other hand, exudes a love for life wherever she goes. She's a bouncy, goofy ray of sunshine who loves arts, crafts, laughter, and playing her tuba. She taught me that life is meant for loving and that if you don't take joy in the little things, you're missing out on the full experience.

My grandma, now 89, taught me that there is no problem in life which a good heart-to-heart, a healthy laugh, a detoxing dose of Dr.

Phil, or a delicious serving of meat loaf can't fix. And my grandpa, who stays atop the latest technological trends better than I do and who also began building his own airplane from scratch in his ripe mid-70s, taught me that it is always the right time to be curious and learn something new.

Collectively and most importantly, my entire family taught me that living a life of gratitude and faith in God above would help me navigate through life's hardest times. Ephesians 1:11, quote: for he works out all things to fit his plan and purpose. Despite being an unlikely candidate, now an MLA by the young age of 24, I have come to fully understand the gravity of these words.

Between all the things I learned from my family, I grew up with an unrelenting desire to better the world around me. I previously worked for Coca-Cola, a company which I've always thought does an incredible job of marketing the positivity and the goodness in life and inspiring all of us to think a little differently. It was a company that truly aligned with the purpose I wanted in life, yet as time passed, I could see that Alberta needed more help than just a feel-good message. No amount of brown sugar water and positivity could sugar-coat the fact that people around me were struggling to make ends meet, pulling their children out of sports to keep food on the table, closing the doors of the businesses they had dedicated their life's work to and, in some instances, even declaring bankruptcy. It was in this realization that I knew the run for politics was where I belonged.

To sit in this chair, walk on these carpets, and breathe in this legislative air is a privilege unexplainable by word. To be able to serve where so few have served before and to dedicate my life's work to helping better the lives of those around me is nothing short of a lifelong dream come true. Getting here was not easy, as I'm sure my colleagues and fellow members can attest, but the hard work is only beginning.

Just as April showers bring May flowers, so too has an April election brought May reflection. You can feel it all around you: Albertans looking back at the last four years of their lives and breathing a sigh of relief. There is a distinguishable feeling of refreshment and renewal that has swept across our province since the election. Albertans everywhere can finally feel comfortable knowing that the province they love and call home will soon be reinvigorated with the regular buzz of economic stimulation, consumer confidence, and good old Albertan patriotism.

The task ahead of us is huge. I sincerely hope that both sides of this House can find a way to put aside partisan politics and collaborate with each other to do what is best for Albertans. It is truly sad that we have come to a place across all parliamentary democracies where members speaking in the House cannot even be heard for being drowned out by accusations and insults from members across the aisle. We were elected to represent our constituents and be their voice, but partisanship has divided us in a place where we should be listening to the thoughts and ideas of others to better the world around us. I've always been of the belief that fostering dialogue, no matter how controversial the subject, is always better than turning backs and demonizing the other.

There are 4.2 million Albertans counting on us to cultivate an environment that allows them to thrive and be their best selves. We simply cannot afford to squander our precious time here in office pursuing any other mission than that. Based on a standard four-year election cycle, we have precisely 2,102,400 minutes to represent our constituents, and I encourage every member of this House to make the best of every single one.

In conclusion, it is my absolute honour to be granted the privilege to represent the constituents of Banff-Kananaskis for the next four years of government. Above the Chamber doors in the Saskatchewan Legislature, which is located in my hometown of

Regina, Brad Wall had engraved the words: did you leave things better than the way you found them? My only aspiration is that after my four years in this House I will confidently be able to say that myself and all of those sitting around me left Alberta better than the way we found it.

4:50

The Acting Speaker: Thank you to the hon. Member for Banff-Kananaskis.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Highwood.

Mr. Sigurdson: Thank you. I'd like to start by saying that it's truly an honour to be the elected representative for Highwood and have the opportunity to address this Chamber in my maiden speech. I'd like to start by congratulating you on your appointment. I've no doubt that you'll represent in the fair, impartial manner that is a tradition of the position.

I also respectfully acknowledge that we are situated on Treaty 6 territory, traditional lands of First Nations and Métis people.

