



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
First Session

Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, June 3, 2019

Day 7

The Honourable Nathan Cooper, Speaker

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

First Session

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Milliken, Nicholas, Calgary-Currie (UCP), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Party standings:

United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

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Yaseen

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, June 3, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

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

Hon. members, as is our custom, we pay tribute to members who have passed since we last met. Today I'd like to welcome members of the Dickie families who are present in the Speaker's gallery.

Mr. William D. Dickie

August 13, 1925, to May 23, 2019

The Speaker: William Daniel Dickie served three terms as the Member for Calgary-Glenmore from 1963 to 1979. In 1969 Mr. Dickie moved from the Liberal caucus to the Progressive Conservative caucus. He served as minister of mines and minerals from 1971 to '75. Prior to being elected to the Legislative Assembly, Mr. Dickie served as an alderman for the city of Calgary. A lawyer by profession, he was appointed Queen's Counsel in 1969. On March 8, 1972, Mr. Dickie introduced the government motion to create and publish *Hansard*, the official verbatim record of the Legislative Assembly debates and proceedings. He also played a leading role in the formation of the Canadian Energy Resource Institute. Mr. Dickie passed away on May 23, 2019, at the age of 93.

In a moment of silent prayer, I ask you to remember Mr. Dickie as you may have known him. Rest eternal grant unto him, O Lord, and let light perpetually shine upon him. Amen.

Hon. members, ladies and gentlemen, we will now be led in the singing of our national anthem by R.J. Chambers. I would invite you all to participate in the language of your choice.

Hon. Members:

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

The Speaker: Please be seated.

Statement by the Speaker

Standing Order Amendments

The Speaker: Members, before we begin the Routine today, I'd like to point out to all members that copies of the amendments to standing orders that were approved by the Assembly last week have been printed on green paper and placed on members' desks for ease of reference. I'm sure you reviewed them all over the weekend.

As I outlined in my memo to members last Friday regarding the new procedure for introduction of guests, any member wishing to

have guests introduced in the Assembly must provide my office with the full name and phonetic pronunciation of each guest by 11 a.m. that sitting day so I can have a small period of time to practise.

Introduction of Visitors

The Speaker: Hon. members, with our admiration and respect to them, gratitude to members of their family, who share the burden of public office and public service, today I would like to welcome members of the Dickie family who are present in the Speaker's gallery. Please rise as I call your name and remain standing until you've been introduced: Barb Dickie, daughter of former member Mr. Dickie; son Bill Dickie Jr.; and his wife, Joanne. Welcome.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Members, there are a number of school groups with us this afternoon.

From the constituency of Edmonton-City Centre please welcome to the Legislative Assembly a group of students from Grandin school.

From the constituency of Edmonton-Mill Woods please welcome the grade 6 class from . . .

An Hon. Member: Ekota.

The Speaker: . . . Ekota. That was exactly what I was going to say. Thank you so much.

Members, there are a number of guests from the constituency of Lethbridge-West. I ask each individual to rise as I call your name: Barb Phillips, Mike McCuaig, Pirate Jen Takahashi, and Hayden Takahashi. Welcome.

From the constituency of Calgary-Shaw, Dan McLean.

Finally, from the constituency of Edmonton-South West: Maria, Alex, Jonathan, and Julietta Pinchukov.

Ministerial Statements

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Northern Alberta Wildfire Update

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to provide the Assembly with a current update on the very challenging situation in northern Alberta with respect to forest fires occurring in many locations. I had the opportunity yesterday with the hon. the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry to visit some of the affected communities, both on the ground and to see the situation from the air.

Let me begin by offering on behalf of all members a word of profound gratitude to our remarkably professional firefighters, who have been joined and supplemented by crews from all across Canada, who have been doing, in many instances, heroic work to keep communities safe and, thankfully, to avoid any loss of life or, to this point, serious injury, Mr. Speaker.

I toured the area ravaged by the Chuckegg Creek fire around High Level yesterday and have been keeping in close contact with officials at the Provincial Operations Centre of the Alberta Emergency Management Agency. Having spent much of Friday afternoon there, shortly after they moved the alert level from 3 to 4, I can report, Mr. Speaker, that all of our first responders, including hundreds of front-line firefighters, are working extremely hard to protect communities at risk. Their efforts are being expertly directed by experienced managers at regional incident locations as well as the Provincial Operations Centre, and local government officials are actively engaged in the effort to protect their communities.

1:40

I know I speak for all members in expressing our regrets to the members of the Paddle Prairie Métis settlement in the Blue Hills area who lost homes to the Chuckegg Creek fire. We believe about 15 structures were lost. Approximately nine were residential, two of which were not inhabited. While we mourn the difficulty faced by the members of that settlement, Mr. Speaker, we are grateful for the alertness of the community leadership and the provincial wildfire service, who through rapid action helped to save the vast majority of structures in that community.

The good news today, Mr. Speaker, is that the mandatory evacuation order for High Level, the surrounding areas in Mackenzie county, and the Dene Tha' First Nation communities of Bushe River, Meander River, and Chateh was lifted this morning at 10 o'clock. I want to thank and compliment Mayor Crystal McAteer, Reeve Josh Knelsen, and Chief James Ahnassay and the residents of their communities for their calm and remarkably competent handling of this extremely challenging situation.

However, several out-of-control fires continue to burn across a wide swath of northwest and north-central Alberta, from High Level to Slave Lake. Mandatory evacuation orders remain in place for several communities, and thousands of people in the towns of Slave Lake and Manning are currently on evacuation alert. Mr. Speaker, as of last night, of the 29 fires currently burning in the forest protection area, seven are rated as being under control, seven are being held, four have been turned over, and 11 remain out of control. The risk of wildfire remains high to extreme in many parts of the province. The three largest wildfires are Chuckegg Creek, south of High Level; the Battle Complex fire near Manning in the Peace River region; and the Macmillan Complex fire north of Slave Lake.

Mr. Speaker, provincial resources deployed on the ground currently include more than 2,300 wildfire and structural firefighters and staff; approximately 231 helicopters, most of which are engaged in tactical water drops; 28 air tankers, which are laying down either fire retardant or water; and 261 pieces of heavy equipment. Those forces have been strengthened with crews airlifted into northern Alberta from across Canada.

I'm pleased to announce that the federal government has accepted our request for assistance from the Canadian Armed Forces. In fact, I just came from a visit to the Canadian Army 3rd Division, which is certainly prepared to co-ordinate additional support as necessary. I can also report that I received a thoughtful call from the Rt. Hon. the Prime Minister this weekend expressing his concern and that of the federal government and reassuring us that the federal government is prepared to provide whatever assistance is required by Alberta.

Although shifting winds have provided intermittent relief from the smoke in many areas, air quality, as we know, remains a serious concern over much of the province, and Albertans are urged to take precautions to limit their exposure, especially seniors and those who have pulmonary conditions. Evacuees in need of financial assistance may be eligible to apply for an emergency payment to help with accommodations, clothing, and other urgent needs. Of course, that was initially extended to High Level and area evacuees and, as of yesterday, to the residents of three First Nations, including the Bigstone Cree First Nation at Wabasca. Evacuees should check alberta.ca/emergency for updates on evacuation payment eligibility.

Mr. Speaker, the total number of fires in northern Alberta is of great concern, and the firefighters are dealing with, in many instances, boreal forest that has not been affected by fire for up to nine decades. Very dry conditions exacerbate that circumstance. At

a time such as this, I want to thank the staff of the Department of Agriculture and Forestry, particularly the wildfire service, the staff of the Alberta Emergency Management Agency, all officials engaged, and particularly the volunteers in communities like Slave Lake and so many others who have provided tremendous hospitality to the some 10,000 evacuees. That number will hopefully be cut in half today as roughly 5,000 return home to High Level.

Mr. Speaker, in the last 48 hours there have been some hopeful developments, with additional precipitation in north-central and northwest Alberta which has helped to diminish some of the fires, but we're a long way from an end to the fire season. As members will recall, the Fort McMurray fire continued burning throughout the year even under snowcap in the wintertime. The government of Alberta and, I know, all members of this Legislature will continue to be there to support the communities affected, the evacuees, and, most especially, our firefighting personnel, who are doing heroic work on behalf of all Albertans. We thank them profoundly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung to respond.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The last number of days and weeks have been stressful and very frightening for thousands of Albertans in the communities of High Level, Peace River, Slave Lake, Mackenzie county, the Paddle Prairie Métis settlement, Blue Hills, and the Dene Tha' First Nation communities of Bushe River, Meander River, and Chateh.

Due to extreme fire conditions, over 10,000 Albertans have been forced to uproot their lives and flee their homes. Residents have had to pack their bags without knowing when they will be able to return and if they will see their homes, property, and businesses again. Many have had to find refuge in emergency centres, stay with neighbours, and watch as the fires continue to rage. Tragically, in the course of these fires families in the Paddle Prairie Métis settlement and the Blue Hills area have lost their homes, and we have heard many heartbreaking stories as communities have changed forever.

George Wanuch was one of those residents impacted. As the flames engulfed his property – and I heard him say this this morning on CBC Radio – it is said that he pulled out his guitar and sang some gospel songs. It was a moving and sad image. The strength of people like George and the many other families impacted is inspiring and heroic, but there is no question that this is a painful moment in our province's history. People are wondering if this is going to become the new normal. About 15 families have lost their home. Many others are in danger, with over 10,000 people evacuated. This is a situation that no family should have to go through, especially alone. And I want those impacted to know that you are not alone, that we are all here with you, on both sides of the House, and will be with you every step of the way as we rebuild.

Thousands of Albertans are helping across our province through their donations, by opening their homes, and I know many more will continue to support you in the face of this tragedy. There is a long journey ahead, but we will walk it with you every step of the way. We'll also continue to share our thoughts and prayers with those who remain evacuated in Slave Lake and Manning. We are pleased to see evacuation orders ending for High Level, Mackenzie county, and the Dene Tha' First Nation communities of Bushe River, Meander River, and Chateh. But we know that the journey is not over for those families either. The terror of having to flee your home amidst natural disaster can have a lasting impact even after you are able to return home. We must stand with all of those

impacted to ensure they have the support they need in the days, weeks, and months ahead.

