



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
First Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday morning, May 29, 2019

Day 5

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

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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),
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Fir, Hon. Tanya, Calgary-Peigan (UCP)
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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

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Stephanie LeBlanc, Acting Law Clerk
and 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

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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
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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

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.
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Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Chair: Mr. Cooper
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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

9 a.m.

Wednesday, May 29, 2019

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Deputy Speaker: Good morning, hon. members. It's a wonderful day outside, but we are going to be working hard for Albertans here indoors today.

As per the long-standing tradition of this House please let us pray. 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 ideals but, laying aside all private interests and prejudices, keeping in mind the responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all. May Your kingdom come and Your name be hallowed. Amen.

Please be seated.

Orders of the Day

Consideration of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor's Speech

Ms Glasgow 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.

[Adjourned debate May 27: Mr. Guthrie]

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein.

Mr. Jeremy Nixon: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and congratulations on your recent election to the office. I know you'll do well and serve us well.

Madam Speaker, I once saw the government place a child with a cognitive disability into a homeless shelter. I witnessed a woman with mental illness bouncing from street to hospital to street, a homeless man battling grief and addiction make the decision to sobriety only to be turned away from the detox centre for lack of space. A good friend of mine died last year of a fentanyl overdose because he had relapsed and was unaware of what he was taking. Unfortunately, these are just a handful of the hundreds of stories I can tell you from my 15-year career working with the vulnerable people.

The issues we face as a province are real, and the policies that are decided here have a significant impact on the lives of Albertans. It is why I fought so hard to represent this community and to bring voice to these issues to the Legislature. I stand here deeply humbled and, I have to confess, with no little trepidation about the enormity about the task before us.

I wanted to use my first words in this House to acknowledge my parents because I believe it is in their example I chart my course forward. If you see any compassion, fiscal prudence, perseverance, or servant leadership in me, it is because it has been instilled in me by my mother and my father.

Most members here have heard the story of my father, Pat Nixon, a street kid making his way out of poverty, battling overwhelming obstacles to go on and build one of the most amazing community-driven organizations in Canada, the Mustard Seed. His example is a large part of what shaped me into who I am today and what drives me forward in imagining a future that is available for my children, my community, and this province.

His vision was a mobilization of community and church to serve their neighbours in need. His success was demonstrated not only in the thousands of people who were able to overcome addiction and poverty; it was also seen in the thousands of volunteers who discovered the impact of giving. What our family learned was that even though our beliefs may have been different, people with many different backgrounds and ideologies could work shoulder to shoulder because they shared the conviction and the hope that they could make a difference. When I was knocking on doors in Calgary-Klein, it was rare for me to make it past two houses without bumping into somebody who had been impacted by or who had given to the Mustard Seed.

It is, however, my mother, Lise Nixon, who I wanted to emphasize here today in regard to servant leadership. It is her example, her love, grace, quiet dedication to her children, her husband, and the ministry that they were building together that played a core part of shaping me and my brothers into the men you see today.

Vista Heights is the community I was born in – it's in Calgary-Klein – and as I was door-knocking in the election, a flood of memories came back of my mother's efforts to make our childhood amazing. We were not rich. A street pastor's salary did not provide a lot, but it was my mother's tight budgeting, strong fiscal stewardship that ensured that there was always food on the table, that the bills were paid, and then on some occasions there was something special for us boys. Mom was there alongside dad in his work. She volunteered her time, invested her heart, and always demonstrated empathy to those around her. It was often the small lessons she taught us day to day of how to care for our neighbours, through holding doors for elderly people or picking up garbage off the side of the street.

After dedicating over a decade to raising six boys, running several small businesses, and supporting a husband dedicated to ministry, my mother went on to graduate with a certified general accountant degree, achieving a 4.0 GPA. She did this with six teenage boys at home. She is now an auditor for the government of Canada and very good at what she does. She has demonstrated values that we should expect in our government and elected people: perseverance, strong fiscal stewardship, dedication to something bigger than ourselves, devotion to family and community, and, most importantly, compassion. I look forward to applying the principles that my parents taught me in this 30th Legislature and as a representative for the constituency of Calgary-Klein.

I ran for office because I wanted to bring a voice from the front line. I felt that there was a growing disconnect between elected people and the people serving in our communities. Since arriving in this building, I've quickly learned that the disconnect is not because the members in this House don't care. In fact, I've found my colleagues to be extremely concerned about issues of poverty, addiction, mental health, and helping vulnerable people. I'm excited to see the dedication of resources and the time immediately being directed to tackling these problems.

I'm also happy to see an acknowledgement that reaching out to the front lines needs to be a priority, that we are committed to creating a culture of openness that will lead to a bottom-up approach to problem solving. Compassion – compassion – is not a partisan issue. The challenges our communities face in regard to

addiction, mental health, children struggling in care, homelessness, and the shortage of affordable housing are not new to this government, the last government, or the government before that. In fact, most governments around the world are tested by these issues, and that is why we in this House need to move beyond partisan rhetoric, work towards creating a dialogue and breaking down the social stigmas within our communities in order to find solutions.

I've always believed the solutions to Alberta's problems are found at Alberta doors. One of the most common things that I heard during the last election was a plea from my constituents to move beyond petty mudslinging and partisan rhetoric. They want us, expect us, and need us to restore healthy debate and open discussion. I believe that the people in this room want similar outcomes for Alberta: excellence in health care, quality education, care for our seniors, balanced budgets, and to create prosperity for Albertans in a sustainable way, a way that will not leverage our children's future. If we can agree on that fact, we will have a much better time getting down to discussing how we get there.

I have the distinct privilege of representing the constituency of Calgary-Klein. This inner-city constituency is home to 16 communities represented by 11 community associations. Many of the communities in Calgary-Klein were actually annexed by the city of Calgary as early as 1910, with the newest communities being established in 1963. As a result, the people who lived in these communities played a rich role in shaping our city into what it is today. My constituents come from all walks of life, some who live in the same home they built 60 years ago, some who have moved into the homes in the communities that their parents raised them in, and many who have come from across this province, this country, and around the world to make a life for themselves and their families here.

What struck home with me was that people I talked to didn't expect nor want me to head to the Legislature with the goal of bringing back prosperity at all costs. I feel so proud to serve residents who are fiscally conservative but caring about social impact on their neighbours and their communities. I consider myself fortunate to be able to represent and partner with so many active community-minded volunteers and associations. These men and women are dedicated towards making their neighbourhoods a great place to live.

I had the distinct privilege of running against the only two other members that held the title for Member for Calgary-Klein, Kyle Fawcett and Craig Coolahan. Although I did not always agree with their policies, running in an election with them and witnessing them as representatives, I came to respect them, their effort to bring our community's voice forward, and their sacrifice in the name of democracy. The communities of Calgary-Klein have changed over the years, and different parts of our riding have had the privilege of being represented by many noteworthy members.

9:10

Speaking of moving beyond partisan rhetoric, Madam Speaker, I feel the need to mention Bob Hawkesworth, the ultimate community worker. First an alderman and then as a member of the Legislature he set the example of how to put aside partisan concerns and work with his constituents of all political stripes. Many of the communities in Calgary-Klein used to be in the riding of Gleichen – I imagine it looked a lot different back then – and were represented by two brothers: Ezra Riley, Liberal, in 1909, and the second, Harold Riley, Conservative, in 1911. They made history with the brothers' by-elections, and now I'm proud to be able to make history once again and stand alongside my brother in this House. It is in these members' footsteps that I hope to make my mark.

The Speech from the Throne highlighted several key focuses for our new government to get Alberta's economy back on the right track and for improving government services. Bill 2, the open for business act, will restore investor confidence so that corporations will want to do business here, ultimately growing our economy. On May 30 the carbon tax will be repealed so that families can keep their hard-earned money in their own pockets as they know what is best needed to support their families, not the government. With additional funds mental health and addiction facilities can grow their space to meet growing demands and overhaul our current programs.

In addition to once again becoming an attractive place to establish companies to create jobs, Bill 3, Job Creation Tax Cut (Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment) Act, will create new full-time jobs. A commitment to truthfulness and consultation with stakeholders, businesses, and citizens will be a common practice in this government. When given the opportunity, Albertans will take care of themselves, provide for their families, and find ways to contribute in their communities. Government's role is not to take over the job of meeting the needs of people but to create an economic and social environment to allow people, families, and communities to thrive.

I would be remiss if I did not mention the man whose name is engraved on my constituency, the man who grew up in the community where I have knocked on so many doors over the last several years, the hon. Premier Ralph Klein, or more affectionately known as King Ralph. Under his leadership he led Alberta through difficult times and moved us on a journey towards becoming a debt-free province. It was a noble vision and a heroic effort.

Member Murray Smith, MLA for Calgary-Varsity, which overlapped with the communities of Klein at the time, described the time in his 1993 maiden speech:

Alberta is similar to many governments in the western world today. Saddled with heavy debt, Alberta and other administrations recognize the high growth periods of the last 30 years. Now is the time to make that payment back to the people of Alberta. Alberta will be the province in Canada that takes the country's lead in attacking the deficit. Our economic situation requires innovative thinking and new approaches to developing our economy. This government is up to the challenge.

Sadly, we face similar circumstances. These are different times and they call for different solutions, but with perseverance, fiscal prudence, dedication, devotion, and compassion of Albertans and the members of this House I believe we will get there. I gave speeches at the United Way of Calgary to hundreds of offices in downtown Calgary full of people eagerly looking for an opportunity to contribute to making the lives of their neighbours in need better. Sadly, over the last four years I've seen many of those companies I spoke of disappear or struggle to the point where they could not give in the same way.

It brings me back to the disconnect I talked about earlier. Former Prime Minister Stephen Harper described one of Ralph's so-called radical ideas at a memorial celebrating Ralph's life: the best decisions are not made in government office towers; the governments and citizens should face problems head on. As King Ralph reminded us back then, Albertans are prepared to help, but they cannot do that if we do not create the space for them to succeed.

I am so honoured to be in this room with these hon. members and look forward to continuing this conversation. I have great faith in this team and the quality and calibre of the members assembled here.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any comments or questions under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Let me be the first to congratulate the hon. Member for Calgary-Klein on his maiden speech inside this House. I am proud to call the hon. Member for Calgary-Klein my brother but also proud to call him a friend, and I think the House saw why today. My mom did say that I had to be nice to him. She always said that, but it's my pleasure to be nice to him because he's a great man and a great brother. I shared a room with him for 16 years, interestingly enough. I can't tell you some of the stories of those days, the fun in growing up with five brothers.

I also served in front-line work with the homeless in this province and watched the hon. Member for Calgary-Klein's passion to be compassionate to the most vulnerable in our community. I was proud to do that with him. I'm proud to now be here in the 30th Legislature with him. He took the long road here, Madam Speaker, through three elections and finally was able to do it, but not from lack of hard work each time. I know that you know him well as well. He's one of the hardest working candidates I've ever worked with.

Interestingly enough, just for the House's interest, he was once endorsed by the hon. former Finance minister. I can't remember his riding at the moment. I suspect not this time around, but he once endorsed him in the past, which shows his ability probably to work across party lines.

I do have a question for him, though, on his maiden speech. I think he did a great job of talking about the need to be compassionate in our community. I know he believes the same as I do, that we will be judged as a society on how we treat the most vulnerable amongst us. He also expanded on that and why he is a Conservative, what he has seen in his career and in the work that he has done with the homeless and how that ends up with him being a Conservative politician, the reality of a Conservative with a heart, and the ability of parties like ours to be able to actually effect change in the communities that he and I care about.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein.

Mr. Jeremy Nixon: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you, Minister of the Environment for your question. You know, I'd like to echo what my brother just said about me. Knowing first-hand by working with him, starting up the Mountaineer Lodge program and seeing his compassion and dedication, and knowing his leadership role within this party and the many leaders in this party and their concern for the care of the poor and the vulnerable in our community, it warms my heart. I'm very excited about that.

You know, I'd mentioned it in my maiden speech: at the end of the day, if we don't have a strong economy, if Albertans aren't working and we're not creating that prosperity, we won't have the resources to be able to help people in our community. But more than that, I think it's an emphasis on helping people to rise up out of their situation. You know, the classic kind of handout versus hand-up phrase: maybe it's used too much, but it's truly what we want to accomplish here.

One of the things that my dad actually said about the addiction and mental health file is that it should be called recovery. We want to help people to be able to recover, rise up, and connect back into community and find meaningful ways to contribute and be involved in their communities. I think that's certainly the Conservative heart and something that I want to bring to the table here. I know that my colleagues do as well.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

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

Mr. Toor: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Hon. members, I'm very grateful to have the privilege of rising today to address this honourable Assembly. I would like to take this opportunity to thank my constituents and the many hard-working men and women of Calgary-Falconridge who have put their trust, hopes, and dreams in my hands and given me the great honour to be their voice inside this important Chamber. I'm deeply honoured by their confidence in me and humbled to take my seat in a place where so many great Albertans have been before. Most importantly, I would like to thank my family: my wife and my partner in life, Balmeet, and my two children, Abhi and Sahej, who have always stood beside me and supported me in all my political ambitions. They are truly the foundation of any success I have achieved.