Mr. Speaker, I'm a born-and-raised proud Albertan, son of a nurse and paramedic, Ann and Richard. My mother served for years in the health care industry at the Foothills hospital, committing her life to the care of others for decades. My father was a graduate of the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology's first-ever paramedicine class. He was one of the principle owners of STARS ambulance system, which was eventually sold to the city of Calgary in 1971 and became the Calgary city EMS service. He founded the Alberta paramedics professional association and worked for years to have paramedics legislated into the Health Disciplines Act of Alberta. Their examples showed me on a daily basis the dedication and honour of our province's health care workers and the importance of an effective health care system.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

I was raised on a farm north of Cochrane, spending the early years of my life raising horses and cattle and farming. After high school I went to work on a conventional drilling rig in northern Alberta drilling exploratory wells in what is now the proven fields of Alberta's oil sands. I went back to school, to SAIT, to earn my red seal in a mechanical trade and worked through the ranks from journeyman to supervisor. The oil and gas industry gave me my start, and I know first-hand the value of the trades and the importance of the continued commitment to supporting young Albertans in apprenticeships and the skilled trades. I continued my education and eventually became a project manager, design consultant, then eventually became a shareholder and a business owner. I know what it means to build a company and the pride of being an employer. I also know the pain of having to lay people off.

I'm a proud father of three boys – Caden, Ty, and Trystan – and husband to my beautiful wife, Leanne. We chose Highwood to raise our children because of its strong sense of community, our family roots there, and the level of benevolence and charity that is ingrained in this community. Leanne and I are the custodians of the values our parents instilled in us, values we now strive daily to pass on to our children, small-town values such as respect, honour, and a strong work ethic. Together we are teaching them how these values build strong communities, and we hope to instill in them the morals that build character and lead to a fulfilled life.

As a parent I believe our focus should be on building a better future for our children. We need to provide for them a strong education, an education that will prepare them for the future. All Alberta children deserve a life of unlimited possibilities.

Madam Speaker, the constituency of Highwood, due to the recent boundary review, has greatly changed since the Assembly last sat. Highwood now stretches east to the county of Vulcan, west to Kananaskis, and from the south edge of the city of Calgary, with the Bow River and highway 22X as its northern border, to just south of Okotoks, following 434 Avenue.

Highwood is very diverse, which I believe is truly representative of the qualities that make this province such a special place to live. It is an extraordinary region, a collection of wonderful communities, a great mix of urban, suburban, acreage, and rural, warm and welcoming.

Within the constituency we have four municipalities, which include Foothills county; the town of Black Diamond, which derived its name from the rich coal mines that were abundant there in the early 1900s; Turner Valley, named after Rob and John Turner, who settled it in 1886; and Okotoks. Its name is derived from the Blackfoot word “okatok,” meaning rock. The Blackfoot referred to this area as okatok because of the big rock, which they used as a reference marker in their journeys. The importance of the area to the First Nations was that this area was a safe river crossing across the Sheep River, which dissects Okotoks. This big rock they referred to may be what Highwood is most known for. This famous glacial erratic, notably the largest in the world, was transported by a continental glacier during the last ice age from Mount Edith Cavell and now rests in a flat plains area right in between Okotoks and Black Diamond-Turner Valley.

Madam Speaker, the first door I knocked on in my campaign was that of a retired elderly lady in her 80s. Her husband had recently passed. She expressed to me how in the past her husband was the one that showed the most interest in discussing and debating politics, but she now felt that she could no longer sit idly by. She and her husband spent their entire lives shaping this province, with the knowledge that the prosperity they worked towards would be passed on to future generations, but she saw the future they had worked for so hard eroding away. It should always be the inherent responsibility of every generation to pass on something better to the next generation, a future unhindered by regular deficits and a growing, unmanageable debt. We need to re-establish our strong and free society so that our children have the same opportunities to thrive that we did when we were growing up. This responsibility now lies with us right here, right now.

As the campaign progressed, we knocked on thousands of doors and attended hundreds of events, and the needs of the residents of Highwood became even more clear, the need for jobs, accountability for taxpayers' dollars, and a fair deal for Alberta. Too many nights I returned home with a heavy heart, full of stories of families who had lost their jobs, with no hope of new employment, families that had exhausted their life savings and were wondering how they were going to make their next mortgage payment.

The residents of Highwood have entrusted me to bring their voice to this government, and I'm truly honoured to be elected the MLA for Highwood and share a list of names that includes the hon. George Groeneveld, Don Tannas, and George Wolstenholme.