I also want to speak to the brave first responders, firefighters, and emergency management staff who have and will continue to work around the clock. On behalf of the people of our province thank you for your continued efforts, dedication, and hard work. You have been absolutely heroic in the face of devastation and challenging conditions. Just as we have the backs of the many residents and families impacted by these fires, we will have yours. Our thoughts and prayers are with all of you as you continue your fight against these fires and as we move forward to rebuild what has been lost.

Finally, thank you to the Premier, his colleagues, and all the incredible government staff, particularly those in ag and forestry and the Alberta Emergency Management Agency, for their hard work during these very, very dark days for our province.

Members' Statements

Energy Industry Jobs

Mr. Yao: Our first week back, last week, I couldn't help but notice that some of our friends on the opposition benches simply don't understand what has occurred in the last four years, Mr. Speaker. I wonder myself: are they so ideological that they're insulated from reality, or are they just legislatively challenged? So, sir, I am here to educate.

Our oil and gas sector was hit hard. A report funded by the government of Canada, released in April, forecasts that we will have lost a total of 13,000 as a net loss of direct jobs between 2016 and this year. You know why the Americans support this sector? The U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis calculates that the oil and gas industry has a multiplier of 6.9 indirect jobs for every direct job. Eh, numbers.

Let's look at it from another side. Mr. Speaker, one of my best friends builds things, from well pads to 16-storey vessels. He builds big, expensive projects, and he got transferred this past January. You see, the company he works for has no use for that particular skill set here because there's nothing left for them to build. They have operations in the U.S., the U.K., Malaysia, China, Brazil, Russia, Qatar. And my good friend: he got a transfer to Iraq. "Iraq?" I asked. "How much are they investing there?" He said, "Well, about 1.5, give or take a hundred million or so." I said, "Well, what were they investing here?" He said, "Well, in Saskatchewan, Alberta, and B.C. annually in capital spending we were spending about 1.2 to 1.4." That's billion.

1:50

It's not that I solely blame them for all this. After all, they had the help of their best friend, Justin Trudeau. Quel imbécile. Oh, pardonnez mon français, Président de la Chambre.* But the previous government and their best friend in Ottawa – their best friend in Ottawa – not only killed thousands of jobs, but they chased away billions of dollars of investment, destroyed the confidence of an entire sector, and pushed away some of our best and brightest, including my best friend. So thanks for nothing.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member. You'll know that anyone speaking in a language other than English here in the Chamber will provide the translation for us.*

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

*See page 342, right column, paragraph 12

*See page 301, right column, paragraph 3

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, according to the RCMP, 1,200 indigenous women went missing or were murdered in Canada between 1980 and 2012. Other accounts put the number at upwards of 4,000 over the last five decades. For years indigenous people and advocates had been asking for an inquiry into this disturbing trend, yet the former Harper government, of which our Premier was a senior cabinet minister, refused these calls. Does the Premier regret refusing multiple requests for an inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women and girls?

The Speaker: The Premier.

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the hon. Leader of the Opposition: all Albertans are deeply concerned about the record of violence that has been suffered by far too many indigenous women, particularly those who have disappeared and whose whereabouts are still unknown. We look forward to taking the opportunity to review this 1,200-page report, that was just released hours ago, to appointing an interministerial task force to assist us in reviewing it and any implications it may have for provincial policy to ensure that all Albertans and, particularly, vulnerable women are kept safe.

The Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you. I didn't entirely get an answer to that question.

In justifying his refusal to initiate an inquiry into murdered and missing indigenous women, the former PM had this to say, quote: it's not really high on my radar. That was the position of him and, through him, the members of his cabinet, which included this Premier. Premier, in light of the final report submitted by the inquiry on missing and murdered indigenous women, do you now acknowledge that the inquiry was indeed an important step in addressing this national tragedy?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, we certainly acknowledge that one victim of crime is too many and that the high incidence of violent crime targeting indigenous women is particularly terrible given their often uniquely high levels of vulnerability. That is why we look forward to reviewing the some 1,200 pages of the commission report, that was issued just hours ago. I would invite the opposition to share its views about that in a nonpartisan way. This should not be a matter subject to partisan contention.

The Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Unfortunately, it was a partisan decision to go ahead or not go ahead, so this is why it's important to ensure that things remain accountable.

I appreciate the current government's plan to strike what their release said was a crossgovernment committee to examine the recommendations, but in light of previous resistance to the inquiry by the Conservative federal government, of which this Premier was a part, indigenous women and girls need a timeline on which they can hold this government accountable and the right to participate in this review. To the Premier: will he today commit that his review committee or task force, as he just called it, which is already better, will consist of indigenous women and . . .

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Mr. Kenney: Of course, Mr. Speaker, in all matters affecting First Nations people, indigenous people, the government of Alberta's

starting point will be consultations and listening. We need to listen to the voices of those who have lost family members and loved ones. We need to understand how we can do a better job of preventing the kind of criminal behaviour that has claimed far too many lives.

The Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

Ms Notley: Okay. Well, we'll hopefully get them on that task force and get the date, which we haven't heard yet.

Supervised Drug Consumption Sites

Ms Notley: On Friday this UCP government put the brakes on funding three new safe consumption sites across Alberta and pledged to conduct a review of existing sites. These sites are literally saving lives every day. More sites will save more lives. A delay in sites will mean more lives lost. A closure of sites will mean even more lives lost. The expert medical studies proving the effectiveness of these sites are conclusive. To the Premier: why are you turning your back on these vulnerable Albertans?

Mr. Kenney: I reject the premise of the question, Mr. Speaker. This government was elected with an explicit commitment to Albertans to only endorse new supervised consumption sites if there have been extensive consultations with affected communities, including residents and business owners, and if there is a robust, evidence-based analysis of the socioeconomic impact of a potential drug consumption site, and that's exactly what we're going to do. That's our commitment to Albertans, and we will follow through on it.

Ms Notley: You know, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the need to accommodate the needs of communities and to step up policing around those sites, but that is very different from actually saying no to the sites or cutting the funding of ones that have previously been approved. These sites are estimated to have already prevented 2,400 overdoses across the province. Will the Premier commit today that while reviewing strategies to mitigate community disruption, the goal of expanding the number of people helped through safe consumption sites will be absolutely protected?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the leader of the NDP just said that she was very concerned about accommodating local residents. Tell that to the local residents of the Beltline region of Calgary, where there has been a massive increase in crime and the harassment of people, who can no longer live safely in their own community. We committed to listen to those Albertans as well as those here in Edmonton's Chinatown, whose lives have been changed as a result. Looking at the socioeconomic evidence and consulting local communities was a commitment of this government, on which we will follow through.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, as this government dithers on action proven to save the lives of vulnerable Albertans, more people will die from overdoses. Once again it appears this government is putting misinformed ideology over science. Indeed, the Premier himself has said that he thinks these sites exist only to allow people to inject poison into their bodies. Can the Premier at least assure this House that his misinformed opinion will not interfere with the best interests of vulnerable Albertans requiring these services?

Mr. Kenney: Again, Mr. Speaker, unlike the previous government, our commitment to Albertans is to engage in robust, evidence-based analysis of the socioeconomic impact of potential drug consumption sites. [interjections] In addition to that, as they heckle

and shout, having learned nothing from the last election, I can tell members of this Chamber that this government will make unprecedented investments in treatment and recovery to offer a way out of the downward spiral of addiction, that is claiming too many lives in this province, with an investment of over \$100 million in addiction recovery and treatment services.

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

Ms Notley: They need to be alive to get into recovery services, Mr. Premier.

Education Act

Ms Notley: Now, as we speak, school trustees in Red Deer are debating a motion to ask that this UCP government delay proclamation of the Education Act by a year. This government has said that one of the reasons it's bringing in the act is to increase school board autonomy, yet more than half the current trustees in the province have never even seen the legislation, let alone been consulted on it. To the Premier: if trustees vote to ask for the delay, will he delay it, and if not, why not?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I would invite the hon. the Leader of the Opposition to wait for the introduction of amendments to the Education Act in the days to come which will address some of those concerns. I can't understand how anybody would not have seen legislation adopted by this Assembly a few years ago that was subject to massive public consultations, including on draft regulations, legislation that the NDP committed to proclaiming when they first came to office. We're simply following through on their broken promise.

Ms Notley: Fifty per cent of the trustees have been elected since that legislation was consulted on. The Premier should know that.

Now, the act creates massive cost pressures at a time when schools are managing huge uncertainty because the Premier and his minister won't tell them how much money they've got coming. To the Premier: why won't you admit that your plan to proclaim the act is more complicated than you first thought and put the needs of Alberta's students over your need to save face and delay it?

2:00

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, once again I invite the hon. the Leader of the Opposition to await the introduction of a bill that is on the Order Paper, the Education Amendment Act, 2019. In fact, our government is moving very quickly to keep our electoral commitment to proclaim into law the Education Act adopted by this Assembly, which was subject to massive public input and indeed since we came into office additional public input with the key stakeholders in the field of education.

The Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One would think that perhaps the vote of the school boards might be the kind of public consultation the Premier would commit to listening to, but that's not what we're getting.

In April 28 Alberta private schools had refused to introduce policies that would protect LGBTQ kids and their right to participate in GSAs without fear of being outed, yet this government seems intent on putting those kids at risk by removing that very protection as a result of their plans. They were to have lost their funding. To the Premier: have those schools submitted those policies, and if not, why should Albertans continue funding them?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, as we've been clear, our government will maintain the strongest legal protections for gay-straight alliances of any province in Canada, and we will also maintain and strengthen our long-standing and successful tradition of school choice. Unlike the NDP, we believe in real diversity and real pluralism. We don't think the education system should be guided by one party's ideology, but it should be based on pluralism and diversity. That's what we will protect and promote.

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

Funding for Fourth Year of High School

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the Education minister rams through her ideologically driven agenda and looks to increase the age that students can continue to attend high school, she isn't even providing support for the students who currently can attend high school. A letter from the Calgary Catholic school district that we've obtained outright rejects an 18-year-old student looking to attend a proper school for her fourth year of high school from doing so. Will the minister stop with the messaging, start doing her job, and fund education so students with special needs aren't left in the cold?

Member LaGrange: Thank you for the question. While I'm not familiar with that particular case, I would encourage the family to reach out to my office so that I can learn more about their situation. However, it does seem to be a board procedural issue, and our government respects the autonomy of local school boards to make those local decisions on policies and procedures which are in line with provincial legislation.