When I rise today, I think of the journey that has brought me here. Many of us in this House have travelled long and winding roads. My journey may have begun further away than most. It started half a world away, where I was born and raised in northern India, the state of Punjab, at the foot of the mighty Himalayas.

9:20

My upbringing was not unusual for a boy in that area, walking to school up and down a mountainside every day and dreaming of a bright and successful future for myself and family. After graduating university in pharmacy in India, I began the long road that would bring me to the foothills of another majestic mountain range, the Rocky Mountains. Like many who have come to this land before me, I came to Alberta with a pioneering spirit and self-reliant attitude to build a new life in the land of boundless opportunity.

Many new Canadians have built successful communities and prospered through hard work, ingenuity, and unshakable determination. Like previous trailblazers, they had to brave immeasurable hardships but did not falter. They rose to the challenge and helped to create one of the best places in the world to live, work, and raise a family. Their story is like so many others. In my case, I was able to come to a new land and build a very successful business, and today I'm honoured and proud to say that our business employs my fellow Albertans across Alberta.

However, we are faced with many treks that must be conquered. We are fully engaged in the information age, which, in spite of its benefits, means Alberta must compete with the entire globe, from the protectionist forces of our friends to the south and in the Far East to new attacks on our personal liberty and privacy. We are indeed living in a brave new world. Domestically there are long-standing tensions creating regional misunderstandings and sometimes wilful ignorance of the many benefits and advantages that Albertans have provided to our provincial partners in Confederation. These are the difficulties that we must deal with in this Chamber.

Today our fellow Albertans are looking to us for leadership and a path through the wilderness of despair. My journey here is a testament, like so many other new Albertans, to our collective ability to find ways to defeat seemingly insurmountable obstacles and achieve success and prosperity. Under the leadership of our new Premier, his cabinet, and caucus I'm confident that we will harness the energy, spirit, and strength needed to help find the right path forward for all Albertans.

Our current problems are well known: the lack of accessible pipelines to tidewater, the constant attack on our natural resources from international self-interest groups, and the issue of rebalancing transfer payments to better reflect the new realities of our country. The lack of jobs and persistent lacklustre economic performance is

another critical issue. These problems will require ingenuity, persistence, and perseverance to overcome.

I expect that new ideas will be brought to the floor of this Assembly. I'm dedicated to supporting ideas that are rooted in principles of fiscal responsibility. I believe firmly in the analogy that teaching a person how to fish will help feed them for life, instead of giving them a fish, which only feeds them for a day. Together we can imagine an Alberta full of promise and opportunity. Through a reduction in government regulations we can unleash the power of entrepreneurs to build and create new businesses and generate jobs for Albertans. By demonstrating fiscal restraint, we can unburden future generations of debt. That will allow them the ability to deal with many new challenges our province will inevitably face. By providing strong educational building blocks, we can enable our youth to be better prepared to compete against the new global realities.

We know the world has become much more complicated. Computers and electronics dominate our lives, yet few of us understand or are capable of writing the simplest code needed to direct this technology. I believe the time has come for bold thinking, to establish in the curriculum a program where every child is required to take a mandatory coding class from kindergarten until they complete high school. Kids should learn the principles of algorithms and be capable of building new software applications for companies like Apple, Google, and other new companies that haven't even been founded yet. If we institute a mandatory coding class for all students in the Alberta curriculum, we would be the first jurisdiction in North America to do so.

Since 2016 the United Kingdom has instituted mandatory coding classes for all students from kindergarten to grade 12 in order to prepare their youth to successfully compete in the global economy of the future. We could follow this example and be the first jurisdiction in North America to arm our children with the tools they need for success. This would also encourage entrepreneurs and technology companies to consider immediately establishing operations in Alberta, where we have not only an abundance of natural resources but also a highly educated workforce to help power the innovation and technology of the future.

In another area of great complexity we must be courageous and harness new technology and management practices to maintain and enhance the quality of our health care system. I believe we must be open to new ideas to innovate and find new approaches to delivering the medical care and pharmaceuticals our citizens require, all within the limits of our fiscal capacity. My constituents are proud of our health care system, but they're concerned about its future. We must continue to find ways to improve its delivery while ensuring long-term sustainability and not sacrificing the quality of health care at any cost.

The throne speech set out our legislative agenda. It gives us a signpost that will guide our way to a more robust and affluent future. It highlights the challenges that lay before us, but it is also a call for renewed faith for risk takers, and now is the time to unleash the energy and imagination that can help bring back the Alberta advantage.

My personal journey has brought me to this place at this time to use all my knowledge, skills, and experience to help in the effort of lighting a path for today and for future generations, to work tirelessly to create a climate where jobs will flourish and rewards for risk taking will be encouraged. I know, Madam Speaker and hon. members, that you are ready to join with me in taking on this tremendous task.

I quote a well-known poem written by Canadian John McCrae.

To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.

Each generation passes the torch to the next. Be ours to hold it high, be ours to safeguard our freedoms, our liberty, our rights, our principles, and most importantly, safeguard our fellow citizens. We have been passed a great trust from previous generations. In Alberta that is the tapestry of many cultures woven together by shared principles of free enterprise, personal responsibility, and mutual respect. We must continue the work of building a society of tolerance and understanding that is a beacon of opportunities across Canada and around the world.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

9:30

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

Ms Issik: I rise today to congratulate the Member for Calgary-Falconridge for an amazing maiden speech. I very much appreciated hearing how he was educated as a pharmacist and then came here to Alberta to build a whole new life, a successful business, and now here he is contributing to public life in Alberta. I appreciated his comments, Madam Speaker, about our position here in Alberta within the information age, and I would appreciate hearing more from the member regarding innovation here in Alberta.

Mr. Toor: I came from a different world. There's a lot of competition there. Kids have to fight to get into the schools and have to compete. They find the innovative ideas right from when they go to kindergarten. When I said that we should have innovative ideas, we need to have strong competition within the schools. Like, every government from last time we heard that they want to diversify the economy; they want to do different things. Basically, we need to be innovative. We need to be a little bit creative in how we compete in the world. Before we copy and follow the same idea, I think we need to innovate.

As I said, the coding, teaching codes to students right when they go to kindergarten might be helpful. I was sad when I heard that in the last few years our kids were failing math skills, normally required to compete in the world. We need to teach those kids. You know, if they are competitive in the future, a lot of companies will be looking for them, and they'll come to Alberta for those innovative ideas. They need to have that coding, they need to have good math skills, they need to have good grades in science and every perspective of life so that they can be challenged throughout their lives.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any more comments or questions under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm so delighted to see some of these colleagues of mine: the Member for Calgary-Falconridge; the Member for Calgary-Klein, who I worked with for almost nine years in Calgary on the legacy Wildrose side. Some of us had to run multiple times to get here. The Member for Calgary-Klein actually helped my campaign as my co-campaign manager. I use the analogy – I mean, our dean is actually the Member for Central Peace-Notley. He and I ran four times. Probably we both had the record, except for the former Premier from Edmonton-Strathcona, I guess, who was there four times.

I'm so delighted to see some of these colleagues here, particularly the Member for Calgary-Falconridge, a new Canadian, a very successful businessman. Finally he got here in his pursuit to serve the public, being in this caucus of a diverse group of people from different faiths, different backgrounds. Finally he's here. Being a

small-business man, he mentioned how we can advance the agenda in this caucus with that background, so I just want to hear from him: what message is he giving to those ambitious young people who want to be businesspeople in the future, and if they want to serve the public, what advice does he have for them?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Falconridge.

Mr. Toor: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Actually, I'll start with my childhood. My parents always said that I'm going to be an all-rounder. Since I was born, I could play any sport. When I moved here, I used to play hockey, cricket, volleyball, anything. I learned to skate, and now I can play a little bit of ice hockey, too. So basically I'm kind of an all-rounder. When I was going to school, I thought I wanted to become an engineer. I didn't become an engineer; I became a pharmacist. It's not only me, just a new Canadian, but it's the story of every immigrant to this country: you're not going to find the profession where you belong. So when I moved here . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Sorry, hon. member. We would certainly like to hear more of that, I'm sure, but we're out of time.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

Mr. Horner: Yes. Thank you, Madam Speaker. Congratulations on your election.

It is with great pride and excitement that I rise today in response to the Speech from the Throne by Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor and give my maiden speech in this House. This is truly a humbling House for a newcomer. It feels as if the weight and expectation of Alberta looms over it. It's a strange feeling. It makes you feel incredibly small but part of something so very big.

I'd like to thank the constituents of Drumheller-Stettler for allowing me the privilege and honour to be their representative in Alberta's 30th Legislature. I'd like to thank them for taking a chance on an unlikely candidate, one without political experience. I love where I live, Madam Speaker, and I would not care to live anywhere else. It's big and open and can be harsh and unforgiving, but it's full of communities that act like families, that work and play together and rely on each other. I intend to repay the people of Drumheller-Stettler for their trust by working hard and working with them. We're all in this together.

I'd also like to thank my family and especially my wife, Jennifer, for allowing me this opportunity. It's a big ask when you have a young family and you're four hours from Edmonton. I promise to spend the rest of my days paying it back and to explain to our kids why I felt it was so important.

Madam Speaker, it's been mentioned many times what a rare opportunity this is, to be a representative in this Assembly. That fact is not lost on me. My area, going back to when the riding was simply called Chinook, has had only four representatives since 1975. In preparation for this speech, I read the maiden speeches of those who came before. Many or most of the struggles of today were the struggles of yesterday, too: isolation, declining or stagnant population, need for economic development, accessibility of health care, per-pupil education funding, centralization of services, and, of course, the need and desire for more water. My predecessors accomplished a great deal and did the best in their time. I hope to take up the torch and convey to you all how much untapped potential still exists in the Big Country, a potential that can benefit all of Alberta.

The riding of Drumheller-Stettler is big. If it were a country, it would rank 133 out of 196 in size. To give that some context, Madam Speaker, that's slightly smaller than the Netherlands or

Switzerland and a little bigger than Taiwan or Belgium. And unlike our large northern ridings, Drumheller-Stettler has roads, people, and communities in every corner, maybe not many in every corner, but you catch my drift. This riding is municipally composed of three counties, two municipal districts, and the special areas. All told, it is over 8.7 million acres and has over 16,000 kilometres of open, maintained roads. Once more for context, that's over twice the distance of the main route of the Trans-Canada highway. The riding has 25 urban municipalities, almost a tenth of Alberta's total, including seven towns, 16 villages, and two summer villages.

I'd like to say, Madam Speaker, that before I entered the nomination race roughly 15 months ago, I thought I knew a fair number of people from all over the riding. You know, you grow up in an area; you do business there. I felt I'd made a lot of good connections and relationships over the course of my life. It is an extremely sobering and awesome experience to get in the truck, drive three hours from home, and start introducing yourself, start telling your story, and begin to learn the complexities and struggles and strengths of different regions and their people. You soon realize how small your circle was. That has been the most rewarding part of this adventure so far. As with most things in life, it's been about the journey.

9:40

I was confident that I could do this job, that I could learn and grow into the role. I know these roles require hard work, depth, and dedication. You do not have to be a lawyer to be a great member of this Assembly. To steal a line from the MLA for the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills: I believe we have 11 lawyers on this side; that ought to be enough. My point is that I believe much of this role can be learned through experiencing it. I'm reminded of the 4-H motto Learn to Do by Doing. So far I think that is the case. We're learning the procedures, the standing orders, the protocol, and for myself, even things as simple as dressing appropriately. I'm having a bit of a hard time with this one. When our whip spoke of the dress code, I could see the concern in his eyes. I think he was picturing me sitting beside him looking like Woody from *Toy Story*. For the hon. Member for Calgary-West, who, when he's here, is usually the best-dressed fella in here: I am trying.

Back to my point, Madam Speaker, the journey. What I know will help me succeed in this job, that I couldn't have learned here in Edmonton, even with all the support staff and assistance, is what the riding of Drumheller-Stettler needs, what is working well, what is critical, and what is long overdue, the relationships with the many councils and boards, and the late-night phone calls with the concerned folks we've met along the way. If you'll indulge me, I'd like to share a little of what I've learned.

We may as well start with the town of Drumheller. You don't find many towns like Drumheller. For one, it's roughly two kilometres wide by 28 kilometres long. The town itself includes the communities of Nacmine, Newcastle Mine, Rosedale, Wayne, and East Coulee. It was formerly a district of some kind, and years ago it all became the town of Drumheller. Drumheller itself is one of Alberta's major tourist destinations and the gateway to the badlands. Drumheller receives over half a million summer visitors in no small part due to the Tyrrell museum. The museum is world renowned and a cornerstone of Alberta's tourism infrastructure. It does pose some issues for the town and residents: slow falls and dead winters with absolutely full summers create some unique business and town infrastructure challenges; namely, the town needs oversized common areas, and the local taxpayers feel hard done by. The town's most real concern has always been about flood mitigation. The entire area is on a flood plain, and this is the most pressing concern to town leaders.