In my mind, there can be no doubt that the most important feature of the constituency is its people. Highwood has a sense of charity and community that embodies the true nature of Alberta's spirit. I have been proud to play a small part in a few of these such as the fundraiser for Lukah, an infant diagnosed with a large tumour and in need of a blood transfusion. This is a community that bands together in times of difficulty.

Madam Speaker, I believe above all else that the most valuable resource we have here in Alberta is the hard-working, caring residents that have chosen to live here, and that is why I am pleased to support a throne speech that has a strong plan to restore jobs and renew our economy, a plan based on proven strategies and policies, a plan to restore low taxes to create jobs, growth, encourage economic activity, and increase revenues for the province, a plan that will once again make Alberta a safe place to start a business, invest, and raise a family, a throne speech that lays out a plan to end the punishing carbon tax so that life can once again be affordable for families, especially our seniors and those on fixed or low incomes.

It is a throne speech that advocates for a fair deal for our energy sector, which is vital to Alberta. This key industry had its beginning in the Highwood community. On May 14, 1914, near Turner Valley oil and gas first flowed from the Dingman No. 1 discovery well. The oil and gas industry for Alberta began on that day. This gas plant site is now an Alberta historic resource site, and though it's no longer active, the oil and gas sector continues to be important to Highwood as an employer of people and as a generator of wealth for this province. It is essential that we work to positively advocate for our ethically and environmentally produced oil. It's time we dispel the lies and tell the world the truth about our energy sector.

5:00

In addition to oil, Highwood is an economically diverse constituency, home to rich agriculture, cattle ranches, horses, farming, hobby farms, oil, gas, movie and filming sets, tourism, music, and art and culture. The natural beauty of Highwood has brought many filmmakers to the area to shoot their movies, starting with the film *Northwest Stamped* in 1947 to *Silver Streak*, *Superman II* and *Superman III*, and, most recently, the Netflix original *Hell on Wheels*. Our fertile lands produce top quality beef, chicken, pork, honey, and grain commodities. The area is a hub for horse breeders for racing, rodeo, jumping, polo, dressage, and day-to-day farming uses. It is not a surprise that our constituency is home to the Millarville racetrack and ag society, Hebson Arena, and Calgary Polo Club, among others.

However, Madam Speaker, even with all of our abundances Highwood faces some serious challenges. In addition to the need for a strong economy, job creation, support for our natural resources and agriculture, and improvements to our health care and education, Highwood faces a critical water shortage and continued high levels of rural crime. Highwood faces a similar crisis to that of all of Alberta, the need for a pipeline, in this case a water pipeline. Due to the substantial growth of our communities the access to additional water licences has now become crucial to the sustainability of our area, not just to allow for the future residential growth but to supply our commercial and business sector so that we can continue to expand our small-town economies. This is crucial to keeping the tax costs down for our residents.

Madam Speaker, I believe that one of the most important duties of every government is to provide safety for its residents. I'm proud of our strategy to address rural crime so that residents will once again feel safe in their homes. I look forward to working diligently to gain the confidence of my constituents to show that this government has a plan that will make life safer for all of our rural areas.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is an honour and a privilege to be here, and I look forward to representing the people of Highwood.

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 29(2)(a) are there any comments or questions?

Seeing none, are there any members wishing to speak? The Member for Lethbridge-East.

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you. It is my honour to rise today for the first time and address this Assembly. Congratulations to you on your election as Deputy Speaker, and thank you as well, Deputy Speaker, for the opportunity to respond to the Speech from the Throne.

I would like to begin by thanking and honouring the constituents of Lethbridge-East for entrusting me to represent them and be their voice here in the Legislature. Lethbridge has a population of just over 100,000 people and is often recognized as being Alberta's fourth-largest city but serves a much larger community as a central hub for a larger area all around southern Alberta, whose number then soars to approximately 350,000 people. We have strong roots in our land as people from the First Nations of the Kainai and Piikani as well as the Métis live all around us. Farmers for generations have given us a strong heritage in agriculture and food processing.