Thank you.

Ms Hoffman: Well, I've released the letters publicly and will be happy to table them in this House, Mr. Speaker.

The letter specifically says that the primary reason for not allowing the student to access the fourth year of ES II programming is that the district does not have the sufficient resources and facilities to accommodate her. That's on the minister, that's on this Premier, and that's on their government, Mr. Speaker. I have to say that I find it completely inappropriate for the minister to deflect and to say that this is a district decision and that it's in line with the legislation because the legislation clearly says that this girl is entitled to education till she's 19. Enough excuses. Why won't the minister do the right thing?

Member LaGrange: Thank you for the question. The hon. member, being a former trustee, would know that there are actually procedures in place for these situations, and in the event of parents or a student wishing to appeal the decision, they should be going to their school board and following the processes in place to be done.

Thank you.

Ms Hoffman: It's clearly about money, Mr. Speaker. The letter says so. And, yes, asking the parents to go to an appeal in June, at the end of the school year, and having a student walk across the stage and then spend thousands of dollars on lawyers to fight for her right to education is shameful. Why won't the government step up, do the right thing, and fund students with special needs and all students in this province so that parents aren't left in a lurch as students consider whether or not they have a future in education? Do the right thing. Fund this student and all students needing that fourth year.

Member LaGrange: Thank you for the question. Again, I would draw to the attention of the hon. member that there are procedures

in place, and we do respect the local autonomy of school boards to make these decisions. They are in the best position to make the decision. They are on the ground. They deal with the situations on a day-to-day basis. Therefore, should this student or their parents wish to appeal the decision, they can absolutely do so. And I do welcome further information from those parents and students to my office.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein has a question.

Flood Plain Mapping

Mr. Jeremy Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For many Albertans the 2013 flood feels like just yesterday. I personally remember racing to the youth shelter I was managing to assist in the evacuation and the significant damage to the shelter afterwards. My constituents have been asking about the current status of flood mitigation. However, we know that we need the best possible information to plan for this. As we head into the June flood season, can the minister shed some light on flood mapping progress?

The Speaker: The second-tallest Member of the Legislative Assembly and the hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, I just want to start off by reminding everybody that that hon. member has been following me around since 1982, when my mom brought him home, and now he's followed me all the way here to Edmonton, but I will answer his question.

The Speaker: I would just remind the member that comments should be directed through the Speaker.

Mr. Jason Nixon: We understand that our communities want the best possible information on flood hazards to guide future development and to help inform municipal emergency response plans. We recognize that it's important to have the latest information and are working to update and expand flood mitigation coverage across Alberta. In the short term technical work has been done on five new flood studies that we are ready to release and be able to share with municipalities, including Calgary.

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

Mr. Jeremy Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think that the hon. minister is just a little jealous because I was always the favourite.

The Speaker: I might just remind members that there are no preambles after question four.

Mr. Jeremy Nixon: Sorry.

Given that the risks of flooding create a lot of stress for Albertans and given that flooding can cause damage to property, hardship to people, and in extreme circumstances loss of life, given these facts what is the government doing to improve flood mapping procedures in this province?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Flood studies are critical tools that provide information that support emergency responses and safer communities across Alberta. Twenty-one new flood studies have been commissioned since 2015, including eight studies this upcoming spring. These new studies will create 1,500 kilometres of new flood mapping through more than 60 municipalities and First Nation communities across Alberta, with a total budget of \$15.4

million, which includes approximately \$5.2 million of federal funding.

And, Mr. Speaker, I assure you that I am my mother's favourite.

Mr. Jeremy Nixon: Thank you, Minister, for the answer. Mr. Speaker, given that we have seen no status update on flood mapping from the previous government and given the significance of flood mapping for future planning, when the constituents of Calgary-Klein ask about timelines around flood mapping projects, what can I tell them?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, depending on the complexity and the length of the river system, it can take upwards of five years to complete the technical work of a flood study and another year to fully implement the recommendations made by the study. As I've previously stated, we've completed technical work on five new flood studies that we are in a position to share immediately with communities and our First Nation partners, including the hon. member's hometown of Calgary.

Mr. Speaker, I feel that in closing I should say on behalf of the hon. member's five brothers that it's always great to hear from the shortest Nixon.

The Speaker: I would just remind all members that the use of names, no matter what the context, would be wildly inappropriate in the Chamber.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Paddle Prairie Métis Settlement Wildfire Recovery

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was relieved to hear that the evacuation order has been lifted for High Level and that people will soon be returning home. I also would like to recognize the incredible work of the wildfire fighting crews that have been battling this wildfire day in and day out. Members of the Paddle Prairie Métis settlement were also under mandatory evacuation, and tragically, this community has lost 15 homes in the fire. Can the Minister of Municipal Affairs please tell this House where the people of Paddle Prairie are currently staying and what other supports are being provided to them?

The Speaker: The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Madu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. The wildfire hit Paddle Prairie very quickly, and first responders did an amazing job protecting human life, which is the number one priority in these situations. When the fire hit, 30 brave firefighters immediately jumped into action and protected 90 per cent of the settlement. I commend these firefighters for their brave service in the face of danger, I commend the local officials who are working with our government to keep their people safe, and I commend the evacuees who are putting on a brave face in the face of these difficult times.

The Speaker: The Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that as a result of the wildfires members of the Paddle Prairie Métis settlement lost valuable traplines and harvesting sites in addition to their homes and given that members of the community stayed back to assist in fighting the fires and given that the community has three vehicles available to help clear unburned areas and prevent further loss to forested areas surrounding the community, can the minister please tell this House and the members of Paddle Prairie Métis settlement if their offer to assist will be accepted, and if not, why not?

2:10

The Speaker: The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Madu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. I recently visited Paddle Prairie to see the situation on the ground for myself. Overall, the feedback I heard was extremely positive. That said, this is still a difficult situation, and an evacuation order remains in place for safety reasons. We will monitor the situation until the evacuees are back in their homes and communities.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that 15 homes in the Paddle Prairie Métis settlement were destroyed and given that many of the families that were forced to evacuate have small children and given that reception centres and temporary housing is adequate only in the short term, can the minister please provide an exact timeline for the people of Paddle Prairie as to when longer term housing will be available to families who lost their homes?

Mr. Madu: Mr. Speaker, the first responders on the ground and our government have been there for the Paddle Prairie wildfire evacuees. My office is in communication with local officials from that settlement, and I am happy with feedback that we are receiving. Our government is working to ensure the safety and security of all evacuees from the settlement and other parts of Alberta, and we won't be distracted by divisive tactics on this particular issue. Our first responsibility is the safety of the settlement folks.

Wildfires and Climate Change

Mr. Schmidt: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I want to thank all of the brave men and women who are fighting fires in northern Alberta, and I'm happy to learn that the residents of High Level are returning home today.

Now, I agree with the Premier that the cause of these wildfires is complex, but the evidence suggests that climate change is contributing to the severity of wildfires in our province. To the Premier: does he agree with the evidence that climate change is increasing the severity of wildfires in our province?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, this government has been clear. We are concerned with climate change, and we're working towards addressing it. The difference between us and the previous government is that we're focused on actually working on technology and dealing with our largest emitters to actually make change. The former government's approach was to tax Albertans, which was all economic pain and no environmental gain. This side of the House has a different approach.

Mr. Schmidt: Their approach is to do nothing, Mr. Speaker.

Given that when he was questioned by reporters on Friday, the Premier said that carbon taxing didn't stop wildfires in British Columbia and given that studies from Environment Canada scientists "concluded that human influences on climate change leading to extreme forest fires is a trend that is likely to intensify in the future," to the Premier: who's right? His minister or climate science experts?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, the argument that forest fires have just automatically started now is not realistic. It also ignores the fact that we're dealing with an old growth forest in northern Alberta. The point is this, though. We do agree that climate change is an issue that has to be addressed in this province. Our government will be focused on that through the TIER program, which we will have

more to say about in the coming months, focused on working on technology, ways to innovate our way through this problem, a completely different process than what the former government did, which was to tax Albertans with no successful work on emissions. That's all economic pain and no environmental gain. It's a different approach. I'm happy for it, and Albertans voted for it, clearly, on April 16.

Mr. Schmidt: Mr. Speaker, it's an approach that the previous PC government took that failed, and this approach they're proposing will fail again.

Given that the Premier has claimed that the number of wildfires in the province is average but what he has avoided saying is that the size of the area being burned is way larger than average, to the Premier: are you intentionally trying to mislead Albertans so that you can dodge questions about the impacts of climate change, or do you just not want to deal with it?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, the Premier has been clear that we are dealing with a big fire situation happening in northern Alberta, and yes, the size is very significant. This is an old forest that has not seen fires in close to a century or so. That is part of the situation that's happening up in northern Alberta. When it comes to climate change, this government takes it serious. That's why it's a major part of our platform. We're going to focus on technology. That's a contrast to what the NDP did. Under the NDP's watch they brought in a carbon tax, and they did nothing on emissions. They did nothing to protect the environment. All they did was tax Albertans, tax hockey moms and hockey dads. Our approach is different. We're actually going to try to tackle the problem.

The Speaker: The Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

HALO Medical Rescue Helicopter Funding

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. HALO provides the only dedicated medevac helicopter service for southern Alberta. They have been dispatched to over 550 missions since their inception and serve an area of over 55,000 square kilometres. These hard-working men and women save the lives of our family members, and I would like to thank them. I was pleased to see that in March of this year the previous government of Alberta provided HALO with a one-time grant. This was much-needed funding whereas the organization relies almost completely on donations and fundraising. To the minister: will you support an annual funding commitment to HALO and all of southeastern Alberta?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I should clarify that STARS does cover southeastern Alberta, but HALO has done a great job in supplementing that coverage since its inception in 2007. First, helicopter services are funded primarily by operators through their fundraising. AHS provided a one-time grant of \$1 million last year to off-set the cost of transitioning to a new twin-engine helicopter. The funding was not an annual operating grant. It paralleled one-time funding also provided to STARS to off-set the cost of transitioning to a new helicopter.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, given that STARS receives annual guaranteed funding from this provincial government, ultimately creating certainty for the organization and for Albertans, and given that HALO runs off donations as well as fundraising, which is impacted by the state of the economy, and given that HALO

performs an absolutely crucial service as well, what will the minister do to ensure long-term certainty for HALO and how will you ensure that these services will be available to all southeastern Albertans?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. HALO was created on the initiative of people in Medicine Hat. It has developed into a valued partner for AHS, and I expect that partnership will continue and grow in the future. AHS does provide some annual funding to HALO on a per-flight basis. The funding of HALO and STARS is different because they operate on a different scale with different mandates, different service levels, and different cost structures, so AHS is planning to review helicopter medical transport across the province to address the concerns the member is raising to ensure equity.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. HALO has an annual operating budget of approximately \$2.6 million, which they've relied on donors for. Given that southern Albertans need the services that HALO provides and given that HALO could do more for the safety of southern Albertans if they were funded at the same per capita level as STARS and given that the people of southeastern Alberta contribute greatly to the prosperity of Alberta, will the minister commit to aligning the per capita support of HALO with STARS?