Starland county borders Drumheller. It's known for good farmland, has the villages of Delia, Morrin, and Munson, and the well-known hamlet of Rowley, a backdrop for many a movie. Starland's biggest concern currently is oil and gas companies closing their doors. Trident ceasing operations not long ago has hit the county with a 60 per cent shortfall to their industrial tax base. That, coupled with the loss of local jobs and a great many unpaid invoices to local mom-and-pop type service companies: this area has been hit hard. This county is responsible for 122 bridges, and with this hit they've begun to close roads because currently the cost of bridge maintenance or, heaven forbid, replacement is far out of reach.

North of Starland you'll find the county of Stettler. This area is known for great farmland, great cattle country, and oil and gas. The town of Stettler punches above its weight as an oil field manufacturing centre. It employs a lot of fabricators and sends products and packages all over North America and beyond. The Trident closure and others have hurt Stettler county as well. They are currently excited about a proposed grain loop terminal planned by G3 to be built south of Erskine.

East of here we run into the county of Paintearth, known for towns like Castor, Coronation, and the village of Halkirk. This is home to one of the two coal-fired power plants in the riding. The uncertainty of coal's future and the future of our electrical grid in general has caused a great deal of stress and hardship in this riding. Proposed wind projects have pitted neighbour against neighbour. Municipalities need the development, but the unregulated way that land agents acquire an area leaves the locals to fight with their councils in an effort to find a resolution.

East and north we enter the MD of Provost. I have to admit that this is the area I had the least amount of prior connection with, but it has been a great experience to get to know the people in this area. It's known for villages along highway 13, including Amisk, Hughenden, Czar, and the town of Provost itself. Provost is an oil town and is fiercely proud of being a complete town. They still deliver babies and have a funeral home. From start to finish, they have all the services one could require. They employ a great many from the Saskatchewan side, and could teach a lesson to other areas in not only acquiring doctors but retaining them. They go out of their way to make them part of their community. Drumheller and Stettler have been hit hard by rural crime, but no area in my riding has been hit worse than here; many businesses, multiple times. Some are giving up.

In the southeast corner is the MD of Acadia, known for its good soil. Farmers in this area are known to succeed without much rain. There are some big progressive farmers in this area that are moving up the chain, looking to find global partners for upgraded agrifood products. There's a proposed irrigation project in the assessment phase here that looks very promising and feasible. The irrigation potential on soil of this quality would be incredibly productive to the area and the province.

That leaves, in the middle, the special areas, all 5.1 million acres of it. Known for towns like Hanna and Oyen, villages like Consort, Empress, and Veteran, home of the Sheerness power plant, this area is known for hard grass and good cattle. It's notoriously dry. Its hybrid governance model dates back to 1938, when, for a train car to put your belongings in and a little food and travelling cash, settlers turned in their deeds to get the heck out. It's where I'm from. I'm biased, but it's full of great, hardy people. This area has always craved more water and has much more irrigation potential as well. I'm lucky to be an irrigator in this area and know what it can do to stabilize and better an operation and region.

Oil and gas has played a large role in building the area but is having a hard time currently, like most places. Companies are reclaiming entire fields, putting to bed many good wells with the

bad in response to low gas prices and a broken liability formula used by the regulator.

The future of the Sheerness power plant and Westmoreland coal mine causes much concern for Hanna and area. Interestingly, the plant actually just sold to an American company on Monday. The town has been impacted greatly: houses can't be sold, an empty main street, and hurting businesses. The facilitator for Communities Against Abuse mentioned the other day that the reports of sexual violence and abuse in this area have seen a sixfold increase in reported cases in the last two years. The human impact of these events on this area is staggering.

I know the demographics of Alberta have changed a lot and will continue to. I know that our cities will deal with the issues associated with rapid growth, and ridings like mine will deal with the issues associated with clinging to the services we have, the services we need. I know the cities have the votes, the representatives, the power, but, more voices or not, myself and my country colleagues will be here to remind this House that decisions made here ripple out into every corner of the province and have real consequence.

I come from kind of a political family, Madam Speaker. Mr. Diefenbaker made my great-grandfather a Senator, and there have been quite a few since who served federally and here in Alberta. I should have known enough to stay away, but there's obviously a strong hereditary defect. I like to think it's because we care about people.

I think this can be a noble role, Madam Speaker: help people, try hard, and leave it better than you found it. I threw my hat in the ring because I was worried about my kids' future, my region's future, and Alberta's future. The Speech from the Throne, much like this platform and this caucus I'm so proud to be a part of, is a breath of fresh air and has finally given regions like mine some optimism and hope. I'm proud to be here with you all in this House today and pledge to be a hard-working, loyal, thoughtful member. To my constituents I pledge to do what I said I would and tell your story the best I can.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Reid: Madam Speaker, this is my first opportunity to rise in this House to send my congratulations to you on being elected Deputy Speaker. Congratulations to the hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler and his victory in the election this year. I followed your campaign over the last number of months. You are a hard-working, well-travelled man, and I commend you for the time and commitment to the people of your great riding and the space you cover.

You touched on rural crime, which is something those of us from rural ridings have heard lots of over the course of the last number of months and years. If you could take some time and talk a little bit about how it impacts those of us in rural ridings when we're dealing with this scourge of rural crime.

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

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you for the question from the hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod. Yes. I guess rural crime is a hot topic and rightly so. We've seen such an increase locally, and it's been felt across the province, some places far worse than others. I think it is a symptom of the disease, which is a terrible economy, a growing drug epidemic. We're seeing desperate people taking matters into their own hands and going where it's easier, perhaps.

9:50

I know for myself as a rural person who's an hour from anything, it's a sincerely real feeling when you're in your house and you have a wife and a small family and you get a call from the sergeant an hour away saying: "Just giving you a heads up. You know, there are some sketchy people in your area. We think they're armed." I've had that experience personally more than once. If I can convey that feeling of knowing that you're the only person there to protect your family: it's a real feeling and needs to be understood.

Currently, I know that I'm working with my local detachment. They're doing some great things. I don't know if this is a problem that can ever be completely fixed, but we're doing some great things with communication. Right now a constable in Hanna has developed an app, and we're working with multiple rural crime watch groups. We're trying to get everyone communicating, sharing information in real time. The app will be able to use pictures and convey messages very quickly, and hopefully that will help catch some of these perpetrators and find some closure.

I'm proud of our platform. We've discussed adding prosecutors. I know the repeat offender thing is very real. I think that once they are caught, if we can keep them off the streets for a while and find them some help or some closure, it's going to be necessary. I don't think that we can ever overcome the distances. It will be impossible, so we're going to need to focus on communication and prevention and do the best we can.

The hon. member also asked about distances, and I just would like to share something with the House. I don't know if anyone else is experiencing this, being a member for the first time and sitting and learning all this during grad season. In my riding there are 21 graduations. I was fortunate that Provost couldn't use me this year. They'd already had theirs. We're trying to hit 19 of them. I think I have 12 left. I'm 375 kilometres from Edmonton, but when I left on Thursday, I'd put 1,400 kilometres on my truck by the time I got back. We drive a lot. That's our burden, but it's great.

It's truly a great riding. It's got its disadvantages but so many advantages, so many great communities. I know for myself I was well aware of all of these issues when I asked for this job, and I'm happy to do my best to get around and convey their messages in this House.

Yeah. That's probably all I have to say about that.

The Deputy Speaker: There are seven seconds remaining. The hon. Member for Peace River.

Mr. Williams: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I want to thank the hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Sorry. That's it.

That is a significant number of graduations, Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

I just want to remind all members of the House that we need to be very careful when pointing out where members may or may not be in this Assembly and also to direct all comments and questions through the chair.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

Ms Issik: Thank you, Madam Speaker. As a new member in this House it is an honour to rise this morning and address the Assembly in response to the Speech from the Throne from Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor that she so graciously delivered on May 22.

I'd like to start off by expressing gratitude, gratitude to all of those who supported me in this endeavour and make it possible for me to rise in this House today, the hundreds of volunteers who

worked tirelessly through thick and thin, in extreme temperatures, from those that resembled a pizza oven some days to bitter cold that would make a meat locker seem toasty, alongside me every step of the way, ensuring that every citizen heard the message of hope and renewal that our party would deliver; gratitude for my friends who encouraged me that this was indeed a journey worth pursuing because public policy affects real people in real ways every day; gratitude for my family, who not only encouraged me but whose lives have instructed me on the value of hard work, risk taking, and service to build a better community; and finally, gratitude to my colleagues and, in particular, the Premier for their dedication, passion, and commitment to public service.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

As I trudged through the winter on the streets of Calgary-Glenmore, leaving my footprints in the snow, I often thought of my great-grandmother and the footprints she left for me. I have a pair of her shoes that I display in my basement, a little pair of button-up boots. She raised eight boys, eight children, in large part as a single mom after my great-grandfather passed from scarlet fever. She provided for them with the wages of a ranch hand. Mr. Speaker, she was courageous, and she was tough, so when the going got tough, she got going. That is the essence of the Alberta spirit.

It was not so different for my husband, who arrived here in 1987 with a suitcase, \$3,000 in his pocket, and the promise of a job. He, too, exemplified the Alberta spirit as he built a business and raised a family.

And so I make footprints here in my role in this Legislature. I will always be mindful of the Alberta spirit as I move forward because, Mr. Speaker, the Alberta spirit is something that we all share. Whether we are indigenous to this land, came here generations ago, or are newly arrived, we all share that can-do attitude, a unique mixture of optimism mixed with a drop or two of straight-up stubbornness to succeed.

I would also like to take this time, this opportunity to congratulate all members of this Assembly on achieving the opportunity to represent their constituencies. I would also like to congratulate you, Mr. Speaker, on your election to your new role.

Since this is my first opportunity to formally address this Assembly, in the tradition of maiden speeches I'm pleased to not only respond to the Speech from the Throne but also to speak about my home constituency of Calgary-Glenmore and the impact the citizens past and present have had on me and how they have inspired me to serve. Mr. Speaker, Her Honour spoke of renewal and the breathtaking vitality of nature in our great province. In Calgary-Glenmore we are home to the Glenmore reservoir, its clear waters and the natural spaces along its banks, including the Weasel head, and as we look west, we have an unparalleled view of the foothills and the Rockies. There are scarcely any more beautiful sights in the springtime than these.

Also to our west are our great neighbours the Tsuut'ina Nation, a nation of rich culture, tradition, with a proud history of community leadership, successful commerce, and entrepreneurial spirit. In fact, Mr. Speaker, the Tsuut'ina hosted the 2019 indigenous resource council energy summit. I look forward to building stronger relationships with the nation and all indigenous people as we move forward with the indigenous opportunities corporation. As Her Honour mentioned in her speech, the indigenous opportunities corporation will support First Nations' and other indigenous groups' financial participation in natural resource development and infrastructure projects here and in other parts of Canada. I am committed to meet the moral obligation that we have to empower First Nations to be full partners in the development of the resources

that lie below their lands, which their ancestors first inhabited, and to become full partners in prosperity.

Mr. Speaker, you will also find on the banks of the Calgary-Glenmore reservoir Heritage Park, Canada's largest living history museum. My neighbours and I regularly hear the whistle of the steam locomotive, and where else can you watch a sternwheeler paddle through the waters within the city limits of a modern city? We're so fortunate in Alberta to have cultural resources such as these that tell the story not only of who we were but, ultimately, who we are and who we will become.

Right next door to Heritage Park stands the Rockyview hospital, one of our outstanding health care facilities, home to institutes such as the Southern Alberta Institute of Urology, funded by Brett Wilson and Doc Seaman, and one of the sites of the Libin Cardiovascular Institute of Alberta, among others, showing how contributions from hard-working members of the private sector to our public health care system create leading-edge, world-class care.

10:00

Mr. Speaker, Calgary-Glenmore is also home to the incredible variety of excellent educational venues, including public, separate, private, and charter schools such as Henry Wise Wood high school, my alma mater; the Jewish Academy; Connect Charter School; the southwest science alternative program; and the South GATE program, among others. I will tell you that I am pleased with our government's commitment to choice in education.

But as blessed as we are with everything that I've spoken of, the greatest inspiration in Calgary-Glenmore is her people, Mr. Speaker, the wonderful people, young and old, past and present, those who have lived in the area for generations or who have come here recently from other parts of Canada and the world. I am grateful to have as my neighbours the architects and builders of our modern province, the community leaders, the professionals, the tradespeople, and the everyday heroes who exemplify the true Alberta spirit.

As Albertans, both now and in the past, we are proud of the province that we have built. We built a land of opportunity, where hard work and risk taking is rewarded, and I am proud of all that our government is proposing to ensure that Alberta will once again become just that: a land of opportunity, ensuring that our resources can get to market, creating the economic ecosystem that will attract the investment, the innovators, and the builders that will grow and diversify our economy. This is what the people of Calgary-Glenmore have asked for day in and day out. They simply want the opportunity to work hard, succeed, and prosper.

The people were very clear in April. The season of renewal is here, and it is now time to get down to work, Mr. Speaker. I am grateful to have this opportunity to do just that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to address this Assembly and the people of Alberta.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you very much.

Under 29(2)(a) any members with questions or comments? The hon. Member for Peace River.

Mr. Williams: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank the hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore for the beautiful and eloquent speech. I was moved when you were speaking about Heritage Park in your constituency and the deep connection that that constituency has to our provincial patrimony and the heritage that brings with it. You spoke of how that informs us today and where we go in the future.