Lethbridge is diverse in the sense of welcoming significant numbers of new Canadians to our city and our province. Many cultures, including Sudanese, Bhutanese, and Nepalese families, have come to Lethbridge and made this their home over the past few years. This is not new for Lethbridge as we have families from all over the world. In a community of 100,000 these cultures make for a rich, varied, and, by necessity, inclusive environment. One of our most historical and treasured sites is the Nikka Yuko Japanese garden, which commemorates how beautiful things can sometimes grow and help in the healing after adversity and conflict.

We see diversity and inclusion again in our city by having both the Lethbridge College and the University of Lethbridge. I am proud to say that I am a red seal journeyman carpenter, having graduated from the Lethbridge College in 2000, and had the opportunity to use these skills on many occasions at both institutions. These schools draw approximately 15,000 students annually to Lethbridge as well as faculty and staff, creating a vibrant community of learning, research and having a strong impact on our economy.

The Speech from the Throne highlights how important it is for our government to focus on our students, who are our future, and seek the highest quality of education possible where the results of their learning prepare them for success, no matter which avenue they take. Whether matching our universities to the competitive global market or developing the recognition of our skilled trades as vital in our workforce and economy, Lethbridge can play a key role in achieving many of these goals as we have the marketplace with stable jobs to employ our graduates. We are fortunate to have one of the most stable economies in the province, one that balances public service and private enterprise, research and development, agriculture, food production, and construction and technology, to name but a few.

Another strength in our diversity is our seniors, a large and vibrant part of our community. We are a southern hub for retirement. We see many farmers pass on the lifeline of our agricultural commerce, the family farm, to the next generation and then move to the city. They and many others come to Lethbridge for the stable real estate market, access to medical and health facilities and services, municipal parks and pathways, public transportation, arts and culture, and numerous other amenities and benefits, which is why our government is so focused on jobs and the economy, to make sure that the people who work so very hard their entire lives raising families, paying taxes, building our province and our country have the opportunity, availability, and affordable access to the services they need and deserve.

In recognizing our diversity, I also want to recognize the often forgotten middle class in Lethbridge, the people who go to work every day as nurses and doctors, carpenters, electricians, teachers and counsellors, police officers, golf course maintenance workers, first responders, professionals, mechanics, secretaries, and countless other trades, professional volunteers, parents, and advocates who give of themselves to make our city a better place to live. I know these people. I have worked with them, been served by them, been treated by them, and admire them. Many will never hear a thank you for their service or be recognized by an award, so every single one of them who feels like they haven't been heard or seen or remembered, this is for them. Thank you. Thank you for all that you do.

I am very proud to have had the chance to host our current Premier on a number of occasions in our city. Most recently the Premier attended the men's world curling championships, and last summer he also walked in our Whoop-Up Days parade. Both of these events celebrate and highlight our civic pride and collaborative nature. Thank you to the Premier.

It is our responsibility and the high calling of this office to serve all of these individuals with excellence, for that is the standard they should expect. Nothing less will do. It is to be seen in our actions, heard in our words, and displayed in our very character to first hear them and then represent them. This high calling will always find itself at the intersection of today and tomorrow, caught between the demands of the now and the needs of the future. This is why it is so crucial to build our economy, develop our resources and markets, strengthen our trade relationships, and balance our spending. In doing this, we can once again take our place as a global leader in ethics, the economy, and the environment.

I'm very proud to represent Lethbridge in this Legislature. I am proud of the history, the heritage, and the diversity that it embodies. I believe it can be an example to all of Alberta in how it blends its fantastic mosaic of people, culture, and ethnicity into innovative solutions, collaborative partnerships, and economic stability. Lethbridge truly embodies the spirit of our beautiful province of Alberta, and I'm so incredibly proud to stand here today representing the constituency of Lethbridge-East. To all of my constituents: thank you from the bottom of my heart for the honour and privilege of standing here today. I pledge that together we can once again make Alberta strong and free.

The Deputy Speaker: Under Standing Order 29(2)(a), are there any comments or questions?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak?

Ms Lovely: Madam Speaker, I am deeply sensible of the great honour that has been bestowed upon me and the constituency called Camrose, which I proudly represent, by the hon. leader of the government upon this occasion.

First, I would like to congratulate you as our newly elected Deputy Speaker. Given your tenure in this House I have confidence you will provide beneficial guidance and keen insight into the ways of our Assembly. Also, I would like to thank the Lieutenant Governor for her reading of the Speech from the Throne. It is my privilege to deliver my maiden speech at the First Session of the 30th Legislature.