Mr. Shandro: Well, Mr. Speaker, I share the member's commitment to HALO and other partnerships like it. The support it has attracted from people in southeast Alberta shows the best spirit of this province, including the support of the people from the city of Medicine Hat. Funding methodologies are complex, and per capita funding may or may not be the best approach for a given service or a given provider. HALO supplements the coverage already provided by STARS with its own specific level of service. AHS is committed to maintaining a strong role for HALO, and they'll look at funding options based on the distinct role of each of the providers.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

Medical Laboratory Services

Mr. Shepherd: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, mere days after the recent election the incoming government halted construction on the long-needed Edmonton clinical lab hub. To be clear, at the time of this decision the Premier did not have a Health minister. There is no evidence he even bothered to consult with the Deputy Minister of Health, Alberta's public laboratories, or Alberta Health Services. To the Premier: who, in fact, advised you that you should cancel this fundamental project?

Mr. Shandro: Mr. Speaker, this is a project that was committed to by the previous government. The decisions were not based on decisions that were patient focused. In fact, when you look at the two Health Quality Council of Alberta reports that were prepared in 2016, 2017, there's nothing in those reports – when the previous government wants to hang its hat on those reports and say that that report provided for that, those reports do not provide that guidance.

The Speaker: The Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What those reports do show is that the current lab services that are available are

insufficient and need upgrading. Given that this Premier has inexplicably claimed that the lab hub for northern Alberta and Edmonton is sufficient and given that none of the research dating back a decade substantiates that claim – even the previous PC government knew a new lab was needed – and given that the Health Quality Council of Alberta published a report moving ahead on transformation of laboratory services in Alberta, did this Premier even bother to read this report and consider the ramifications of his short-sighted proposal?

2:20

Mr. Shandro: The answer is yes, Mr. Speaker. Yes, we did read those reports. Yes, we did talk to Dr. Ballem. Yes, we did talk to patients. We did speak to pathologists. First of all, let's think about when those reports were first published, 2016, 2017, and dithering from that previous government – dithering while patients needed those infrastructure investments. Dithering.

Mr. Shepherd: Mr. Speaker, in that time we moved forward with the creation of Alberta public laboratories and consolidating lab services in the province as the council recommended.

Now, given that with a dated and insufficient lab for Edmonton and northern Alberta the only beneficiaries of this decision are the owners of DynaLife, who the Premier said that he would allow to continue to provide services without even considering alternative models or a public bid process, my question is this: did the owners, executives, or aligned beneficiaries from DynaLife medical labs donate to this Premier's leadership bid, the bid of his kamikaze puppet candidate, or any of the many PACs . . .

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Mr. Speaker, while the previous government wanted to make decisions on infrastructure, while they wanted to make decisions on laboratory infrastructure, laboratory services in this province, to nationalize laboratory services in this province, all those decisions were ideological. None of them were patient focused. None of them were going to help any patient in this province. Let's remember that every patient care decision is going to require either lab work or is going to require an X-ray. The simpler sends that require lab work – all of those decisions or the quality and the timeliness of those decisions for those patient care decisions were affected by their ideological decisions on laboratory services.

Gay-straight Alliances in Schools

Member Irwin: Mr. Speaker, happy Pride Month. Just over a year ago, at the UCP's founding AGM, the Minister of Transportation warned fellow delegates that a motion to require mandatory parental notification if a child joins a gay-straight alliance was, quote, about outing gay kids. The motion passed anyway, and now this Premier and the Minister of Education look poised to do just that and roll back the protections enshrined in Bill 24. To the Minister of Transportation: have you talked with the Premier or the Minister of Education and tried to convince them that outing gay kids is wrong and dangerous?

Member LaGrange: Thank you for the question. The Education Act, when it will be proclaimed here shortly, will have the strongest legal protections in Canada for inclusion groups, including GSAs and QSAs. We've been very clear on that. We continue to be clear on that. Thank you.

Member Irwin: Given that since taking office a month ago this Minister of Education has not offered any words of comfort to our LGBTQ youth who fear that this government will remove their right to confidentiality and given that she has a history of fighting against gay-straight alliances and aligning with known anti-LGBTQ organizations, will this minister commit here and now to further consultations with gender and sexually diverse youth, who weren't able to vote in the last election, before she goes ahead with a law that puts them in a very dangerous situation?

Member LaGrange: Thank you for the question. In fact, I disagree wholeheartedly with what was just said. I have been meeting with my minister's youth council. I've heard from numerous LGBTQ youth who have actually put forward that they want to work with me in implementing the Education Act. As early as last Friday I spoke with a particular young lady who shared with me that she found Bill 24 to not support what she needs. She wanted to have more of a balance. Thank you.

Member Irwin: Given that actions often speak louder than words and given that it is now Pride Month and given that in addition to taking meaningful steps to improve the lives of queer and trans Albertans our government has always made a point to celebrate Pride with the LGBTQ community, could the minister inform this House what she plans to do to celebrate and to support Pride and does she find it concerning that she'll be rolling back LGBTQ rights during this very important month?

Member LaGrange: Thank you for the question. All Albertans deserve the freedom to be true to themselves regardless of race, religion, sexual orientation, or gender identity. All Albertans means all Albertans. I really put that forward to you that we will be looking after all students and all Albertans. Thank you. [interjections]

The Speaker: Members, I appreciate hearing the questions; I'd also like to hear the answers.

The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

Fire Retardant Gels

Mr. Getson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The impacts of the forest fires that hit Slave Lake, Fort McMurray, and now that are taking place up in High Level affect us all. It's common practice in other countries to make use of certain fire suppression polymer gels, using aerial application to contain fires, which can be applied to the forests as well as free-standing structures. These gels save homes and greatly reduce the risk of property loss, forest loss, and reduce the amount of smoke in the air. Is the minister aware of these gels, which are more cost-effective, require less support infrastructure, and offer better protection than conventional chemical retardants currently in use?

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

Mr. Dreeschen: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First, I would just like to say thanks to the Premier and the Member for Edmonton-McClung for their recognition of all the hard work that's being done by Alberta Wildfire and all the men and women that have been bravely fighting these forest fires for the last couple of weeks.

To the member's question: yes. Our department is aware of these gels, and we are constantly looking at new technologies to be at the forefront of fighting fires.

Mr. Getson: Given that my constituent brought this forward to his former MLA who was also the previous Agriculture and Forestry minister at the time and in my constituent's words he only received the runaround from his former MLA, is the minister aware that there was a contract that was issued for the use of combatting gels that was rescinded by the previous government essentially because of bureaucratic red tape?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Dreesen: Well, thank you very much for the question, Mr. Speaker. When it comes to the previous government, I won't go too much into it, but there are always lessons learned from any major events like forest fires. We do have a red tape reduction commitment that we are looking at ways within the Department of Agriculture and Forestry to try to find new technologies and new ways of combatting fires.

Mr. Getson: Will the minister reinstate the previous contract or, at a minimum, allow this product and its applicators the chance to be put here and work in Alberta, just as it has in Australia, British Columbia, and the U.S.A. and give our brave forest-fighting folks better tools to perform their jobs?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Dreesen: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the question. I can assure the member that we will do an assessment within the department to make sure that this type of technology would work with all the different types of methods that we use to fight fires because it is a very complicated procedure when you have water bombers and people on the ground to make sure that they coincide with each other. But, again, I'll trust the experts within our department that have been doing this for the last 34 years. It is an incredible procedure to watch. Thank you very much for the question.

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

2017 UCP Leadership Contest Investigation

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Last week the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General told reporters that he takes preserving the integrity of our justice system very, very seriously, yet the minister said that he informed the Premier's office when he was questioned by the RCMP. The current Premier was the victor in the very leadership contest under investigation. Since witnesses are normally cautioned not to speak to others involved, to the minister: what exactly did you tell the Premier about the investigation, and what steps did you take to ensure that it didn't interfere with an active investigation?

The Speaker: I might remind members, as I have done from time to time, that questions should be focused on government business, not necessarily party business. Having said that, I'm happy to hear a response from the hon. Minister of Justice.

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, of course, I talked to the Premier's staff about this matter. There was an article in the news that morning regarding the fact that I met with the RCMP that weekend. I came and informed this Assembly at the earliest opportunity regarding that matter. Again, I'm not going to comment on an

ongoing investigation by the RCMP. One thing that I'd just like to identify for this Assembly, though, is that I've been interviewed by the media extensively on this matter going back to 2017. All relevant information I have regarding this matter has been a matter of public record going back to 2017. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think our concern is that the minister spoke to the Premier's office.

Given that the Premier has maintained that he has not had any contact from the RCMP and given that it should be the RCMP that chooses what information, if any, is provided to the Premier, to the same minister: did you obtain permission from the questioning officers or legal advice before discussing an active investigation with the Premier?

2:30

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, I have not talked about this matter with the Premier, as I've already answered and provided this Assembly with transparency. This matter is before the RCMP. I'd refer their questions, if they have further matters that they want addressed, to the RCMP for their comment.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that now that a special prosecutor has been appointed after nearly a month of the Official Opposition calling for it and given that despite the minister and this government's desire to see this issue go away, it seems to continue to expand, will the government commit to informing this House and the public of any other individuals interviewed in relation to this active investigation and seek legal advice before discussing it amongst themselves?

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, again I would refer this hon. member, if they have questions regarding the RCMP's independent investigation, to the RCMP. Again, as we've said many times in the Assembly regarding this matter, we respect the independence of the RCMP to conduct their investigations, and we respect the independence of the prosecution service to conduct their work in an independent way. The system worked. It worked how it was supposed to, free from elected officials being involved.