Can you speak a bit more about your own heritage and how that informs you as a representative of those constituents of the province

and how you hope that can help you in your goal of servant leadership as an MLA?

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

Ms Issik: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member for Peace River. I'm pleased to respond to that question. I'm a very proud Albertan. I was born in Calgary, as were many generations of my family. In fact, four generations of my family have lived within walking distance of the reservoir. We don't get around much. The fifth generation, the earliest generation, actually lived within what is now Calgary-Lougheed. My grandfather was actually baptized in the Red Deer Lake Presbyterian church, which is now the United Church. I live three blocks away, in fact, from where my grandfather's acreage once stood.

As a child, I was fortunate. We lived next door to the Tsuut'ina Nation, so like all neighbours do, you have your neighbours over. You visit your neighbours. It was not uncommon at my grandfather's home to visit with members of the Tsuut'ina Nation. It was just part of our background, our family. That informs me today because I think it created in me an understanding of how important it is to stay in constant touch with your neighbours. Too often we have spent in recent decades, I would say, not speaking with our neighbours necessarily. It's too easy to be on your phone, texting, watching television, jumping in your car and going somewhere. How often do we sit with our neighbours and just visit?

So we have certain traditions that are starting to come forward today like Neighbour Day in Calgary that is coming up soon. I would hope that all members in this Assembly will take the opportunity to really visit with your neighbours. I'm going to continue to visit with my neighbours on the Tsuut'ina Nation, and we're going to build better relationships because, like all neighbours, we've grown apart over the years and now it's time to grow together again.

I'm also informed by the history of my husband who came here in 1987. While I'm a multigenerational Calgarian, he's a new Canadian, so we have blended our traditions together to raise our family, and I know that we are not alone in that. That is a shared value amongst many families in this province and in this country. I think that informs all of us as we move forward to appreciate culture.

I was pleased last night to attend the iftar dinner, where we shared traditions. I think that's an important part of what we do, and that is to share culture, to share ideas, and through that create the understanding that will be necessary to really fight the intolerance that we are starting to see grow. It's only going to be defeated by growing understanding, and that's from sharing cultures and ideas.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

Mr. Stephan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and congratulations on your recent election. I've really enjoyed listening to the maiden speeches of some of my colleagues, and it's helped me gain a greater appreciation of both of them as individuals and the great areas in which they serve.

I'm thankful for the opportunity to share my maiden speech.

The Acting Speaker: To clarify, this is not going under 29(2)(a). This is a maiden speech.

Mr. Stephan: I'm grateful for the opportunity to share my maiden speech as a response to our throne speech. An overarching theme of our throne speech was a message of renewal and hope. With that

message in mind and as a response to our throne speech, I will share my hope for our province, for my constituency, Red Deer-South, and last of all for the hon. Members of this Legislative Assembly.

First, my hope for Alberta. Mr. Speaker, we are living in interesting times. Governments are failing us. The out-of-control spending ways of our governments have done a great disservice to our children. The old ways are not sustainable ways. The old ways are this: ineffective, inefficient governments with uncompetitive taxes and unsustainable billion dollar debts and deficits. What has been the result?

In the past four years leading up to our election, Alberta's debt has increased by over \$45 billion. Mr. Speaker, cumulative \$45 billion deficits are easy for irresponsible governments to incur. These gigantic debts are much, much harder for Albertans to pay for or even comprehend.

To put \$45 billion into perspective, the prior government's deficits are massive enough to buy every single home in Red Deer, Alberta's third-largest city, mortgage free, not once but twice. An undisciplined government did that in only four years. Mr. Speaker, these debts will be a burden for our children and the rising generation.

This truth cannot be ignored. Spending money you do not have is not the definition of successful government. Governments are supposed to be our allies in protecting our freedom and prosperity. They are not supposed to be impediments to freedom and prosperity. In these challenging times our governments need to be much, much better. Mr. Speaker, on April 16, Albertans took a big, positive step in the right direction to bring back Alberta's economic prosperity for ourselves and opportunities for our children by electing this new government.

10:10

This government's legislative program, as articulated in the throne speech, includes the following two priorities: renewing Alberta's economic prosperity and placing the public interest at the heart of sustainable government. Mr. Speaker, there is an interrelationship between these two priorities. Without a strong economy, there are no taxes from private-sector businesses and those who work in them. When there are no taxes from the private sector, there is no money to pay for government. The facts speak for themselves.

Alberta is better off with governments who live within their means, know how to compete and attract investment in the real world, and support economic growth and individual choices. That is how Alberta has competed and excelled. As set out in the throne speech, this Legislature will renew and restore Alberta as the most competitive and attractive jurisdiction in Canada to start and grow a business, and that is a very good start.

However, there is more for government to do. There is a required culture change in government. Our Premier has expressed Alberta's culture as follows: Alberta is a meritocracy, open to the talents of all, a place where we assess people not on the basis of where they were born, how they pray, or who they love but on how hard they work and how well they treat others. That is the culture of Alberta in the real world. That is not always the culture of Alberta in the government world. Often a government culture is not a meritocracy; sometimes it is mediocrity.

Mr. Speaker, why is there a disconnect between Alberta's real-world culture of meritocracy and government's common culture of mediocrity? The difference is accountability. Without accountability there can be no meritocracy. Some in government shun accountability but in the real world we are all accountable to our families, to our friends, to clients and customers, and our own personal morality, and all of these stewardships motivate us to work

hard, to be honest and strive to do better. Striving to do better is our aim in the real world, and that is what we need in the government world. In these challenging times we can afford nothing less. We need a government culture which strives for excellence, sets a good example for our children, lives within its means, is accountable, and focuses on serving the public interest in an efficient and effective manner.

Mr. Speaker, government plays a vital role in our society, but there is a growing contempt and distrust of the rising generations in unsustainable, ineffective government institutions. A deep culture change to meritocracy and accountability in government is the antidote. Better days are ahead for Alberta.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would like to share my hope for Red Deer. Red Deer is a blessed place. It is a place of great potential. Red Deer is an attractive city. Its population is about a hundred thousand. It is not too big. It is not too small. It is centrally located between Calgary and Edmonton. We have a river. We have great parks and amenities and lakes and other recreational opportunities close by. We will have our own university. Red Deer is a home of great entrepreneurs, businesses, individuals, and families. Red Deer is the home of many great servant leaders who I have had the privilege to get to know better in this important capacity. I grew up here. I chose to start a business here, and my wife and I chose to raise our three children here.

Mr. Speaker, like all communities, Red Deer has unique strengths and needs. I have discussed some of its strengths, and I will now outline one of its needs. The Red Deer regional hospital serves Red Deer plus its surrounding rural communities, comprising up to hundreds of thousands of Albertans. The Red Deer regional hospital had development plans over the years and had been listed as a priority project prior to 2016, but in the fall of 2016 it was dropped off the infrastructure funding list by the prior government, with little or no explanation as to why.

This hospital has been undersupported by government, with a gross disparity in per capita funding over the past 10 years, which has left central Alberta with a deficit of up to 10 times the rest of the province for hospital infrastructure. As a specific example, Red Deer has no cardiac cath lab. This is a time-sensitive, life-or-death health service. As a result of no cath lab to treat heart attacks and related issues, central Albertans have a higher death and disability rate from these issues than people in other areas of the province.

Mr. Speaker, Red Deer does not need nor does it seek special treatment, though. Red Deer can succeed and prosper on its own merits, as it always has. However, similar to Alberta's requests from Canada, Red Deer only requests equitable treatment from a principled government. As set out in the throne speech, this new government will be principled. Better days are ahead for Red Deer.

Last of all, Mr. Speaker, I want to close by expressing my hope for this 30th Legislative Assembly. In these challenging times we need the best, most-qualified individuals possible in government, who are willing to sacrifice, serve, and do their best. To be successful, this government will need to make significant course corrections, and that is going to require individuals with the determination to do what is right.

Mr. Speaker, I was entrusted with the United Conservative Party nomination for Red Deer-South on March 16. Exactly one month later, on April 16, I was elected as MLA for Red Deer-South. It was very hard work, and it demanded personal sacrifice. However, the importance of this election deserved nothing less than our own very best efforts.

I am surrounded by colleagues who did nothing less, who worked hard and sacrificed and succeeded in the crucible of nomination events and elections with other excellent contestants and candidates. The overall calibre of this government caucus is likely

the strongest that Alberta has ever seen. I respect all of the members who are here with me, including those on the opposite side. Each of them has strengths, and it takes courage and grit to run and succeed.

Mr. Speaker, last week I attended my first question period. I was disappointed to observe a few members consistently yelling and interrupting as ministers stood to answer questions. That was rude. All of the members of this Assembly are capable and talented adults and are better than that. My hope is that we can choose to act with more civility, to set a better example for our children and counter the growing contempt in government institutions. Notwithstanding our individual differences, all of us share a common desire for freedom to seek happiness as we individually see fit. With that common interest in mind, we can choose to strive to act respectfully and with civility with one another.

10:20

In closing, at the end of the day, what we take with us in this life is our character and our relationships. As a member of this Assembly my desire is to serve to the best of my ability all Albertans and every resident in Red Deer-South. This can be our shared hope with the limited time given to each of us, to give our best and contribute what we can for the public interest and make Alberta better for our children and the rising generations, and then having done so, to step back and allow others the same opportunity.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Under 29(2)(a), any members wishing to make any questions or comments? I see the hon. deputy House whip standing.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the Member for Red Deer-South for his remarks. Though I'm new to this job and to this Chamber, I've had the opportunity to speak with a lot of the members since the election and hear the excitement that they are experiencing to be here. It is the culmination of years of work for many of us, years of work to get here and to have the honour to serve our constituents. So I was hoping that I could ask the Member for Red Deer-South if he could share specifically some of the things that excite him the most and things that he looks forward to doing in this House and to accomplishing.

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

Mr. Stephan: Thanks for that great question. I'm, of course, excited about our platform. My background is in the private sector. Mr. Speaker, I am a lawyer, I'm a chartered accountant, and I have had a successful career practising law and working with many successful businesses and their owners. One thing that I have noticed in the real world as businesses seek to compete is that there is a culture of excellence that they strive to emulate in both their personal lives and in the lives of their businesses. What I am excited about – and, again, I am so excited about the wonderful colleagues that I have in this caucus – is working together to also be excellent in the way in which we carry out our stewardships, our sacred stewardships, of trust and opportunities to serve all Albertans. That really does excite me.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Any other members wishing to take advantage of the time remaining under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to begin by saying how honoured I am to have been returned to the

Legislature. I have been in this place before, but I represent now the riding of Calgary-Mountain View. It has been an incredible campaign. I've spent a large part of the last year getting to know that riding, and I'm so honoured that the people in that riding have sent me back to this place to continue to represent their interests.

I think I would be remiss if I didn't mention my predecessor who retired before the last election, Dr. Swann. The former Member for Calgary-Mountain View has left an incredible legacy, a legacy that I hope that I can take up and continue to move forward. I can remember watching the former Member for Calgary-Mountain View in the Legislature, you know, a number of years ago, before I ever considered coming to this place, and he really did advance the interests of his constituents. He took an incredible interest in ensuring that he advanced the interests of those most vulnerable, those with housing challenges, with mental health challenges; ensuring that the health care system was properly funded, that the education system was properly funded, that even those in our prisons were taken care of.

I know that in my previous role I had an opportunity to have a number of conversations with him in that regard, and I hope that I can be the kind of advocate, for all people in Alberta from all walks of life, from all different backgrounds, that he was. In some ways the riding has changed its representation, but I hope that in other ways it has not. I hope that I am able to carry forward that legacy of speaking for those who may not have the ability to speak in a place like this for themselves.

I wanted to say a little bit again about why I got into politics. There are a number of things that drove me to take an interest in the first place and to continue on in this instance. Certainly, my background, as folks will know, is as a lawyer, but I think it's worth noting as well that I have degrees in psychology and philosophy. I think that in some ways one of the things that sent me into politics was a dislike of bad arguments or of ignoring the facts, if you will.

One of the things I think that drives me is the increase in income inequality that we see throughout not just our province but throughout the country and throughout North America. For me, that's a real concern, the idea now that, you know, at the same company one person may be making a salary and someone else at that same company is making 500 or a thousand times more, that someone at the head of a company can earn in the first six hours more than some of their average employees earn in the entire year. I don't think that that does positive things for society. Having those not just at the bottom but even in middle incomes struggling to be able to afford basics like food and shelter while at the same time we have some of the richest among us I think is a huge concern.

I also believe that trickle-down economics won't work. We have tried that in the past, and I don't actually think that there's any evidence to support its working at any time in history. There may have been covariances where economies happen to get better at the same moment that tax cuts were made, but there have also been covariances where economies have gotten better while taxes were increased. So I don't think that we can draw any conclusions from that, and I think that there has yet to be any consistent correlation or causation discovered between giving away more money to the richest and having everyone else have a better standard of living.

Public education I think is critical. You know, we talk about equality of opportunity, but absent that public education I don't think it can exist. I think that strong investments in ensuring that everyone has equal access to that education is critical.