5:10

I'm honoured that the constituents of Camrose granted me one of the greatest privileges and chose me to be their representative to bring issues and problems they face to the Legislature. I would like to thank my constituents for their support in giving me this honour to serve them. During my nomination period and once the writ had

been dropped, it was an opportunity for me to visit every town in the entire constituency, going door to door introducing myself to the residents. I visited farmers and colonies. As I was intending to educate them about our party and why they should support me, as the case should be, I ended up learning more about them and what they required to be effectively supported. The needs are great in our area, and many have faced hardships in the loss of jobs and economic uncertainty. Many have worked in the oil industry, which has been extremely hard hit over the past several years. The residents are hopeful our government will have success in working with our federal government to get the pipelines built and help restore prosperity to our province.

Madam Speaker, the Camrose constituency is a newly formed boundary. Previously our boundary included Wetaskiwin; however, highway 21 between Camrose and Wetaskiwin now separates us. The boundary goes north, following the Beaver county boundary line, north of Tofield and Viking, then runs down to Hardisty, Alliance, and Bashaw.

In 1909 Mr. Smith from this Chamber mentioned: the past year was one of plenty and abounding prosperity for agriculture. The total yield of grain within the province at that time was expected to exceed 34 million bushels. Today farmers in our area are busy seeding, and we have experienced some good weather over the past many days. There is some uncertainty as to what should be planted as our agriculture industry is currently stumbling given inflections by our federal government. I wish our farming community well and pray for some rain over the next couple of weeks once our seeding season has completed.

Madam Speaker, there have been so many kind people who have assisted me with my effort, given me good advice, and who are filled with pure wisdom. I would like to pay tribute to a few of those kind individuals by including them in my maiden speech. D'Arcy, one of our prominent farmers, had this to say: agriculture is a key part of our province's economy. Oil and gas are our number one revenue source, but agriculture has been number two. Therefore, a thriving agriculture sector is so important to the province and our rural communities. The Camrose constituency has a history of consistent grain, oil, seed, and pulse production. Tied with good access to transportation and infrastructure, it has led to numerous inland terminals, elevators, with more in construction. As well, the Cargill crush plant is an important part in value-added production in our region.

We are an exporting province and nation. We produce more than we can use domestically, so the ability to move our products to market is key. The struggles we've seen in the last few years emphasize the importance of trade agreements and good relationships with those markets. As farmers it's frustrating when you see exports diminish not due to market reasons but political ones: pulses into India, wheat into Italy, barley into Saudi Arabia, and now canola into China. As farmers we tend to be eternally optimistic, but we do need strong leadership locally, provincially, and federally to work better those relationships and, importantly, push for trade agreements that remove some of the unpredictability. The beef sector has also had similar access challenges.

During my time travelling through the constituency, I had the pleasure of meeting many people who live at our 10 Hutterite colonies. These colonies include Wavy Lake, Donalda, Viking, Alliance, Rosalind, Loughheed, Camrose, Holden, Bruce, and Tofield. These good-hearted people contribute to our agriculture industry but also furnish people with their garden vegetables and baking, which they sell at farmers' markets. Many people are not aware of the large contribution our colonies make to the local food bank, helping to provide aid to those residents in our community who require an extra bit of temporary assistance. Their kindness and

quality are appreciated, and I'm glad to acknowledge them in my maiden speech.

Madam Speaker, in Mr. Smith's maiden speech he talked about the mining industry, with coal production for 1909 at over 2 million tonnes, mentioning a dispute between operators and their employees during the early part of the year which had a negative effect on most of the large mines. Today it is our past government that has had the negative effect on our mining industry. The town of Forestburg in particular has been hit hardest by this recent change in philosophy. Many in this area face losing their lucrative careers, which they depended upon to provide for themselves and their families. If they must relocate, the question is: who will buy their house? Will they be able to sell it at all?