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

Overweight and Overdimensional Vehicle Permits

Member Ceci: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Roadata, the permitting agent for two-thirds of Alberta's municipalities and counties, recently warned that the UCP platform proposed replacing the rural roads permitting program in favour of an annual provincial permit. Sounds harmless, maybe even a good idea, but local leaders point to many potential problems, including significant road degradation, downloaded costs, and overlooked local knowledge and planning. My question is to the Minister of Transportation. By all accounts the current rural roads permitting system is working. Why are you killing it?

The Speaker: The Minister of Transportation.

Mr. McIver: Well, Mr. Speaker, thank you, and I would actually thank the hon. member for a pertinent question. I'll start by educating the hon. member. Part of what he said is correct. The permitting system that we use – the acronym is TRAVIS – is an automated system where the municipalities maintain control of the

weights and measures of the vehicles that travel over their roads, and the hon. member will be glad to know that rather than killing it, we're actually expanding it.

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

Member Ceci: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that overweight and overdimensional vehicle permitting is intended to provide municipalities with tools to ensure that the roads they manage are used by service rigs and others with minimal impact to roadway infrastructure and public safety, to the Minister of Municipal Affairs: have you consulted with the representatives of local governments, or are you defending your government's roughshod treatment of these representatives with what we hear in here all the time, from the Premier on down, quote: it's in our platform, and we won the election? Is that what you call consultation?

Mr. McIver: Well, Mr. Speaker, I would let the hon. member know that I've kept in touch with the Minister of Municipal Affairs on this, and we've been in direct touch with the leaders of the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association and the rural municipalities association as well as the mayor's office in Edmonton. They are aware of what we're doing, and while I wouldn't say that there's a hundred per cent support, because that would be a stretch, there is broad and widespread support across Alberta's municipalities for what we're doing. It should keep them in control and actually save them some money.

Member Ceci: Roaddata doesn't support it.

Given that classifying service rigs as off-road equipment, as is the case with farm machinery, will surely result in unintended consequences that will cost ratepayers, local governments, and the province precious capital dollars and that the Transportation minister is effectively downloading responsibility onto Municipal Affairs and the costs onto local taxpayers, will the Minister of Municipal Affairs do the right thing and halt any changes to the Roaddata permitting process and first consult with local mayors and reeves?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. McIver: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess I'm going to ask the hon. member to take yes for an answer. Before we put the actual final regulations in place, we're actually doing just what the member said, as we've been taking our time, talking to the local municipalities, making sure that they know that they're just as in control of the weights and measures of the loads that go across their roads after what we do as they were before what we do. What we're doing, in fact, is automating the process, so they actually get to set the standards at which the answer is yes or no. The fees they get charged are no more or less. All we're doing is automating it and saving some . . .

The Speaker: The Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

Trans Mountain Pipeline Expansion Project Federal Bills C-48 and C-69

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For the Minister of Energy. This government campaigned on getting serious about the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion approval and that we need the right economic conditions for the energy sector. This pipeline is not only in the best interests of Alberta's economic prosperity but Canada's, too. On June 18 the federal government is making a decision on the expansion of the Trans Mountain pipeline. In my constituency of

Drumheller-Stettler Albertans are asking me what you are doing to get this pipeline approved. To the minister. Good jobs with proud workers are at stake. Can you tell us what this government is doing to ensure that the federal government makes the right decision on the Trans Mountain expansion?

The Speaker: The Minister of Energy.

Mrs. Savage: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are a hundred per cent committed to standing up for Alberta, protecting the value of our natural resources, and getting pipelines built. That's why last week in Ottawa we launched the Yes to TMX campaign, a multimedia campaign focused on the need for the federal government to say yes to TMX. We need that positive decision on June 18, not a month later, not a week later, not a day later. We need it on June 18. This project has suffered endless delays already, and we need to get to a yes. We need the country to come . . .

The Speaker: The Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that any delays will jeopardize an entire construction season and that the government in British Columbia also needs to get onboard to get Trans Mountain expansion built – and most British Columbians agree that the Trans Mountain expansion should be built – what is this government going to do to ensure that Premier Horgan gets this message?

The Speaker: The Minister of Energy.

Mrs. Savage: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The day after we announced Yes to TMX in Ottawa, we announced Yes to TMX in Vancouver. It's a campaign directed at the Lower Mainland. It's a campaign to talk about the benefits of the Trans Mountain pipeline and a campaign to highlight that British Columbians are paying a buck 70 at the pump and to make the connection between that and the Trans Mountain pipeline. So British Columbians are saying yes to TMX, Canadians are, Albertans are. It's time for the Premier of B.C. to say yes.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that bills C-48 and C-69, also known as the no-more-pipelines bill and the tanker ban bill, will have a detrimental effect on Albertans and Canadians, can the minister tell us what she is also doing to ensure that these devastating pieces of federal government legislation will not hurt our economy or resource future here in Alberta?

Mrs. Savage: I was in Ottawa last week meeting with Senators. It seems like I was all over the country last week. Both of these bills, C-69 and C-48, are devastating, and I can tell you that the Senators are taking their role of reviewing legislation while respecting regional representation very seriously. We've asked the Senators to accept the recommendations of both committees to effectively kill Bill C-48 and to accept 187 amendments to C-69. We can tell you that if they don't accept those amendments, we will be launching an immediate constitutional challenge.

The Speaker: The Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

School Construction and Modernization

Mr. Reid: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Education. Schools across this province are seeking clarity on

how the government decides which schools receive funding for modernization. For example, J.T. Foster in Nanton has been in desperate need of renovations for multiple years, and the Livingstone Range school division has made securing funds for this high school their number one priority. Can the minister please explain to this House how the Ministry of Education prioritizes funding for school modernization?

The Speaker: The Minister of Education.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and the hon. member for the question. As part of the annual budget process my department works alongside Infrastructure to prepare a list of projects that represent the highest priority needs as identified by school boards in their capital plan submissions. Priorities identified by school boards in their three-year capital plans are considered and prioritized based on factors such as health and safety of students and staff, enrolment projections, current utilization, facility conditions, and, of course, capacity for program delivery.

Thank you.

Mr. Reid: Thank you, Minister, for explaining the process.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to modernizing schools which are in need of repairs and renovations, our government was elected on a mandate to build schools across the province, and given that there are many schools that are over capacity and given that many rural communities are lacking easy access to schools, can the minister explain how she intends to honour this platform commitment?

2:40

The Speaker: The Minister of Education.

Member LaGrange: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker and the hon. member for that question. We were elected with a mandate to continue to build schools. I'm looking forward to working with my colleagues, my colleague the Minister of Infrastructure, as we work to accomplish this commitment. More details will be coming when we table the budget in the fall. This is very much on my heart, that we are going to look after this, so thank you for the question.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Reid: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Back to the minister. Given that J.T. Foster is only one example of a school in desperate need of renovations and there are school districts across the province seeking confirmation of their capital projects, that they've been approved, can the minister please elaborate on how the government decides which schools receive modernization funding or are approved for new builds?

The Speaker: The Minister of Education.

Member LaGrange: Thank you for the question, Mr. Speaker. Priorities identified by school boards in their three-year capital plans are considered and prioritized based on the factors I have already described. The projects represent the highest priority needs as identified by those school boards in their capital plan submissions. We will continue to look at the priorities of school jurisdictions and work with them to address current and future school infrastructure needs.

Thank you for the question.

Statement by the Speaker

Translation of Remarks in French

The Speaker: Members, I would just like to provide a clarification. Earlier during the daily Routine, I interjected when the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo spoke French.* Of course, pursuant to section 5(1) of the Languages Act, French in the Assembly may in fact be spoken without translation. However, from time to time members may like to provide a translation as a courtesy to members who may not speak French. But all other languages do require the translation.

Hon. members, in 30 seconds or approximately there, we will proceed to Members' Statements.

Members' Statements

(continued)

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

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The history of indigenous women and girls in Alberta has been one of historical and multigenerational oppression. The final report of the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls commission, of which Alberta was a full participant, states, "As the evidence demonstrates, human rights and Indigenous rights abuses and violations committed and condoned by the Canadian state represent genocide against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQIA people."

Genocide is a difficult word, as truth often is. The report arrived at this determination through an examination of facts that many Albertans might find difficult to comprehend: a history of oppression, of systematic violence, of residential schools, forced sterilization, the '60s scoop, and widespread racism; a history of systematic underfunding, denial of human and treaty rights, and neglect by the institutions which were built on revenues from stolen lands.

For many, the use of the word "genocide" is uncomfortable, too much, over the top. But for indigenous people in Alberta the word is appropriate. It names the experience and allows them to claim their truth. It reflects not only the experience of their mothers and fathers but the experience that their children live today. Literally today a group of conservative Senators in Ottawa are working to block the passage of Bill C-262, which requires the government to determine whether federal laws are consistent with the UNDRIP.

I know that some people have said that while much has gone wrong, there was no underlying intent to commit genocide. To that end, I would like to leave you with two quotations, the first from Reverend Kevin Annett, who published *Hidden from History: The Canadian Holocaust*, in 2001, "As early as November, 1907, the Canadian press was acknowledging that the death rate within Indian residential schools exceeded 50%," and a response to this issue from Duncan Scott, the department of Indian affairs superintendent in 1910 ...

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Cross.

Ramadan and Eid

Mr. Amery: Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege for me to rise before you in this Assembly to speak about the valuable contributions of Muslim Albertans as the holy month of Ramadan draws to an end. Alberta is a province of rich and diverse religious beliefs and

* See page 293, left column, paragraph 11

practices, and many individuals of the Islamic faith call Alberta and indeed the constituency of Calgary-Cross home. For Muslims this is an important and exciting time of the year, with the holy month of Ramadan drawing to an end and the celebration of Eid expected to begin tomorrow. As you may know, Muslims fast throughout the month of Ramadan, where they abstain from food and drink from sunrise to sunset, in part to experience the struggles of those less fortunate but also to reflect on their beliefs, offer charity, spend time with loved ones, and give back to their communities.