Interestingly, one of the things – the members across the way may be surprised to hear this – that drove me was concern about government waste. Certainly, in the justice system we spend an enormous amount of money housing folks in prison who could have been housed for far less money in affordable housing. I think that

that is a waste. It's a waste of the human potential of those individuals, but it's also a waste of government resources in a number of ways. I think that investments in mental health and investments in affordable housing can do a lot to turn that around. I'll note later, I think, some steps we've taken on that, but I don't think, by any means, that in four years that problem has been solved. I think we've made progress, but there is much more to do.

Public health care is another thing that, obviously, I'm incredibly passionate about, ensuring that everyone has access to that, ensuring that we're making progress on the issue of climate change, which is something we've been discussing a lot in this House.

I'm incredibly honoured to have served for the last four years and to continue to serve for the next four. One other thing that is important to note is that I do believe it's important in this place to have representation from all different backgrounds. Certainly, there's a lot of talk about women representing us in this place, but more than just women. You know, before the last four years, before the 29th Legislature, we had never seen a single MLA who had given birth in office, and we had three. I think that that's incredibly important because women of child-bearing age are part of the population, and they, therefore, deserve representation in this place. Now, I won't say for a second that that is an easy thing to do, particularly when you're having to split your family up and move between Calgary and Edmonton. I don't think that that's easy. I don't imagine that it's easy for anyone. But I think that it's important.

10:30

I think in my case the only reason I was able to be successful in that is because of the support and dedication of my colleagues. You know, the member across the way talked about this sort of crucible bringing forward the strongest amongst us. With respect, I'm going to have to disagree. I don't think that is necessarily how we get the strongest amongst us. I don't think it is by fighting those next to us and elbowing and trying to climb over them that we create the strongest team going forward. I think it's by supporting each other. You know, in order to allow representation by all different backgrounds, I think that working together and working from our mutual strengths is incredibly important.

Another thing that I think drives me is system design, and I think in this place and in government in general we ought to concern ourselves with what it is we're trying to achieve and how it's best achieved. One of the things that I think is important, when we discuss that, is considering where the obligations lie. Certainly, one of the things mentioned in the Speech from the Throne was about red tape reduction. I'm interested to see what that means.

You know, we talk a lot about that sort of thing and about finding efficiencies, but at the end of the day corporations have a legal duty. They have a legal duty in the Business Corporations Act, and absent of the regulations that duty is to maximize short-term profits for their shareholders. That is the duty that they have. So if we remove all other regulations on them, then the duty that they have is to continue to do that.

When we talk about the reduction of regulation, I think the concern that creates for me is that it leaves these corporations, who may very well want to do the right thing – most of them have people who work for them who do have a sense of their neighbours and of their communities and of caring about that – but when the only duty they have is a duty to maximize their profits and there's no regulation around the environment, there's no regulation around ensuring that their workers are properly treated and that they have occupational health and safety, I think that that's a concern and it does not necessarily create a stronger society.

When we turn to, say, the health care system, we talk about public health care, about whether or not we have public or private delivery. People say that private delivery will create efficiencies. Well, you know, we're talking about health care here. Sure, everything should run as efficiently as possible. There've been, you know, increases in technology and scheduling and sort of predictive algorithms that can help us to do a number of things more efficiently, but I think we need to bear in mind that we're talking about health care. Technically, by most definitions of efficiency, if we spend \$1 million to save 92 sick people out of 100 rather than \$5 million to save 98 sick people out of 100, technically that's more efficient, but I don't think that's the outcome that we want. So I think we need to think very carefully about what it is that we're talking about, because for those six people it's a really big deal.

You know, in health care when we talk about private delivery, often what we see is fewer staff with less training doing more work, and I don't think that's necessarily better, especially when we're talking about the care of our elders, who have built this society in which we live, who have sacrificed to give us what we have today.

A little note. I think one of the things I mentioned was trickle-down economics, and in particular here we're talking about the corporate tax cuts. I think we know it doesn't work. We've seen an article just this morning where economists criticize that and whether or not it is, in fact, going to create a whole bunch of jobs.

I think that what does work is putting more money into the hands of individuals below the median income. I think that that has a much greater effect because those people have been demonstrated to spend that money in the local economy, not sending it overseas, not putting it in the bank somewhere but they spend it to meet their needs, to meet the needs of their children, to meet the needs of their families. It creates not only a stronger, more vibrant economy but a stronger and more vibrant community. I think that that is the best way to proceed forward.

You know, they say that the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result. Well, I think we've tried this, "Let's cut the corporate tax and the economy will diversify itself," and it hasn't worked. So I think the evidence is that it's not going to work, and we ought to look at strategic investments and look at ways we can do that a little bit better.

I think one of the main questions that drives me is: is government a force for good, or is it a force for evil? A lot of people talk about government, and they talk about how it is inefficient and it drags people down and it's not accountable. I don't think that that's true. I think that there are things that can be improved, as there are in any large system, but I think that at the end of the day government is a vessel for us to work together. I think that working together, we create a better health care system. Working together, we create a better society. Working together, we create a better education system.

Some things are best delivered by the private sector. I won't deny that for a minute. Many things, one might even say most things, are best delivered by the private sector. But when the question is life versus profit, when we're talking about something like health care, I'm not sure that the same argument can be made. I fear what exists to the south of us. It may be efficient – actually, you know, I don't think it is efficient. They spend like 800 per cent more on administrative things because they have to deal with all these different insurance companies, so actually I don't think it's efficient at all. It can be deadly in real ways.

I had the opportunity recently to watch *Knock Down the House*. It's an excellent documentary. I would recommend it to anyone. It deals with average women of more modest backgrounds trying to enter into politics in the States, where big money is a really big thing

in politics. One of those candidates talks in that documentary about her reason for running, and it was because her 22-year-old daughter died because she was denied health care because she didn't have insurance. I don't want to see that happen to anyone up here.

I think I'd be remiss if I didn't take a moment to speak about the justice system. This is actually one of the things – I think it's important to say when we disagree and also when we agree – that I was thrilled to see in the throne speech.

The Acting Speaker: Under Standing Order 29(2)(a) are there any members wishing to make any comments or questions? I believe I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I want to thank the Member for Calgary-Mountain View for her thoughtful remarks in response to the Speech from the Throne. You know, it's been my pleasure to have worked with the Member for Calgary-Mountain View for the last four years in various capacities. I can tell everybody in this House and all the people of Alberta that there isn't a more thoughtful and engaged member of this Legislature than the Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

As a cabinet colleague I got to see her shepherd all of our government's legislation through the legislative committee and the cabinet committee, and I know that she spent many, many hours reviewing the legislation that was brought forward to our government for consideration and worked very hard to make sure that the legislation that we brought forward met the intent of the policy decisions that we made and was well-crafted legislation. So I want to thank her for all of the work, and I want all of the people of Alberta to know how hard she works and how dedicated to the well-being of the people of this province she is. I think she's unmatched in those capacities, and I want to thank the Member for Calgary-Mountain View for her dedication to the people of Alberta.

I also want to highlight some of the work that she did as Justice minister. It was my privilege to serve as acting Justice minister while the Member for Calgary-Mountain View was away having her baby. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that Justice minister is probably one of the least desirable jobs in the province of Alberta. In the three months that I was in that role, of course, we had hunger strikes in the remand centre, we had cases of people being released from remand and being murdered as soon as they walked out of the doors of that centre.

10:40

Not to mention, I had to take verbal assaults every day from the leader of the task force on rural crime, which drove me crazy in two ways. One, you know, when given the opportunity, the members opposite voted against the budget that was actually significantly successful in reducing rural crime, but also because the member who was asking me those questions turned out to be a rural criminal himself.

It's a challenging ministry, and I think she acquitted herself very well with honesty and integrity, that the current Justice minister I think would be wise to follow. In fact, when the Member for Calgary-Mountain View suggests that maybe we should appoint a special prosecutor to oversee the RCMP investigation into allegations of fraud in the UCP leadership race, the Justice minister, the Member for Calgary-Elbow, would be wise to follow her lead.

You know, we've heard a lot about compassion in this place this morning in various members' responses to the Speech from the Throne, and I want to just let everybody in Alberta know that when it comes to compassion, nobody has actually put that in action more than the Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

One of her acts as Justice minister, which didn't go widely reported, Mr. Speaker, was to remove the jail sentences for people who couldn't pay fines. That means that if people were caught jaywalking or committing some other small infraction that they were fined for and for reasons that were beyond their control couldn't afford to pay the fine, in the past those people were sent to jail, and some of those people were killed in jail. The Member for Calgary-Mountain View put an end to that barbaric practice, so no longer in the province of Alberta can somebody be sent and possibly killed for crossing the street at the wrong location, and I want to thank the Member for Calgary-Mountain View for that.

I also highlighted her work tackling rural crime. Of course, she invested a significant amount of money in hiring new prosecutors, developing courthouses in the city of Red Deer, investing in ALERT, of course a program that the Member for Calgary-Lougheed cut when he was a federal cabinet minister. You know, this was tremendously successful, so successful, in fact, that the current MP, Shannon Stubbs, actually congratulated the Justice minister on the excellent work that she did in tackling rural crime, so I want to thank her for doing that.

I also want to take the opportunity to extend to her thanks on the good work that she did in shepherding cannabis legalization through this House, Mr. Speaker. Of course, I think Alberta is a much better place because of the excellent work that she did on that file.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika.

Mr. Schow: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour to rise today and deliver my maiden speech, a response to the throne speech, but before I do, I'd like to congratulate Mr. Speaker on his election as Deputy Chair of Committees. I certainly watched with anticipation and excitement through your election, and I'm very grateful that you, sir, are here in this Chamber with us today.

I rise today in the spirit of gratitude to deliver this speech. I am grateful to the Hon. Lois Mitchell for her continued service to this province of Alberta as Her Majesty's representative, as Lieutenant Governor, and for the eloquent manner in which she delivered the throne speech.

I'm also very grateful to the people of Cardston-Siksika who, with an over 70 per cent mandate, trusted me with their vote to represent them in this Chamber and with that vote thrust upon me the yoke of public office and a mantle that I find myself unworthy to bear on my own but am willing and capable with the support of friends, family, and fellow members of caucus.

I'm grateful to the best campaign team a political candidate could ever ask for, always willing to rise to the occasion when called upon. My team, led by the amazing – I emphasize “amazing” – Stacey Atwood, demonstrated that love and commitment to community will always triumph over fear and division.

Mr. Speaker, I'm also grateful for the example set for me by those who honourably served my community within these very walls years before I ever stepped foot in this building. From Little Bow: David Schneider, Barry McFarland, and Ray Speaker. From further to the south: the hon. associate minister for red tape reduction and Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner, Gary Bikman; Paul Hinman; Bryce Jacobs. And going further back if you'll permit me: Jack Ady and John Thompson. Each individual laid their own bricks along the path I walk today. To them I say thank you.

Most importantly, I'd like to express love and gratitude to my family. To my wife, Nicole, for her unconditional support and patience as she elected to sit next to me in the front seat of this political roller coaster that we got on five years ago and who knows

when we'll ever get off: love you, babe; to my kids, Olive and Atlas, for their hugs and kisses; to my mom and to my dad, who taught me how to work and how to play; to my brothers David, Jonathan, Daniel, and Benjamin and my lone sister – but don't feel bad for her – who from a young age taught me patience, teamwork, and unconditional love.

I'm also grateful for the get-it-done attitude that built this province and the men and women across Alberta who personify it each and every day. In particular, I want to tell you about one of these people, to some just a man but to me and many others an absolute hero. His name was Leonard Jack Harker. Jack was born under humble circumstances in southern Alberta in September 1922. Like many other young boys his age, Jack got to work early on a farm, thinning sugar beets in the dry Alberta heat. It was back-breaking labour, make no mistake, but nothing he couldn't handle. Jack eventually started a trucking company with his father, where he worked until the age of 18, at which point he enlisted in Her Majesty's Royal Canadian Air Force to fight Hitler's Germany in World War II.

Not many people expected much from this small-town southern Alberta boy, but his natural intelligence and charisma landed him in the pilot's seat of a Halifax bomber commanded by the 415 Squadron, commanding a crew of six flying missions in defence of our freedom. I'm grateful to him and to his crew. After victory was declared and the war was won, Jack returned home to southern Alberta to resume his place within the family business, but something was obviously missing. The front seat of a sugar beet truck could not compare to the cockpit of an airplane, so Jack left a career of running the family business for a life high in the big blue sky, where he felt most at home.

Though he faced many setbacks along his career as a pilot, Jack's determination and get-it-done attitude eventually led him to the pinnacle of his craft and his career when he became the director of flight training for the government of Canada. A will to succeed can take you as far as you want, and for Jack it took him miles above the Earth. Not bad for a small-town kid from Magrath, Alberta; not bad for my grandfather, Leonard Jack Harker.

Mr. Speaker, this is the story of Alberta. It is not unique to Jack. He died in 2008, but his example touched the lives of my entire family and countless others around him in the same way that members in this Chamber, I'm certain, have been influenced by their own families, their friends, or mentors. Alberta is replete with similar success stories, and they all sound the same: a person has a dream, sets out to accomplish it, overcomes impossible odds and insurmountable obstacles along the way. It's what makes me so proud to be an Albertan. But lately Alberta's potential has laid dormant. Recently over 180,000 men and women remained at home each day, unemployed and failing to magnify their potential, through no fault of their own. Truly a heartbreaking state of affairs.