Greg, one of Forestburg's prominent businesspeople, had this to contribute to my maiden speech. He says: you would be hard pressed to find a better example of the pioneer spirit than the settlers from the Forestburg area that began an industry by digging gopher-hole coal mines in the banks of Battle a hundred years ago. The development of this valuable industry paved the way for coal-fired power generation that filled Alberta's energy needs for decades. These two industries set up Forestburg and area as a place a person could raise a family, get a decent job, and make a good living. That all ended when narrow-minded people decided to destroy what took generations to develop because they didn't want to work to improve what was already there. It seemed easier to them to just shut down the industry and displace the families. The Forestburg area still has the same spirit today that town founders had and works tirelessly to reinvent itself.

The government needs to look at rural Alberta as the unique area it is and apply rules that make sense for rural Alberta. The community is reeling, and the pain is great. I will work hard alongside our ministers to ensure that the town is able to continue and thrive. We may not be able to undo what has already been set in motion, but, rest assured, this government will do all that it can to preserve your way of life and ensure a future for you and your families.

Madam Speaker, I've mentioned Mr. Smith in my maiden speech, and there have been many MLAs who have represented our area. I am blessed to be part of this Legislature and proud to say that I am the first female MLA from the area. There have been many famous women who have acted in government. These halls have seen many great men and women who have preceded us. Among these people of note are Alexander Rutherford, Alberta's first Premier. Additionally, there are the Famous Five women who asked the bold question: "Does the word 'person' in Section 24 of the BNA Act include [women]?" Their efforts proved that women were indeed persons and did have the right to vote. When I look around, we have come a long way in this Chamber since the question was first asked.

My constituents can count on me to ask uncomfortable questions when they need to seek answers and to work diligently to improve our economy, ensuring a bright future for themselves and our next generation. I was born in Saskatchewan and moved to Alberta in 1989. During that time the expression was: last one out turns out the lights. I'm afraid that is what's happening in Alberta now. Many have left our province seeking job opportunities elsewhere. Our young people in particular are having difficulty seeking employment. This is the reason why I decided that I must run as a candidate. A great many people in our area share my concern.

Given that many of my family members still lived in Saskatchewan, I would drive with my family taking the route through Camrose back and forth for many, many years. I knew when my children were young that once they had grown up and moved out on their own, I would one day live in Camrose. My son

is an engineer, and my daughter is a nurse. Now that they have left, I have moved to Camrose where I have fallen deeply in love with the city and the residents who fill it. I count many friends who share all kinds of interests with me. I'm a proud member of the Camrose & District Chamber of Commerce, a Rotarian, and an active member in my church. It is my humble pleasure to serve our community and its residents in a number of capacities.

I asked one of our prominent Camrose businessmen, Phil, what he liked most about Camrose. Phil told me that it was the friendly people, the pretty layout of the ravines, the streams, Mirror Lake, the trumpeter swans, the community spirit, hockey, and well-respected, long-standing mayors. Business is tough in our community right now, and we talked about how each month there seems to be a new business shutting its doors. Our constituency along with the rest of rural Alberta faces the challenge of population decline. There are many, many businesses for sale in our area and a lack of buyers.

My hope is that with our newly formed government, investors will feel encouraged and seek opportunity in our rural towns, which are filled with kind, encouraging people anxious to meet and welcome investors. The people in my community are generous. They love to help others, and they like to spend time with one another.

Gail of the Camrose Swans and Roses Lions Club contributed that we have 150 Camrose Lions members with two clubs. There are clubs in Bawlf, Killam, Sedgewick, Loughheed, Viking, and Tofield. Gail shared that the Lions Club motto is We Serve. We are in communities to provide service. We raise funds through volunteer efforts to donate to local organizations and individuals in need. Several of our fundraisers include the concession at Lindstrand Auctions, the Christmas tree sales lot, the July 1 community pancake breakfast. Recent beneficiaries of our funds include Neighbourhood Aid, which is the Camrose food bank; the women's shelter; the Service Options for Seniors Society; the Special Olympics; Meals on Wheels; and the Family Violence Action Society. We organize, we serve, and we work for a brighter future for our community members. Thank you to Gail for her contribution.

5:20

Education is a pillar in my community. There has been an evolution, so to speak. Dean Allen Burger had this to contribute. The Augustana campus of the University of Alberta is located in Camrose. Part of the University of Alberta since 2004, Augustana now plays a unique role, defined as for the public good in the U of A strategic plan, as a living laboratory for teaching and learning innovation to the benefit of the entire university.