Muslims have made great contributions to this province. Many currently serve in law enforcement agencies, the Armed Forces, private enterprise, and, yes, as members of this historic Legislature. I am honoured to be part of a government that has been given a clear mandate to represent individuals of all faiths and backgrounds. As a proud Muslim myself, Mr. Speaker, during this month I have learned the value and importance of caring for our neighbours, tackling problems in our community, remaining humble, and lending a helping hand. Although these values are a key tenet for all Muslims, they undoubtedly reflect a bigger message of inclusivity, tolerance, and the cultural mosaic that makes up this great province.

As our government works to energize our economy, I invite the hon. members of this House to recognize the contributions made by Albertans of the Islamic faith by joining me and wishing all Muslims a Ramadan Mubarak and a joyous celebration of Eid in . . .

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Airdrie-East.

Provincial Fiscal Policies

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Oscar Wilde once said that a man who pays his bills on time is soon forgotten. Because of the former NDP government's inability to pay this province's bills and unique ability to take on new debt at an alarming rate, they will most certainly not be forgotten. Our province's debt load sits at more than \$60 billion. That's \$60 billion imposed on the next generation of Albertans.

You know, Mr. Speaker, as a proud mom of two I have a real insight into what running this kind of debt really means. It means my kids are going to have to pick up the tab. This type of irresponsible debt is the real legacy of the now Official Opposition. They oversaw the largest deficits in Alberta's history and added record amounts of debt that future generations, including my children, will have to pay off. What's worse is that because it was clear that they had no plan to pay down their debt and deal with their spending addiction, they watched as it got even more expensive for Alberta to borrow, with six credit downgrades.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be a member of the United Conservative Party, with a real plan to get Alberta's finances back on track. We will bring forward a responsible plan to deal with the mess left by the previous government, and with new, exciting policies like the job creation tax cut, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business, and, one I'm really excited about, An Act to Repeal the Carbon Tax, we will not only get Alberta back to balance, but we will return our province to the engine of job creation it once was.

Once again Alberta will be the best place in Canada to live, work, and raise a family. With our plan to spend responsibly, create jobs, and get Alberta back on track, we will deal with the mess left to us by the previous government, and we will ensure Alberta . . .

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

2:50 Consumer Protection for Motor Vehicle Owners

Mr. Carson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am proud of the actions that our government took to protect consumers over the last four years, including common-sense policies and regulations that make sure Albertans can feel confident when buying or repairing a vehicle. After multiple concerns were raised about AMVIC's ability to independently advocate for consumers, we took the important step of making AMVIC a public body to ensure that it has the oversight and powers it needs to stand up for Albertans.

However, the UCP's refusal to commit to these protections should be worrying for all Albertans. Last week in question period I raised serious concerns about this government's connection with a lobbyist who promised to raise over a million dollars to help the UCP get elected in exchange for weakened consumer protections. I asked this question to get assurance that this government would follow our lead in defending these protections. Instead, what Albertans got was spin. Instead of standing up for consumers, the Minister of Service Alberta chose to defend the Premier's PAC, saying that it was "independent from political parties." Instead of pledging to operate in the way Albertans should expect from their government, the Minister of Transportation said that my advocacy for consumer protections was, quote, embarrassing.

Mr. Speaker, the UCP owes an explanation to the people of Alberta. Why don't they think that informing consumers about the prior history of a vehicle is a policy worth protecting? Why don't they think that Albertans deserve a comprehensive bill of sale when buying a vehicle? Why won't they commit to keeping AMVIC a public body, ensuring the independence of this critical organization? While the UCP waffles and spins, Albertans know that their rights and protections should not be for sale.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont would like to make a statement.

Canadian Armed Forces Liaison

Mr. Rutherford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand in this Assembly to express my honour and gratitude at being designated the caucus military liaison for the government of Alberta. I look forward in my new role to developing, promoting, supporting, and sustaining the Alberta government's relationship with the Canadian Armed Forces. This is particularly meaningful for me as just yesterday we marked Canadian Armed Forces Day.

As Albertans know, the men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces serve a vital role in the defence of peace and human rights around the globe. They protect our way of life here at home, and as we have seen many times, including the last few days, they play a life-saving role here in times of natural disaster. Albertans and their government are grateful to the men and women of our Canadian Forces and their contribution to our country. We are equally grateful to their families for their perseverance and sacrifice as their loved ones respond to the needs of a nation.

One of my first priorities as caucus military liaison will be assisting in the creation of a new postsecondary scholarship program to be named after Alex Decoteau, named for Canada's first indigenous police officer who served, as I was proud to, in the Edmonton Police Service. This scholarship will help veterans and their families integrate into Alberta's workforce following their term of military service. As caucus military liaison I will do my utmost to strengthen our province's relationship with these brave and selfless Canadians.

Thank you.

Tabling Returns and Reports

Ms Sweet: I have three tablings with the appropriate copies. The first is entitled Supervised Injection Facilities in Canada: Past, Present, and Future.

Second, from 2019, What is Known About the Impacts of Supervised Injection Sites on Community Safety and Wellbeing: A Systematic Review.

Then, Decrease in Crime in Red Deer, Including Near Safe Consumption Site: RCMP.

The Speaker: The Member for Edmonton-Glenora is rising to table a document.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I, too, have three documents, that I will submit the requisite number of copies for as one package. The first is a letter to one family, residents of the Calgary Catholic school district, saying that their student won't be allowed to return because: "The primary reason for not allowing [your student] to access a fourth-year . . . is that the District does not have sufficient resources and facilities to accommodate her." Again, this is a student with severe special needs. Then, virtually the same sentence is in a letter to another family. Also, a letter from one of those families in pursuit of their appeal. All telling information about the damage that reduced education funding causes to parents, particularly for children with special needs.

Thank you.

Orders of the Day

Motions Other than Government Motions

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

Relocation of Government Facilities

502. Mr. van Dijken moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to require a local economic impact assessment and take the results of that assessment into consideration when planning the centralization or relocation of provincially funded government service centres, offices, and branches.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today in the Legislature to move and to speak in favour of my private member's motion.

But, first, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly my eldest daughter, Jessica, and three of her children: Will, Vera, and Lewis. If you would please rise to receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I was first elected in 2015 and now again in 2019 partly on a promise of looking out for the best interests of my constituents and the communities within my constituency. The intent of Motion 502 is to protect the jobs, social well-being, and sustainability of communities not only in my constituency but communities throughout all of rural Alberta.

Early in my first term, in October 2016, the Trudeau government announced that they would be closing the federal immigration processing centre in Vegreville, Alberta, and moving 228 employee positions to Edmonton. The announcement blindsided the town. They were not notified or consulted with about the potential effects this decision would have on their community, and it appeared that the federal government had put no thought into how significant that impact would be on this small Alberta town of less than 6,000 people.

The people of Vegreville knew that the closure of the immigration processing centre, impacting 8 per cent of the town's workforce, would deliver a serious economic blow to their small town, so the town hired Torque Communications to help lobby the federal government to reconsider their decision. I remember the day I received a Respect Vegreville button and letter asking for my support of their campaign.

The Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties passed a resolution, brought forward by the county of Minburn, urging the federal department to reconsider their decision to close the immigration case processing centre in Vegreville. The town also hired Nichols Applied Management Inc. to do a socioeconomic analysis of the expected consequences of the centre's closure. The Nichols report estimated that approximately 420 people could move out of the town, municipal revenues could decline by \$1.2 million, housing values could drop by 25 to 30 per cent, and enrolment in local schools could decrease by 130 students, and that service clubs such as Little Warriors, the Vegreville breakfast club, the Vegreville Food Bank, Vegreville KidSport, and the Vegreville Association for Living in Dignity, that received thousands of dollars in charity support from activities carried out by the employees of the immigration case processing centre, would have shortfalls in funding.

Mr. Speaker, these impacts would be devastating to any small town, but the fact that an indifferent federal government made this decision without any prior consultation or consideration of the people and the community affected is an insult and, I believe, should never happen again. That is why I am putting forth Motion 502.

I believe it is incumbent upon our government to ensure they take into consideration, before a decision is made, the results of a local economic impact assessment when planning the potential centralization or relocation of provincially funded government service centres, offices, and branches. No community should be blindsided the same way Vegreville was. Mr. Speaker, I think of some of the government-funded services in my constituency, whether it be the Athabasca University in Athabasca, the Alberta Distance Learning Centre located in Barrhead, the Alberta Health Services north zone offices in Westlock, or any of the other provincially funded service centres in my constituency. These offices and by extension these jobs have become an integral part of the local economy and the social well-being of the communities they are located in.

3:00

I also think of the potential devastation to these communities if an indifferent government decided to move any of these facilities. Mr. Speaker, whether it is agriculture, energy, or forestry, our resource industries, primarily located in rural Alberta, will have downturns. This creates challenges for the communities who are on the front lines of these industries. We have seen during this latest downturn in the energy industry how provincially funded service centres, offices, and branches provided steady employment and income, serving as a shock absorber for the local economy in these rural Alberta towns.

Families also benefit from this shock-absorber effect. Government-funded jobs are often held by spouses or family members of the workers employed by our resource sectors. Having a government job allows these families to manage through some of the challenges they are faced with during a downturn. When one member of the family is faced with reduced hours or even the loss of their resource sector job, at least their family is better able to manage through the downturn.

Mr. Speaker, I believe it is important for government, going forward, to recognize how important these stable government jobs are for the sustainability of these small towns and the health of the families within. I believe a fair process is required before any government decision is made to centralize or relocate government services, offices, or branches. I believe no community should be blindsided the way Vegreville was by an indifferent government that put no consideration into the effects on the town of the decision to move the immigration case processing centre.

Mr. Speaker, we can do better, and I must say that we must do better. Good decisions are well-informed decisions. The need for proper consultation before a decision is made is important and respects the communities and families that will be directly impacted by these types of decisions. That is why I am asking this Assembly to urge the government to require a local economic impact assessment and take the results of that assessment into consideration when planning the potential centralization or relocation of provincially funded government service centres, offices, and branches.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I urge all members to support private member's Motion 502.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks very much to the hon. Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock for bringing forward this I think timely and well-conceived motion. I think it's important for all of us to look at the importance of public services, not just for the services that they provide across the province and in rural areas and smaller centres but for the employment that they provide as well.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

I know that the hon. member and I were together in Neerlandia a couple of years ago building and opening a new school. Again, it's self-evident that that school is not just a place of learning and a place of pride and a community centre but also a place where, you know, people are employed, quite frankly. When I look across the province, in the vast majority of municipal districts across the province, for example, the leading employer is the education system and all of the jobs associated, not just teachers but secretaries and custodians and bus drivers and so forth.