10:50

In the highly underrated 1993 mob film *A Bronx Tale* local boss Sonny gives the young protagonist Calogero, a.k.a. C, a profound piece of advice when he simply states: the saddest thing in life is wasted potential. Well, Mr. Speaker, it's time we embraced the get-it-done attitude that built this province and unleashed the full potential of Albertans.

What is a province or even a constituency without the people? I would venture to say that Cardston-Siksika is one of the most culturally and economically diverse blocks in Alberta. To the south small towns like Glenwood, Hill Spring, Mountain View, Cardston, and Magrath are populated by members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and some others, predominantly members of that church, whose pioneer ancestors ventured north from Utah to southern Alberta generations ago in the face of

extreme conditions in search of economic prosperity and religious freedom. Heaven knows, they didn't come for the weather.

Further to the centre Picture Butte, Iron Springs, Diamond City, and Nobleford were the landing places for Dutch immigrants who began settling in Alberta following the Second World War, a trend that I'm told was a big result of the fond memories of Canadian soldiers who liberated Holland from the Nazis. Since then thousands of new immigrants have joined their families on Canadian soil, including Johannes Van Maanen in 1977.

Further to the north agriculture towns like Lomond, Vauxhall, Vulcan, and Arrowwood are populated by some of the hardest working and diligent Albertans I have ever had the privilege of meeting throughout the course of the campaign and look forward to serving through my tenure in office.

My constituency of Cardston-Siksika is also home to two of the largest reserves in Canada. The Kainai Nation, also known as the Blood Tribe, is bordered by the Oldman, St. Mary, and Belly rivers. The Blood Tribe is home to over 13,000 people, with over 5,000 who live on-reserve. The Siksika Nation encompasses the mighty Bow River, that runs through the reserve. It is home to 7,800 people, with over 4,000 on-reserve.

Both the Blood Tribe and the Siksika Nation are proud members of the Blackfoot Confederacy, and both have overcome the diversity and colonization and generational trauma as a result of residential schools. They value oral histories and have kept their Blackfoot traditions alive for hundreds of years, traditions I am genuinely excited to learn more about. Many of the Blackfoot people in both the Blood Tribe and Siksika continue to teach the importance of their way of life. They're also still active in traditional societies and sun dance celebrations, and the Blackfoot people understand the value of hard work in creating a healthier and prosperous future for their people. Both reserves boast an increasing percentage of postsecondary graduates entering the workforce. Many have found employment in Alberta's industry and continue to support the Alberta economy. From visits I have made to the reserves, I understand that family committees are the foundation of their culture. As Siksika reels from the devastating floods of 2013 and the Blood Tribe fights a courageous battle against the opioid crisis, I hope to do my best to represent these two strong nations as their MLA.

And what of industry? Cardston-Siksika does over \$2 billion annually in farm gate sales, making it one of the largest agriculture-producing constituencies in the province. Each day men and women get up and produce food that feeds our province, feeds the country, and feeds the world. But it doesn't come easily. Farmers are looking to us to reduce the stress and the burden, and it starts with cutting the regulatory burden and working to improve trade negotiations that have left many producers, especially of canola, worried about the future of their operations.

Arthur C. Brooks wrote in his book *The Conservative Heart* that when Ronald Reagan made his case for the American people, he didn't spend a lot of time talking about what he was fighting against. He spent most of his speech talking about what he was fighting for. I am proud to be part of a government that's fighting for a better Alberta. I'm proud to be part of a government that takes the fiscal, social, and environmental future of this province seriously, with a measured approach to support our job creators and most vital sectors.

In the throne speech the Lieutenant Governor said:

No economic hardship has ever ruined us. No political enmity has ever defeated us. No natural disaster has ever stopped us. Our success, our resiliency, and our yet-untapped potential is a powerful magnet that continues to attract ambitious and talented newcomers from across Canada and [across] the world.

Mr. Speaker, Cardston-Siksika is a proud constituency and one that I am honoured to represent. I'm honoured to stand in this House among distinguished colleagues to take this province forward in what we believe to be the right direction.

Winston Churchill once said, "You have enemies? Good. That means you've stood up for something, sometime in your life." Certainly, over the course of my tenure in office I'm certain there will be those who will not like the things that we do, possibly the members across the aisle, but I understand that it's all of our duties to do what is best for Alberta.

On a clear day living in Cardston you can see off in the distance Old Chief Mountain. What was once a mountain often climbed by many is now difficult and precarious because of erosion. My grandfather, Paul Schow, spoke of it often and loved to climb it. Similar to Chief Mountain, for the past four years the economy in this province has begun to erode. The United Conservative government is committed to ensuring that we right the ship and get the province back to work so we can ensure that we have a province that is strong and free.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you for the comments, hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika and deputy government whip.

Under Standing Order 29(2)(a) are there any members? I see the hon. Member for Peace River standing for questions and comments.

Mr. Williams: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika for a wonderful speech. I was particularly interested in how geography has shaped so much of your constituency's past, whether it be the First Nations in the Blackfoot or the first settlers in the church of Latter-day Saints or the Dutch farmers that came. The landscape has formed and continues to shape so many of those people. Could you speak to the House a little bit about how the landscape and the geography continues to shape the way that you hope to represent your constituents?

Mr. Schow: I'd like to thank the hon. member for his question. The landscape is, without question, unique. I remember that in the month of March I put about 6,000 kilometres on my truck as I drove around visiting with constituents from the north and southern parts and everywhere else within Cardston-Siksika. In that time I learned something very important about Cardston-Siksika: it's united. It is indeed united, and it is unity that I believe brought us here today. Unity is what I committed to years ago when I joined in support of the now Premier his endeavour to unite the two legacy Conservative parties in this province.

My grandfather, Jack Harker, didn't talk a lot about the war, but he did say a couple of things. One was very intriguing. When he would go out on bomber missions, these weren't solo flights; they'd go out in large groups, huge, sometimes hundreds of planes. The idea was that you stayed close together to avoid enemy fire. Though the ride inside the pack was rough and difficult and sometimes very turbulent, it was much safer there than for those who decided to venture out to smoother skies, who were more vulnerable to enemy fire from fighter planes.

Life isn't always difficult. We're going to disagree on quite a bit, but I'm committed, as I believe this government is committed, to focusing on what unites us. There will be turbulent skies ahead in this province, of that I am certain, but it is worth it because nothing worth having ever came easy. That's what I believe, that's what my grandfather Jack believed in, and that's what the history of this province is built upon. We can do hard things. We've proven it. We've gotten this far, and moving forward, we will show again that the Alberta way of life is worth fighting for.

11:00

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Any other members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, I see the hon. Member for Sherwood Park who would like to speak.

Mr. Walker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and congratulations to my colleague and the Member for Cardston-Siksika on his wonderful maiden speech.

Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour as the Member for Sherwood Park to respond to the Speech from the Throne presented by the Lieutenant Governor of the province of Alberta. I would like to thank Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor for laying out the agenda for the 30th Legislature.

I also want to thank my constituents for bestowing upon me the honour to represent them in the Legislature. Sherwood Park is a thriving community, as is our municipality of Strathcona county. I am forever grateful to the people of Sherwood Park for the great honour they have conferred upon me in electing me as their MLA.

Mr. Speaker, I am excited about the Premier's vision for Alberta and his commitment to get Alberta back on track with thoughtful, common-sense policies. Alberta has traditionally been a leader in Canadian Confederation, an exceptional people and province. I am heartened to know that we have a Premier who understands our history and shares these sentiments proudly. We are fortunate to have a leader like him with his experience and strong leadership, who is committed to once more making Alberta the best it can be, a leader nationally and internationally, ensuring that our province once more becomes the ultimate platform for wealth creation, opportunity generation, and individual self-realization. Alberta: the ultimate land of opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, the Speech from the Throne sets forth our new government's legislative agenda. The priorities are, namely, getting Albertans back to work, making life better for Albertans, and standing up for Alberta. With the aim of achieving these priorities, our new government's top five commitments are, in no particular order: our job-creation plan; repealing the carbon tax; as well, we will focus like a laser on getting our fiscal house in order and balancing the budget over the next four years; also, we are committed to standing up for Alberta against the Trudeau Liberals in Ottawa and other groups that are trying to land-lock our interests and undermine our prosperity; finally, we are committed to protecting quality health care and education.

Mr. Speaker, I am excited about our new government's legislative agenda, centred on improving Albertans' quality of life and focused on jobs, the economy, and pipelines. I am humbled and overjoyed that we received a historic mandate to implement this ambitious and much-needed agenda.

Now, Mr. Speaker, moving on, I would also like to extend my congratulations to you on your recent election to your honourable office. I have watched you from afar for a long time with great admiration and respect and have had the pleasure to get to know you personally over the last little while or so, and it has been very rewarding. I have the utmost confidence that you will carry out your duties with fairness, wisdom, and the most sound judgment.

Next, I would also like to extend my congratulations to the new cabinet. I have full confidence that you will perform excellently and honourably for Albertans as you implement our new government's vision for getting our province back on track. I wish you all the best, and your colleagues who sit as private members are ready and willing to assist you.

I would also like to extend my congratulations to all members of this Assembly on your successful elections. I look forward to working with you all for the betterment of Alberta.

I would also like to recognize and thank my direct predecessor, the hon. Annie McKittrick, for her years of service to Sherwood Park from 2015 to 2019 and for her efforts to make our community a better place to live. I salute and thank all other Sherwood Park MLAs who came before me since the Sherwood Park riding was created in 1986.

With that, I would like to comment proudly more about my community, constituency, and municipality, which are all intrinsically linked, Mr. Speaker. The Sherwood Park constituency comprises roughly two-thirds of the hamlet of Sherwood Park. The said hamlet was established around 1955, with the first family, the Gordon Walker family, no relation, residentially moving in in December 1955, followed a month later by Cliff Otto and the Jean Dawdy families, respectively. Since 1996 Sherwood Park is part of and governed by the specialized municipality of Strathcona county, one of Alberta's largest municipalities by population. Strathcona county includes both urban and rural components. Out of roughly 98,000 residents 71,300 live in the urban area, with the remaining 27,000 living in the rural components.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Madam Speaker, going back to the history of my riding and municipality of Strathcona county, I would go way back and point out that, legally speaking, the genesis point for Strathcona county was in 1893, when the area was established as fire and labour district No. 2 by the then government of the Northwest Territories. Over the next hundred years what would eventually become Strathcona county evolved in structure and name until 1996, when it was formally established.

The region that would become Strathcona county welcomed industrial development following the discovery of oil in our region after the Second World War. Sherwood Park was established as a community to provide living accommodations to refinery workers and their families. Since then Strathcona county has developed a strong economic base that has grown and diversified, with energy remaining the foundation of our dynamic local economy, which contributes greatly to Alberta's prosperity.

Madam Speaker, today the Sherwood Park constituency is home to two of three oil refineries in Strathcona county. Together the three refineries in the county produce 462,000 barrels per day of crude oil, or 62 per cent of all refining in western Canada. Furthermore, numerous other heavy industries and related manufacturing operations complement the county's peerless refining power. As well, through partnerships with other municipalities and industry the county has been able to attract investment domestically and internationally to grow its industrial base and expand its commercial operations.

Perhaps the best example of such co-operative partnerships is Alberta's Industrial Heartland, which is the largest industrial area in western Canada and is a development initiative between five municipalities in the region, including Strathcona county. Alberta's Industrial Heartland, established about 20 years ago, is Canada's energy engine, being our nation's largest hydrocarbon processing centre, producing 75 per cent of petrochemical refining in Canada, a driver of the local and provincial economies, prosperity, and quality of life. Over 30,000 Albertans are employed directly or indirectly in the Industrial Heartland, which is home to more than 40 petrochemical companies and \$40 billion of existing investment.

Madam Speaker, Strathcona county is also an entrepreneurial hub. We have over 11,000 businesses and require no business tax

or business licensure. Strathcona county is working, and due to our business-friendly climate we continue to attract investment, with more than \$10 billion of investment announced, under construction, or recently completed.

Besides our many economic successes, Madam Speaker, Sherwood Park and Strathcona county are widely considered one of the best places to live in Alberta and Canada, quite frankly. Key quality of life indicators from infrastructure to the environment all point to a high quality of life in Strathcona county. In terms of quality-of-life infrastructure – get ready, everyone – we have 12 major recreational facilities, including the renowned Millennium Place, which is a megarecreation centre, along with a fine theatre in Festival Place, a gorgeous library, our own hospital, four art galleries, 200 sports fields, 229 kilometres of trails, over 3,000 hectares of natural areas, 147 playgrounds, nine golf courses, 17 tennis courts, 27 outdoor rinks, and I could go on and on.