Augustana, which enrolls approximately 1,050 undergraduate students, including 6 per cent indigenous and 15 per cent international, offers bachelor of arts, bachelor of science, bachelor of music, and bachelor of management degrees. It is a provincial and national leader in community service learning, international study opportunities for students, and undergraduate research. Inspired by the university's strategic plan, Augustana has implemented a unique academic calendar and a first-year seminar program. Its faculty council recently approved new interdisciplinary concentrations in law, crime, and justice studies; ethics and global studies; and creativity and culture along with revisions to its core program that include a scaffolded approach to work-integrated learning.

As the only campus of the U of A outside of Edmonton Augustana is also home to the Alberta Centre for Sustainable Rural Communities and the Chester Ronning Centre for the Study of Religion and Public Life. Through a relationship with Alberta Parks

the campus also maintains a research station at Miquelon Lake provincial park and will soon be adding an astronomical observatory there, taking advantage of the park's status as a dark sky preserve.

Currently both the U of A Nursing and Rehabilitation Medicine faculties offer programs at Augustana, recognizing that health science students trained in and among rural communities are more likely to build their careers in such settings. More broadly, Augustana and several health science faculties have aspirations to develop the campus as a centre of excellence for rural health and wellness.

Hardisty is another major town, at the far end of our constituency, filled with kind, hard-working people. It is best known as a pivotal petroleum industry hub where western Canadian select blend crude oil is produced and traded. My personal goal is to arrange a trip where our ministers of Transportation, Infrastructure, and Energy and Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction could assist a committed group of business people to successfully develop their community to provide jobs and have a positive impact on our community. Blake, one of the community organizers, advises that the opportunity is waiting.

I look forward to serving the needs of my constituency and all Albertans in this House. Thank you.

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

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

Mr. Jones: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am honoured to respond to the Speech from the Throne and to deliver my own maiden speech. The first time I entered this room, I was in grade 6 on a field trip to the Legislature. The second time I entered this room, I was the Member-elect for Calgary South-East, touring this Chamber during MLA orientation week. It took me 21 years to get from up there to down here, and I intend to use my time in this Chamber wisely.

Like many Albertans, I wasn't born here. I was born in Sparwood, B.C., home to what used to be the world's largest dump truck. My father worked in the coal industry and followed his career to Alberta, to the company's Calgary headquarters when I was about seven years old. Here he built a life for me and my five siblings, all of which still live in Alberta today. My father believed in three things: integrity, work, and education. He taught us to do what we said we were going to do and to treat others how we wanted to be treated. Pretty good advice for an MLA, I think.

On work, I'll never forget the day I turned 14, when he turned to me and said: it's time for you to get a job. I can't remember how I responded, but I think it was something along the lines of: I don't want to. But I'll never forget what he said. He said: you have to stop looking at work as if it's optional. It's an interesting statement if you think about it in the context of what has happened to Alberta. How many people have we all met with that don't just want to work, they need to work? It's not optional for most people to provide for their families, for their children, or for themselves. It's a necessity. And so at 14, in grade 8, I began working full-time in addition to going to school.

In addition to funding my future university education and providing me with financial independence at a young age, it also gave me work experience, an expanded social network, and it developed my interpersonal communication skills. These are the foundations on which my career was built and why, like our government, I am passionate about enabling our youth to work.

After I finished school in Calgary, I married my wife, Tarena, graduated from the University of Calgary, worked for nine years as

an investment banker, completed the chartered financial analyst program, and became the father of four children: Caleb, Kieran, Logan, and Isla. Each of these events was a step on my journey to becoming a member of this Assembly.

Throughout my career as an investment banker I had the pleasure of working directly with the entrepreneurs and businesses that drive Alberta's economy. I helped them to attract investment and execute transformative financial transactions. During the first five years of my career everybody I approached on behalf of these businesses wanted a piece of Alberta. It was amazing, and it actually made my job pretty easy. I would receive calls and e-mails daily from investors and businesses asking me if I had anything in Alberta, or northern Texas, as some would call it, for them to consider. When selling an Alberta-based business, it was not uncommon to have multiple international groups at the table in addition to suitors from other areas of Canada, but then something changed.