I couldn't have said it better. This acts as an economic shock absorber, especially during an economic downturn, you know, Madam Speaker, where we see otherwise that the price of energy had caused a lot of jobs to be lost. But we as the previous government chose not to exacerbate that situation by laying off teachers and nurses and other public service employees, who provide an essential public service and provide jobs in those communities.

I can think further to the hon. member's Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock riding, where you have, of course, not just schools providing education services but also other services. I know there's specialty work done in the clinic in Westlock around knee and hip replacements. You know, it's a good way to utilize those services that are built and to help to reduce wait times in the larger urban centres, again providing an essential service for Albertans but also providing employment in Westlock. Again, by having these places in smaller communities, you help to plant a seed for further economic growth and all of the ancillary services that the doctors and nurses at the knee and hip replacement place might need and so on and so forth.

Travelling a bit further down the road – the hon. member must know that I have a very good memory for driving down highways

and so forth – we find Barrhead and the Alberta distance learning facilities that are there, again providing online and correspondence services for students around the province. Having that centre at least partially situated in Barrhead has had, I think, some positive economic benefits for that town. Again, you know, once those services are entrenched – I believe the ADLC has probably been there for 30, 40 years at least, right? – you've created an economic, essential part of the Barrhead and area community with those things.

As we look across the province, there are other places, and quite frankly we should be innovative in looking for ways by which we can expand public services into smaller communities to help to share that diversity, right? Economic diversity is absolutely essential. If we learned anything from the last four years, it's that when you have too many eggs in one basket, the boom-and-bust cycle comes back to bite you. We saw it in spades here in the last number of years, where the economic downturn, energy prices globally falling through the bottom – you know, we were in a very vulnerable situation. I think it's incumbent upon us to learn from those things and help to diversify the economy in the broadest possible way and help to diversify each individual community as well, if we possibly can, through the spreading of public services to different places.

This motion, Madam Speaker, I think, serves a practical purpose, right? We all know what happened in Vegreville, and it was unconscionable. You could physically see things closing down as the announcement became reality in regard to the immigration services being lost in the town of Vegreville, and we certainly fought hard to counter that. I know that our member at that time tried to move heaven and earth to rally people to have the federal government reconsider that decision, and it was for naught, unfortunately. But we can learn from our mistakes or we can learn from bad situations so that they don't happen again. I would suggest that this motion is in keeping with learning from the past to make something better for the future.

But I would also suggest that the decisions around public services, not treating them like they're just red ink on the ledger paper but actually understanding that the essential services that schools and hospitals and other public services provide are helping kids – they're helping families, but they're also helping the economy, quite frankly. You know, to just suggest that the school budget or the health budget is just a liability that you must shed for the sake of a certain political agenda I think is short sighted and is a misrepresentation of the reality that we see in a place like Westlock or Barrhead or Neerlandia or Vegreville and hundreds of other places across the province.

You know, always, I think, cooler heads must prevail, right? We shouldn't make, Madam Speaker, sweeping statements suggesting that every single thing that ever happens that's bad in the province happened because of the previous government. I always endeavoured to not do that when I was a government member. I made a point of not dwelling on the past to suggest that the politics of the Conservatives were the fountain of all negative and evil things in the province. I would strongly suggest that this government should also endeavour to do so. I mean, politics being what they are, these things do happen, but don't let it dominate and overcome rational, sensible decision-making.

3:10

For me, to see the hon. Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock have his motion surface like a ship of rational, reasonable thoughts, perhaps, on the stormy seas of political rhetoric is refreshing, and I certainly support this motion in the broadest possible way.

I must say that your family must be proud of you. Somehow they came all the way here to watch you with this. I'm wondering if the kids go to Neerlandia. I bet you they do. No? Not quite? Okay. There you go. Anyway, it was good. I enjoyed my visit up there a couple of years ago, and I hope that the spring agricultural season shines and smiles on you.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I jump with honour to rise in support today of Motion 502. I think this is an extremely important motion which will provide not only stability but, I think, survivability to many of the communities of rural Alberta. It's a motion that urges our government to require a local economic impact assessment and actually take into account the results of that assessment in the consideration of planning either centralization or relocation of provincially funded services, offices, and branches. This is a motion that we really do need to encourage our government to engage in a transition of methodology and maybe even driving philosophy. It absolutely is not a partisan issue; it's something that has been in need of review for about 15 years or more. It definitely is a motion that I rise to support.

Of course, we all watched what happened in Vegreville, and that's been spoken to by both of the two members before me, so I will not rehash that or redo it except to say that the degree of impact that occurred from that was actually even greater, more devastating than people ever anticipated it would be. The population of the town shrunk by almost 10 per cent. Home values fell by 30 per cent. It didn't just mean that people had to find new jobs with that kind of an economic transition; it meant that every citizen in Vegreville, in one way or another, as the ripples of that impact spread out, was impacted. Local businesses lost. Everything was impacted. An economic impact study should have been conducted by the federal government prior to engaging on that change.

That's why, Madam Speaker, I believe that it is important that we do our best to make sure that that kind of thing does not happen again and particularly that it doesn't happen in the areas where we have provincial authority and control, because the impacts of government being centralized in our two large cities from all of our small rural towns can actually, literally cripple and even kill some of those small towns.

Our government's platform has been that we have put forward some bold ideas related to the revitalization of rural communities with the rural entrepreneur immigration plan, the rural renewal immigration plan. These programs really will help revitalize our rural communities. They have incredible potential upside for those seeking to live in rural Alberta, and I think we need to be aware of that.

I can't imagine the effects that some sort of centralization or removal of services would have on the local businesses and community life in the town of Lacombe, for instance. AFSC is one of the larger employers in my constituency. We do not need to have that removed from our community through some sort of centralization process. On top of that, they provide tremendous community work as well and support in the community. Everyone from working individuals to schoolchildren would feel the effects of some sort of centralization to the two big urban areas of that government service.

Worse would be the fate of Ponoka if centennial centre, the brain injury centre at our hospital, were to be removed. It's been there for – I'm not even sure – 80, 90 years. If that were suddenly to be centralized out of Ponoka, the hundreds of employees that would be impacted, the community would truly suffer from that. The issue,

Madam Speaker, is that none of us would choose to create a small business in an environment that can't promise stability. Too often the instability is created by a government policy or decision that removes the major employer from a region.

With more and more centralization of government offices, many of which are massive employers in our rural communities, more protection from government for entrepreneurs and citizens is worth considering and, as has already been said, quite frankly, more protection for the schools and the hospitals in those regions as well, who also then become less viable, who then are often considered for closing. The communities one step at a time literally die when these kinds of centralization efforts take place. It means we lose opportunities of every kind, economic, social, community, in every way. The reality is that this effect takes place not by some natural means; it takes place because of policies and decisions of government.

I find it extremely challenging that in a time where over the last 15 years, for the most part, except for the last couple of years, the population of Alberta has been overall growing significantly by immigration yet at the same time we have small rural communities that are declining. Why is that? Because of government policy and decisions that hamper them, that make it impossible for them to function. So, Madam Speaker, government needs to create the kind of situation which actually supports and reinforces our smaller communities and towns, which makes them enticing, viable places for business and for the communities to continue to survive.

What people fear is losing their jobs and the opportunities that are leaving these communities. That's the situation that we saw most poignantly in Vegreville, and we don't need to see it in any more communities in our province. In fact, I would suggest that we need to begin to pursue a policy that's somewhat the opposite of that if we want to revitalize rural Alberta at a time when the province isn't growing. Rather than depopulating rural Alberta, with the right policies we could see rural Alberta growing as well as the province overall.

This is an extremely important issue. As I said, I think centralization, I don't know 10, 15 years ago, sort of became the philosophical default of government. The argument was that through economies of scale everything would get better, but the reality is that in that experience we've had, the efficiency of service has significantly declined and the impact on rural communities has been seriously felt.

As an example, I would like to use central Alberta in a very specific case. Decentralization of services, particularly health care in central Alberta, has had a huge impact on central Alberta. It has left central Alberta really stripped of opportunity that should have been left there. I refer to a couple of FOIP documents, well, one FOIP document in particular, from Alberta Health Services on capital spending in the central region on health care. I cite this in relation to this motion because of the massive impact it has had on the capital expenditure in the central region with regard to health care and hospitals. It has cost us hundreds of millions of dollars. It has cost us many hundreds of jobs that should have been there that got centralized and relocated out of our area, and the impact on all of our central region communities has been huge.

Let me give you a few quick numbers from AHS documents, capital spending, 2014, and then I'll refer a little bit to 2016. Per capita spending: this is per capita, per individual. Capital project spending in Calgary, for instance, in 2014 was \$1,632. In Edmonton it was \$1,117. For northern Alberta it was over \$2,000. In southern Alberta it was \$1,500. In central Alberta it did not make \$1,000. No, it didn't even make half of that. No, it didn't even make a quarter of that. It's \$227, Madam Speaker. This is a massive drain on the economy and the vitality of central Alberta to the two urban

regions at the expense and the cost of everything that happens in central Alberta: jobs, businesses, housing, construction, all of these things.

3:20

In more recent numbers, 2016, the spending in Calgary was \$1,400 per person. In Edmonton the projected at that point in time was \$4,000. For central Alberta, the entire central region: \$286. Over a decade it averages out to \$104 per capita in central Alberta. This has been going on for years, this policy of centralization that bleeds away from the smaller areas, subsidizes the two major urban areas, and impacts our communities. The taxes are collected from our communities, but they're not spent in our communities. We subsidize other regions. This impacts the economy of central Alberta. The taxes collected from us are not represented in the services delivered. It's the reason why we have to have Motion 502.

In reality – let me just wrap it up, then – the government has . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Sorry, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Mr. Yao: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. The good Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock brought together a very good proposal. This is a strong consideration that we have to do because government jobs are government investments. These are taxpayer investments and there for the communities, and it can be detrimental to a smaller community when these jobs get moved.