11:10

Madam Speaker, it is enjoyable to talk about and promote my riding of Sherwood Park and my municipality of Strathcona county. I could go on happily all day, but I would like to also mention a bit about myself. Before becoming the MLA for Sherwood Park, I was a civil servant with the government of Alberta working in foreign qualification recognition and immigration as an officer. I enjoyed my time working with the government agencies of the international qualifications assessment service as well as the Alberta immigrant nominee program, IQAS and AINP respectively. The clientele we served were primarily new Albertans. It was an honour to assist mainly new Albertans through having their foreign credentials recognized and helping them achieve permanent residency. Given my professional background and passion for international relations I will always be a champion for new Albertans, and that is a great honour for me.

My passion for international relations, Madam Speaker, developed as a boy. The world has always fascinated me, thus both my postsecondary degrees focused on international relations. As the MLA for Sherwood Park I take this lifelong passion with me and firmly believe Alberta's economic destiny is a global one. I see the Asia Pacific as a critical region for Alberta to expand its presence in, in particular. I believe Alberta must build strong relations with Japan, for example, the world's third-largest economy and one of the most technologically advanced nations on earth and a fellow democracy.

Madam Speaker, there exists great economic, strategic, and cultural complementarity between Japan and Alberta. I have had a long and intimate connection with Japan. A long time ago I taught ESL there and fell in love with that country and a local, who is now my wife. I speak very basic Japanese, too, though it's fairly rusty as I've been pretty busy with some other pursuits, including, of course, elected office and getting Alberta back on track.

Madam Speaker, this year marks the 90th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Canada and Japan, and next year will mark the 50th anniversary of the opening of the government of Alberta's first international office, which was opened in Tokyo, Japan, in 1970. These are incredible milestone events that we should cherish, recognize, and build upon. Now is a great time to build strong relations with Japan, Alberta's third-largest trading partner, because the nation's politics have never been more stable, strong, and open to international partnerships. Under the national leadership of Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, Japan has become the most economically and politically stable democracy in the developed world. I will continue to be a strong advocate for Alberta-Japan relations as well as for Alberta to be deeply engaged in the world abroad for the benefit of Albertans here at home.

Madam Speaker, I got involved in politics because I am a patriotic Albertan who deeply loves my community and province. I fundamentally believe Alberta is an exceptional place not because of what is in the ground but fundamentally because of what is in the hearts and minds of the Alberta people, our free-enterprise culture and values passed down to us by our ancestors. It is that, our unique, freedom-loving culture, which has made us Canada's ultimate opportunity society. Thus, my love of province and passion to advocate for our traditional free-enterprise values led me to get involved in politics, and it's been an amazing journey, one which I'm deeply grateful for.

Penultimately, Madam Speaker, I want to state that I am especially proud to be part of a Conservative government committed to putting Albertans back to work, standing up for Alberta, and focusing on renewing the Alberta economy and defending our energy sector, which remains the foundation of our prosperity and will be so for decades, decades, and decades to come. Our new government has received a strong mandate from Albertans. They have put their faith in our government. It is a great honour to be conferred this responsibility by Albertans to manage their affairs. I pledge to my constituents and all Albertans my sacred honour and commit to do my very best in my capacity as MLA for Sherwood Park and a member of this new government.

In conclusion, Madam Speaker, I would again like to thank Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor for her thoughtful words, and I want to thank the Premier for his inspiring leadership and fierce commitment to Albertans.

Madam Speaker, it has been a great honour to rise today and speak. I will end my speech with the call to all members of this House and all Albertans to renew our sense of hope as we focus on the rejuvenation of Alberta.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, you might be interested to know – and you probably already know – that the people of Japan will now be eating our wonderful Alberta beef.

Mr. Walker: Yes.

The Deputy Speaker: Any comments or questions under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The hon. Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Thank you, or as I should say [Remarks in Japanese]. I was listening with interest. The hon. member is such a strong advocate for his community, but, Madam Speaker, I was wondering, through you to the hon. member, if I'd be able to ask the hon. member, with his experience in working in foreign credentials as an officer in immigration, with our campaign platform and commitments to welcoming newcomers, if he'd be able to tell us a little bit about his experience and how that might have informed those campaign commitments and his interest in seeing those commitments going forward.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The Member for Sherwood Park.

Mr. Walker: Thank you so much, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the Minister of Health for his great question and incredible Japanese. Sugoi. Amazing. Sugoi means great, for *Hansard*.

Yeah. My time as a foreign qualification recognition officer was a great honour, and I certainly learned a lot. It made me appreciate just how much Alberta is diversifying in terms of its population and how people, including new Albertans, continue to strive to come here because we remain the ultimate land of hope and opportunity.

You know, I'm very excited about our campaign platform. It is very dynamic, and we have a robust, ambitious, and much-needed foreign qualification recognition, fairness for new Albertans platform. I've thoroughly reviewed it. I one hundred per cent support it. I gave it two big thumbs up. As a professional and expert in that area I can tell you that stakeholders are so excited that this is getting so much attention because we have a unique situation where our Premier is actually a legitimate, real, top-level expert in foreign qualification recognition and immigration, and that shows in the platform. I'm just so excited. This FQR and immigration platform, Minister of Health, will strongly deliver for new Albertans, and I'll make sure that I'm at the table, too, to give my insights.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any more comments or questions? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker, and I want to thank the Member for Sherwood Park for his comments. I listened with a great deal of interest, and I just wanted to provide a few comments in response to some of the things he mentioned. Of course, our ridings share a common boundary, and the people of Sherwood Park and Edmonton-Gold Bar travel back and forth to each other's constituencies. I have many residents of Sherwood Park who take advantage of the excellent schools in Edmonton-Gold Bar. Of course, Edmonton public is one of the best school boards in the entire province, and many people from Sherwood Park choose to bring their children into schools like Donnan, Vimy Ridge, the Suzuki School to make sure that their kids get an excellent education in small-sized classrooms.

I am deeply concerned, Madam Speaker, that the Member for Red Deer-North is going to take a giant axe to the public school budget, resulting in a number of closures of the schools that both my constituents and the Member for Sherwood Park's constituents currently enjoy. I was greatly concerned that on April 17, the day after the election was concluded, the Edmonton Catholic school board had already decided to close one of the schools. St. Gabriel school is set for closure. Of course, you know, they can see what's in the wind, and I think they're getting ahead of the curve and trying to make sure that the axe that's set to fall on them – they're dealing with it already.

I know that many students at St. Gabe's came from Sherwood Park, so I would plead with the Member for Sherwood Park to lean on his colleague the Member for Red Deer-North and his cabinet colleagues to not cut the budgets of our public schools because his residents will suffer as much as mine, if not more, Madam Speaker. I plead with the Member for Sherwood Park to actually act in the best interests of his constituents and mine and convince his cabinet colleagues to back off on their plans to devastate the budgets of the public school system here in Alberta.

I also plead with the Member for Sherwood Park because we have similar economic interests. He mentioned that the county of Sherwood Park is home to the Industrial Heartland. Many of the residents of Edmonton-Gold Bar rely on their jobs in the Industrial Heartland for their well-being.

11:20

The Deputy Speaker: I believe, hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, that you were referring to the Minister of Education as opposed to the Member for Red Deer-North, correct?

Mr. Schmidt: They're both the same person.

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

Ms Sigurdson: Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today and give my response to the Speech from the Throne. Of course, it was delivered on March 22 by the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta, and I must say that I was most surprised by what the speech did not contain as opposed to what it did.

I guess the significant pieces that were missing for me were why I fundamentally became involved in politics, and it seemed like the Speech from the Throne was silent on many issues that I think are so important to the province of Alberta. Of course, I'm talking about fairness and justice. I'm talking about structural social services. Those matters were glanced at in the Speech from the Throne. It was disturbing to sit there and have those fundamental parts of a healthy society missing. I feel I want to take this time to address that and talk about the very fundamental importance of having structural social services in our province. Of course, I'm coming from the vantage point of 30 years as a social worker. I'm a trained social worker. I worked front-line social work for many, many years, so it is even more disturbing because of my educational background.

I think what's important, too, is just my experience as, you know, a human being in this province, growing up in this province. I grew up in a small town in the Peace Country, Valleyview. Really, my experience as a child motivated me to become a social worker and then, ultimately, a politician because social work had its limits. I couldn't do as much as I wanted to. I didn't have as much authority or power. I sort of unwillingly but eventually did decide to step forward and become a politician and a social worker. I'm still a registered social worker in this province and a very, very, very proud one.

I grew up in a very small town, 1,200 people when I lived there, and it was an oil town. I grew up in a town that, you know, had a lot of problems. It had high rates of addiction and violence. There still is and was at that time an Indian reserve right next to it, Sturgeon Lake band. There was a tremendous amount of violence on the reserve, lots of problems, lots of racism, anger between the two communities. I remember people saying, "Well, we have such a large RCMP detachment here because it's a great training place," because there was so much violence and so much difficulty.

There's also a whole bunch of sexism in my town. I remember sitting at my kitchen table with my mom and her friend. She worked for an oil company, and she was talking about how she got half the wages of a male doing exactly the same job. Granted – granted – you know, I'm almost 60 years old. This was a while ago, but that's where I grew up. That shaped my view as a young girl, shaped my view as a woman, and motivated me to do a lot of what I have done in my life.

Another thing that really motivated me, too, is that I remember in grade 6 – right now Sturgeon Lake does have their own school, and kids from the Sturgeon Lake band do go to school on-reserve. But when I was a kid, they came to town. They were bused in because there was no school on-reserve. I can remember that my best friend in grade 6 was Verline Gauthier. She was a great gal. We had lots of fun together. Then we were all going to grade 7 at Hillside high school, but, you know, Verline never came, and she wasn't alone. There were many indigenous children that never even made the transition to junior high.

Besides sexism, racism, violence, addiction issues rampant in the community that I grew up in – I just thought: "Oh, my goodness, there needs to be something better. Why isn't anybody fixing this?" I can remember as a young kid wondering: "What's going on? What's happening in this province?" This – I don't know – mythological Alberta advantage was never visited on me or my community, really. So when people talk about the Alberta

advantage, I think: wow; you live in a completely different world than I ever lived in.

I'm going just to throw in a few social work words that I think other professions use, too. Hopefully, I don't lose anybody in that. I'm sort of talking about the larger societal context right now, the macro, right? Besides sort of these challenges in the community that I grew up in, there were also microchallenges or microsystems that happened. Then you're looking at the individual, you're looking at the family system.

I grew up in an intact family system. There were three kids, mom, and dad. Both of my parents had mental health issues. Consequently, because of that, specifically my father would self-medicate. He would drink excessively. He had addiction issues. Of course, that caused a lot of issues for the family that I grew up in. My dad is 90. He's an amazing man and I love him deeply, but he had tremendous problems. Because of that, he had difficulty earning an income, supporting our family. We had challenges in our family system. My mom was a school teacher, and she had a stable income. She was part of a union, so her earnings were protected, she had holidays, and she had all sorts of support. Our family was definitely a middle-class family, but we had many, many challenges.

I just always remember as a kid thinking: "Why isn't someone helping us? What's going on here?" I'm just sort of giving you the macro, and this is the micro sort of view of the way I grew up and what sort of formed me and motivated me to do what I've done. I really saw social work as the pathway to actually creating a better society, and all these years later I'm so proud of my profession and believe that it really fundamentally makes a difference in people's lives.

There are lots of barriers to social workers making changes in our system, and maybe I'll talk a little bit about that. I taught social policy for years at university, and one of the best ways for me to help my students understand sort of the things that we need to do and the fairness and justice, how we need to do it, is just by telling a little bit of a story, so I'm going to tell a little story. Let's just use the North Saskatchewan because here we are in Edmonton.

I'm walking down the North Saskatchewan River. The river is flowing by me, and it's a beautiful, sunny day, probably a day just like today. Today is a magnificent day. We're walking along, and I'm just looking at the sun, and I'm looking at the birds and enjoying my walk. Then all of a sudden I hear someone yell: "Help! Help! Help! I'm drowning! Help!" And I'm, like, "What?" And I look over, and sure enough, someone is flailing in the water. So I run over, and I'm able to catch them and pull them out and save them, and they're so grateful. They're so grateful to me. They're just, like: "Oh, you saved my life. I'm so lucky you walked by. Thank you so much for saving me." I just say: "Are you all right? Is everything okay?" Blah, blah, blah. They're fine, so they just walk on their way. I think: "Wow. I'm so glad I was there to help them." Then I just think: "Oh, what should I do? I'll just keep walking on my walk."

11:30

I'm walking along on my walk, and then, not very much longer, again there's someone in the same situation. Someone is drowning. They're yelling: "Help, help! I'm drowning!" So I go over, and once again I pull them out of the water. I save them again, and I'm like: "Are you all right? What happened?" Oh, they're fine. You know, they're just grateful, of course, that I'm there to help them again. I'm like: "Whoa. What are the chances of that?" That's so bizarre, you know? But I'm glad I was there and that I could help them. What should I do? So I'm going to go for another walk. I'm

just going to keep going. Why not? It's a nice day, so I go again. And then again someone is yelling at me. They're saying: "Help, help! I'm drowning!" You know what I did this time? I don't go save them. I go run upstream and find out who's pushing them in.