Over the next four years my phone stopped ringing, and the e-mails stopped coming. I went from sourcing growth capital and identifying acquisition targets for profitable Alberta-based businesses to seeking distress debt or identifying solutions to impending bankruptcy or trying to sell a company for which there was no interest. I witnessed record unemployment, record business closures, record vacancy in downtown Calgary, and friends and family members lose their jobs. I reached out to the companies and investors that used to contact me daily for Alberta-based opportunities, and this is what I was told: Alberta is a political and regulatory nightmare. This is not a commodity price issue – commodity prices are low everywhere – and we are in the oil and gas sector for the long term. But when prices are low, we must be careful with how we deploy our capital, and it's not going to be in high-tax jurisdictions with anti-energy governments and mounting uncertainty. It turns out that government matters.

My assessment at the time and the assessment of my family, friends, neighbours, and businesses that I worked with was that government had exacerbated a bad situation and that we needed more qualified, experienced, and educated people to step up and provide better management of Alberta, particularly in the areas of business and finance. Given my background in both, I decided to put my career on hold, and I started to door-knock. Over the next year I went to virtually every residence in the communities of Auburn Bay, Cranston, Mahogany, and Seton, that make up Calgary-South East. I got to know people who had lost or were losing their jobs, the people who could no longer pay their mortgages, families where a spouse lived in another province or country to make ends meet, entrepreneurs who had lost everything, couples deferring to have children, people who had lost hope. I also met people with severe health issues and parents frustrated with the lack of schools and overcrowded classrooms in my constituency. I was reminded daily how blessed I was to have a job and to have healthy children. Door-knocking was eye opening and humbling, and I became even more concerned about what state the province would be in for my own children 10 years from now.

On April 16 the people of Calgary-South East and the rest of Albertans had their chance to speak, and they delivered a clear mandate to our government. They want jobs, a strong economy, fiscal responsibility, pipelines, a government that will stand up for Alberta, and quality health care and education. And why should they settle for anything less in a province so abundant in talent and natural resources? Standing before you today, I believe we have the right people in this room to accomplish what we committed to do. And, like many of my constituents and Albertans across the province, I am now excited and optimistic about Alberta's future.

I would like to thank the constituents of Calgary-South East again for entrusting me to represent them in this Assembly and the over 150 people that volunteered to get me here. I would also like to thank the other members of this Assembly for their work and sacrifice to serve their own constituencies, and I look forward to working with you to make Alberta better.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any comments or questions under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The hon. Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I just wanted to say what a pleasure it's been listening to so many of these incredible speeches. Having door-knocked as much as I had as well, it makes me feel incredibly honoured to hear your story and hear the stories of many of the members in this House, how you got here, and about the things that really, really were impressed upon you throughout the process of how you came through to be here in the first place.

You were mentioning at the beginning of your speech about working full-time when you were 14 to pursue your dreams. I also did that. The east side of Chestermere knew me very well. I babysat the entire east side of Chestermere and picked rocks out in the farming fields because it was one of the few jobs that I was very good at. Would you mind speaking a little bit more to the work that you did as a young person, what inspired you, and sort of the process that you went through? I think it's a very inspiring story to many of our youth, especially coming forward, now that so much of our mandate is about getting people back to work.

5:30

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-South East to respond.

Mr. Jones: Yeah. Thank you for the question. Well, I wasn't inspired to work. Remember that I was told to work. It was not an option.

When I turned 14, my father suggested strongly that I get a job, so I applied at a Dairy Queen. I was hired, and I worked there for two years. I became the youngest supervisor there, and I worked about six hours a day every day after school in grades 8 and 9 on weekdays and then as much as I could on weekends, which was upwards of 16-plus hours. As I mentioned, I believe this was the best thing that happened to me.

There's a Dairy Queen in my constituency, and I had the pleasure of running into the owner of the Dairy Queen. Of course, I said, "I used to work at one." We had this conversation. I said, "Do you still hire 14-year-olds?" She said: "No. Why would we hire 14-year-olds, who can't open and close the store, who can't deal with the money, who can't deal with complex customer complaints, when we can hire someone at the same rate who's in their mid-30s?" That is why the youth wage is an important piece of legislation that we're going to be bringing forward. That's a real-life example.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any more comments under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Madam Speaker, I think we've made some good progress today. I've enjoyed listening to the new members' maiden speeches. As such, I would move that we see the clock as 6 o'clock and adjourn until 7:30 this evening.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:32 p.m.]

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