That's the difference between doing a charity model of social programs, where you just give people things. You save them, or you actually change the fundamental roots of inequality and justice. Of course, that's not true. I happily will go save that person. Of course, if someone is hungry, absolutely you feed them. You do both. You don't do one or the other. In a healthy society, certainly Canada and Alberta with our tremendous riches, you absolutely change the fundamental structure to create equality. We know that societies that have equality, that don't have so much disparity in income are much, much healthier than societies with a big difference. That's why that's fundamental. Certainly, that really illustrates what, you know, we must do as politicians.

In my value system I believe people are equal, people deserve supports, like I talked about in my member's statement yesterday. When I was a young single mom, I had hardly any money, and I was going back to university to study. I had children. At that time – and this was, as I said, many, many years ago – there was support for me to be able to live in subsidized housing so I could better myself. You know, as I said then and I'll say again now, I mean, I've been a good investment. I've certainly paid taxes for many, many years. I've got a good income like the rest of you here, and I've been able to support my children also to grow into adults and be successful.

You know, the throne speech talks about charity. It doesn't talk about fundamental social justice. That really makes me concerned. Maybe I'll just talk a little bit more about the distinction between charity and justice. Charity provides direct services like food, clothing, shelter. Justice promotes social change in institutions or political structures. Charity is directed at the effects of injustice, its symptoms. Justice transforms systems by alleviating the root causes of injustice. As I said before when I was telling that story, we need both. We can't just leave people hungry or homeless. We need to do both. We need to do things to change our system.

I just want to quote a little bit from a paper I was reading that talks about the shortcomings of charity and why even though the throne speech talks about charity and sort of seems to suggest that that's the way to go, it's really not. It's not enough. It does provide some relief, but there needs to be so much more.

This article is by David Pfrimmer, and it's from Evidence Network: Charity is simply not enough. "Citizens for Public Justice [propose] an impressive six-point plan. [It] could nudge the government in several worthwhile directions, including indexing the child [tax] benefit." You know, that's something that when the NDP government was in, we created an Alberta child tax benefit. These are the core, root things that we need to do, provide more safe and affordable housing.

Well, as the former Minister of Seniors and Housing we invested \$1.2 billion. That was, like, unprecedented in this province. That was four times more than the previous Conservative government inputted. We made homes for thousands of people so that they could live in dignity.

He also talks about "establishing a national pharmacare program, providing improved access to skills training and funding for indigenous education" – certainly, these are actions that we took – "and a national child care program." Well, everybody . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any comments or questions under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Member Irwin: Thank you to the Member for Edmonton-Riverview. I appreciate very much the stories that you shared and your comments in particular about education and the importance of a strong public education system and your own experience growing up in Valleyview, where my mom went to school with you as well. I know you got to grow up together. As a former teacher and school administrator I get concerned when I hear some of this coded language around choice in education, and I worry what that means for supports and resources for our public schools. So I'd like to ask the Member for Edmonton-Riverview just to elaborate a little bit on her perspective regarding a strong public education system and what you've heard from your own constituents on that.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

Ms Sigurdson: Okay. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Certainly, I am a strong proponent of the public education system, and certainly in my riding of Edmonton-Riverview I hear that from many constituents. We want to make sure that, you know, again, just going back to the understanding between what social justice, what a justice model would look like, regardless of people's income levels, socioeconomic backgrounds, nationalities, ethnicities, they are all welcome at a public school and supported well in that.

I've got a few teachers in my family. My mom is a teacher; my brother is a teacher; I don't know, probably six or seven of my aunts are teachers; and my eldest son is a schoolteacher. Everybody thought that I was going to be a teacher, and I think that I kind of, you know, sort of tricked them by becoming a social worker. Then I did start teaching, but I was teaching at the university. So somehow that teaching bug was certainly in my family.

I know how important it is when we know, too – it's really the game changer when kids have a strong public education system regardless of their economic background. That really creates a pathway for them to have success. I know that throughout my, you know, going beyond just public education, like, from K to 12, my going back to school – I mean, I have a BA in political science from when I was 21, but I went back to school when I was a single mom when I was 30 and got my bachelor of social work and my master's of social work – I just know that that changed my life, going to school later on and having supports to do that. I had affordable housing.

I did also because I was seen – and, again, this is a very long time ago – as a population that the government at that time, and it was a Conservative government, wanted to support, disadvantaged populations like myself. Especially when I was doing my master's, I got some grants to support me and my family, which I've greatly appreciated.

Sadly, you know, it was in the early '90s when the government came in, and they slashed all those grants. It made a huge difference. I was in the middle of my master's program at that time. Of course, that was when public programs were cut by 50 per cent by the Conservative government. Really, since that time, it's just been a very lack of willingness to support public infrastructure. Certainly, as a front-line social worker, too, you know, it was – I mean, that's what really motivated me to get involved in politics. I was so disturbed by the limited resources we had to support extremely vulnerable people, who really had so much adversity. If they could have been given a bit of support, it could've made a big difference for themselves and their children. But the government was – I don't know – I just want to say cruel, not thinking about what a difference it makes and how much people are its best asset.

11:40

I just want to go back to how sad I was to see that the throne speech really missed a huge part of what I think is fundamental to

a healthy society and certainly the province I love and how I want very much to make sure that that province is for everyone. That mythical Alberta advantage isn't for everyone. You know, maybe there is a group of people who do benefit, but I know a heck of a lot of people who don't, so we need to stop that and make it an inclusive province, make sure that everyone is – and what can we do to create steps for people to overcome barriers that they might have.

One of the things that I was super proud of when we were government, Madam Speaker, was that we had gender parity in cabinet.

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

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I've enjoyed the debate this morning on the throne speech, but I move to adjourn debate.

The Deputy Speaker: Sorry. You cannot move to adjourn debate because you have already spoken to this.

Is there anybody else wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche.

Ms Goodridge: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I wish to move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Government Bills and Orders

Second Reading

Bill 2

An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business

[Adjourned debate May 28: Ms Sweet]

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any members wishing to speak to Bill 2? The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to speak to Bill 2, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business.

I think the intent of this bill, like Bill 1, is pretty much the same in what this bill is trying to do. It's also trying to reverse the progress and take Alberta backwards in many aspects like taking your overtime, cutting your holiday pay, and lowering your wages, and all that is done to give a huge tax break of \$4 billion to the most wealthy in our province. It's simply an attack on the workers in this province, on their rights such as an eight-hour workday. If we talk about that, there's a long history of people across this country, across this continent who fought for this eight-hour workday and who fought for overtime pay. Those things are attacked by this piece of legislation, such as minimum wage. That was brought forward somewhere in 1918 in Canada, first in Manitoba and then in Saskatchewan and then British Columbia, to protect women and children, and essentially this legislation is attacking those rights as well.

We are told that our finances are not in good shape, that we are going through a rough time. We look at the history of the minimum wage, those changes like regulating overtime pay, for instance. In the United States those changes were done in 1938, during the recession times, with the Fair Labor Standards Act by President Roosevelt. Again, that brought in the minimum wage, ended child labour, and regulated overtime pay. And here we are. This legislation before the House is trying to reverse the progress that we made in the last four years under the leadership of our leader and the MLA for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

The changes we brought forward were done in a thoughtful manner, in consultation with all those who were concerned about it, and they were made to bring Alberta in line with the rest of Canada. At that point we knew that Alberta's labour laws had not been touched for two, three decades, and they were not in line with the rest of Canada. So the changes we brought forward were common-sense changes, were the rights that Canadians have enjoyed all across this country except for Alberta, because previous successive Conservative governments didn't pay attention to those things. For instance, these changes were in response to public fatality inquiries. One that comes to mind is the Wolski inquiry. Things recommended in that inquiry were also incorporated in the changes we made to the labour laws.

For instance, changes were made where it was mandated that workers have the right to know the risks related to their workplace, the right to be part of those safety procedures, those committees, and their right to refuse unsafe work. And there were instances where individual Albertans were fired for taking care of their kids who were sick, who were in hospitals. So those things were covered under the changes we made.

The changes we made were good for workers. They were good for women. They were good for children. We raised the minimum wage to \$15. We know from evidence that two-thirds of those who are earning the minimum wage are women. That was the change that was directed to make sure that those who are earning the minimum wage have enough to put food on the table and have shelter.

Madam Speaker, I have worked minimum wage jobs – convenience stores, pizza delivery, all those kinds of jobs – and I know, from 10-plus years' experience, what it means to work at minimum wage and what it means when you get a 50-cent increase, a dollar increase in your minimum wage. Before becoming a lawyer in 2012, I had done that for, like, a long time, throughout my student life. Not all those who are earning the minimum wage – let me put it this way. Those who are earning the minimum wage: most of the time they do have responsibilities for their families. They are supporting their families. Lowering the wage for youth workers is like shutting opportunities for them. It's making it difficult for them to get shelter, to meet their needs. This change is taking Alberta backwards. It's an attack on the workers across this province.

11:50

With respect to overtime pay it will affect almost a quarter of a million Albertans across this province in the oil and gas industry, in construction. Like Canadians in other provinces, they were given this choice to bank their overtime, like any other Canadian, and had enjoyed that right. Those changes were made. Now what we are seeing is that this piece of legislation is taking us backwards and taking that right away as well.

I have worked in a homeless shelter in Calgary, and I was working 24 hours every week and working at minimum wage and supporting myself, supporting my family, going to school. When I would take time to get an additional shift on holidays, that was a huge support. I think that people, when they work overtime, work with a view to making sure their needs are met and that for those they support and have obligations to, their needs are met. But what this legislation, again, is doing is taking away those rights which Canadians in other provinces do enjoy today.

The youth wage: they are cutting it by \$2. Again, we are asked to believe that somehow that will increase jobs, but the way we can create jobs is not by cutting their pay. The way we can create jobs is what we did in 2015. There used to be a program called the STEP program, the summer temporary employment program. By 2015 the previous government had discontinued it. When we became

government, we started that program. This is how you create jobs for the youth. You invest in youth. You create opportunities for them. You work with employers. You work with students so they can get the jobs, so they can get the experience. But, being a student of economics, I've never heard of this, that by cutting the wages of youth, you will somehow magically create job opportunities for youth across this province. That's not how jobs are created.

This government certainly came with a promise of jobs, the economy, pipelines, and so far everything they have done has taken us away from jobs, taken jobs away from Albertans. For instance, in their first piece of legislation they are getting rid of the carbon tax, and they are saying that it's creating 6,000 jobs while there were already 7,300 jobs under that climate leadership plan. They are taking those jobs away from Albertans.

In terms of the economy, I think the priority for Albertans was that they will get their pipelines built, they will get access to markets, and so far, from what we have heard, we are doing everything that is taking us away from getting a pipeline. For instance, we are getting rid of the carbon tax, which in that climate leadership plan was one of the key considerations for the federal government when they approved the Kinder Morgan pipeline, when they approved line 3. What we are seeing here now is that that's being repealed.

Then we signed contracts to ship our oil by rail so that we can address the capacity shortages. We can ship or transport our products to market, but we are seeing that now this government is threatening to cancel those contracts. With that, I guess, our economy is also suffering. The jobs that would have come with those contracts: we are losing those jobs as well with these steps.

I think I do recognize and respect that the government got a mandate. I hope that they respect that mandate, too, that once they become government, they are the government for all Albertans. They need to leave the campaign rhetoric aside and work in the best interests of all Albertans. Cutting Albertans' overtime pay, cutting their holiday pay, and cutting their wages is not in the best interests of Albertans. I don't think that's what Albertans meant by that mandate. Albertans needed jobs, Albertans needed an economy that looks out for everyone, that creates opportunities for everyone, but here we are seeing that we are creating a two-tier wage system. If you are under 18 and going to school, you will be paid differently. After a certain time you will be paid differently. The fundamental

thing here is that for an equal amount of work, for a similar kind of work, people should be paid equally and the same. Creating this kind of division in wages is not in the best interests of Albertans.

This bill also, from all those things – it's targeting overtime, it's targeting youth wages, and it's targeting the minimum wage – will have a disproportionate impact on Albertans with low incomes. It will have a disproportionate impact on women in this province, on youth in this province. At the same time, what we are seeing on the other hand is that they are also getting ready to give a \$4 billion break for the most wealthy: cutting the corporate tax, which was already the lowest in Canada, and somehow, again, selling it to us that it will magically create jobs across this province.

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 29(2)(a) the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore, please.

Mr. Nielsen: Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate you allowing me to get up under 29(2)(a), and I want to thank the Member for Calgary-McCall for his comments on Bill 2, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business. I find myself getting a little bit hung up on the title here for a second, so I'll shortly ask my colleague for his thoughts on this: an act to "make" Alberta. I can't help but think back to my younger days, when I was playing the game I love, basketball. It was a while ago. What I found was that throughout my career there were times when players would find themselves getting caught up in the moment, and they would want to do what was lovingly referred to as forcing the play. They would just be so consumed with: I am going to get this section of our play done no matter what happens.

What usually ended up happening, Madam Speaker, was that they would throw the ball away to the opposing team, which was detrimental for the team's overall goal. When I look at the bill, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business, I'm wondering if perhaps we're trying to force a play here in order to possibly make something happen based on what we're trying to accomplish.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt you, but it is lunchtime.

This House stands adjourned until 1:30 this afternoon.

[The Assembly adjourned at 12 p.m.]

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