I mean, if we take Vegreville, for example: 236 jobs, and the total population of Vegreville was only 5,436 approximately in 2016. Those 236 jobs equals 420 residents, which is substantial when you think about the local schools and things that are impacted but also the indirect jobs. In my member's statement I talked about the indirect jobs in the oil and gas industry as measured by the Americans there. There are a lot of indirect jobs that also come from these. Again, it's not just the government jobs that are affected. It's the impacts of having the people that shop in those grocery stores and by things like the Canadian Tire and Home Hardware locally there investing in their community and participating in their community. That's enough kids to have filled a classroom at the very least.

Certainly, when governments are making these decisions, it does need to be well thought out. They do have to consider the economic implications of their decision-making, much like something that our previous government did not do when they were evaluating so many things, including in my community of Fort McMurray. Thousands of jobs were lost, and it was very detrimental to our community because it wasn't just oil sands jobs that were lost, Madam Speaker. We've had businesses, contractors that were providing these services to these oil companies lost out. We've had grocery stores slow down and lose a lot of business. Many of our retail outlets currently – oh, shoot; I forgot the name of the store. They sell camping gear, outdoor stuff, a big franchise in every community, and they just recently closed down. Again, these are the impacts of what happens when you remove a lot of people from a population, people with paying jobs that were able to contribute to the economy.

My good friend from Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock is coming out with a very sensible motion that I concur with. We should consider this at all levels of government.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for all of this fine work. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any other members wishing to speak to the motion? The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this motion from the Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock and talk a little bit about the value of the public sector here in the province of Alberta.

Indeed, it's quite refreshing to have the opportunity to have that discussion and acknowledge the value that public-sector workers in Alberta bring to their communities, and it's been wonderful to hear from so many members in this House today about the folks that work in the public sector, whether that's folks who are working in health care as nurses, as paramedics, as health care aides, or whether it's the local teacher, whether it's the folks that are working in other government services that are located around the province, the value that brings.

Indeed, I had the opportunity, you know, when I took on the role of health care critic for the Official Opposition, to have some really good conversations with the former Minister of Health, the Member for Edmonton-Glenora, about the rural health care system here in the province of Alberta. She noted to me that one of our commitments had been to maintain investment in these rural hospitals and in our public health care system precisely for that reason, recognizing that in many cases individuals who had lost work in the resource industry due to that world-wide drop in the price of oil, the challenges that we face due to the court ruling against TMX, and the many other factors that were involved, many of them had partners who worked within the public health care system, who worked in continuing care, who worked in our rural hospitals. The fact that we maintained that funding, that support, that we did not look to make cuts, as has been the wont of previous Conservative governments when the price of oil would fall, helped to ensure that those families had at least one good income coming in.

Indeed, last weekend, when I had the opportunity to attend the Health Sciences Association of Alberta conference here in Edmonton, I had a chance to talk with many folks who work in different aspects and some who work in lab services in some different parts of the province. I had the chance to talk with some who work as rural paramedics. They shared with me the importance of them being able to be there in their communities and provide those services. As so many members have noted today, that then also comes with economic benefit to those communities that helps support other local businesses, that helps support other people to live in that community, and that helps keep our rural population going. I recognize that as the roots of our province. That is where we come from, and it's an important way of life that I agree we want to see preserved.

As I said, it's refreshing to be able to have this conversation because too often I hear, you know, Conservatives or conservative commentators who speak very negatively of the public sector and the money that we invest as government in the province of Alberta to support those workers and the work that they do here in the province of Alberta. Indeed, recently there was an editorial by Danielle Smith, a former member of this House and a great supporter of the current government. She was quite concerned about some actions that public-sector workers, through their duly elected and democratic unions, were taking on climate change. One of her complaints was that these were, and I quote, the biggest and most powerful public-sector unions in our province, those who never saw job losses during the most recent downturn in the economy, those who never faced a wage cut.

I find that sort of framing and that sort of demonization of folks who work in the public service, Madam Speaker, to be troubling, especially with the discussion that we're having here in this House today, where we recognize that investment in providing fair remuneration for those who work in the public service is something

that supports communities across this province. I recognize that at times there can be, much as there is the rivalry between Edmonton and Calgary or perhaps the west and the east, some of that rivalry that exists between urban and rural Alberta.

Certainly, it's challenging as government looks to find efficiencies and looks to find ways to offer services most effectively. Indeed, that is something this government has indicated they are very concerned about doing. I recognize it can be challenging in that, then, to find the right balance and ensuring that we support our important rural communities that provide so much in this province, whether it's in agriculture, whether it's the individuals that work in the resource industries and many of the folks are out fighting those fires right now. It is challenging trying to find the ways that we most effectively deliver our public services, but we recognize that the public service is an important employer and an important source of economic activity here in the province.

3:30

Indeed, I recognize that because I had many conversations over the last four years with individuals in the business community in and around Edmonton's downtown. We had some extensive conversations about what their experience was during the years under Premier Ralph Klein, when he made severe and drastic cuts to the public service here in Alberta, and about the effect it had on Edmonton's downtown core. More than once I heard the term "ghost town" used. It devastated businesses. It devastated the economy here, something from which it took some time for this community to begin to recover.

Now, I recognize that there is a difference between the downtown in the heart of a larger city and indeed an individual small town, though certainly the Minister of Health has taken the time to ask, I guess in regard to the clinical lab hub, which we had some more discussion about today, about why I was not concerned about jobs being moved out of my constituency for that. I recognize, again, that there are times when we have to weigh the decisions, we have to look at what's involved, and we have to make the right choice in terms of how we are going to provide the best services for Albertans.

Certainly, again, I think what the member has brought forward here is a reasonable proposal that, in doing so, government do, as our government in fact did, a weighing of the balance and the benefit that will be provided in making that decision versus the cost it will have to the local community. While our downtown is to some extent resilient and indeed on an upswing in many respects, which accommodates, I think, a shift like moving the clinical lab hub a little better, I recognize that for a small rural community the loss of a significant service hub, where we have, again, those public-sector workers who indeed – again, I'm glad we are talking about how much we value them and how much they contribute to the economy here today, how important that is, in a much grander sense, to small rural communities.

It is my hope that as we go forward – and indeed we will see a budget coming this fall after the blue-ribbon panel, which is looking for efficiencies and will only be able to find ways to reduce spending, so we recognize that we are going to be having these conversations in this House and that the public sector is indeed going to come up in terms of discussion, in terms of what they are paid and what they earn and what value they add – we will remember this conversation today, in which we all agreed on the value that the public sector brings to our province and recognize that if we launch attacks on the public sector, that will not just affect people here in my constituency of Edmonton-City Centre or just in Edmonton or in Calgary. It will affect workers across this province,

who provide great benefit and value to their communities and who indeed clearly voted for members from both parties in this House and are expecting all of us to give due consideration to the value they provide to this province. It is my hope that our conversation at that time will continue in this positive tone.

With that, Madam Speaker, I'll just say thank you again to the Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock. I was just telling the member that it's in alphabetical order, so it should be easier to remember. I thank him for bringing this motion forward and giving us the opportunity for this discussion today. I look forward to voting in favour.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Schow: Why, thank you, Madam Speaker, for this opportunity to rise and speak in favour of Motion 502, put forward by my friend and colleague from Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock. It's also great to see many members in this House rise today in what appears to be bipartisan support of this motion.

I think this motion speaks to unintended consequences. I think that's the point of this: unintended consequences and how we can go about avoiding them. We've heard a lot of comments today about the refugee and citizenship case processing centre out in the Vegreville area and the lack of consultation that was carried out on behalf of the federal government when that office was closed and the drastic effects it had on the community.

I support doing an economic impact study before government offices are closed because, like the member opposite from Edmonton-City Centre said, Alberta's public sector does tremendous work, and their interests must be considered. But so, too, must the interests of rural Alberta be considered. It is the place where I live. I have lived in and visited many places across this province, across this country, and in my completely unbiased opinion rural is where it's at. But I digress.

I want to tell you a little bit about some unintended consequences that I have seen in the past. In the small town of Magrath, a town of about 2,600 constituents in Cardston-Siksika, there was a hospital or, rather, what was once a hospital with an active emergency room, and about a decade or so ago it was closed down. As a result, it has taken a bit of a hit because of the attractiveness of living in a town with an active hospital. Not far to the northeast is Raymond. It has a hospital. The town where I live, Cardston, also has a hospital. The populations of both of those towns are larger, not necessarily directly as a result of the hospital. But, certainly, when the hospital was closed, I was told that there were about 20 nurses who were no longer working in town. As a result, they were not buying local products, and they weren't even using the local golf course.

Further to the south is the town of Del Bonita. Several decades ago there was a school in Del Bonita, and that school was closed. One member in Magrath said that when he graduated, there were about 43 students in his graduating class. Today there is no longer a school there. No one is graduating. They go to Magrath, and the town now has a population of about 651 people.

While I'm talking about education, I just wanted to take a moment to tell you how important it is and what it's done for my life and the importance of great teachers and the effect they've had on me. When I moved to Alberta in my teenage years, I had some of the greatest teachers that a young student could ever ask for: in my English class Mrs. Pilling, in my math class Mr. Noad. Both of those teachers were more than just instructors. Living in a small town, they were friends, they became mentors, and they encouraged me that I could do better in both of those subjects, and they helped

me along the path. I am certain that without their help I would not be where I am today, so to them I do want to say thank you.

Unintended consequences are what we are trying to avoid. This government ran on a platform with five major commitments. Repealing the carbon tax: we've gone ahead and we've made serious moves towards that. Hopefully, by the end of the day that is complete.

Standing up for Albertans, which means standing up for this province against what we believe to be a federal government that is not taking our concerns as seriously as we think they should, including getting our products to tidewater.

Getting our fiscal house in order, which means balancing the budget. I would be a terrible legislator if I left this House without making a concerted effort to leave this province better for my kids than I found it, and that means reducing the debt load of this province so that my children are not paying for the mistakes of my predecessors.

Protecting the quality of health care and education. I did address education and its importance in my life. We made a commitment to maintain or increase spending in both of those sectors.

And, of course, job creation. Some unintended consequences of the previous government we have seen are declining investment – 7 per cent in agriculture, 10 per cent in manufacturing, 27 per cent in finance, and 65 per cent in retail and trade – putting us cascading towards a debt of close to \$60 billion.

Now, I do not believe in my heart of hearts – and I mean this sincerely – that the members opposite intended to have these negative consequences on our province. I believe they are good-intending legislators and people who want to see what's best for the province. On this side of the House we simply see how to get there as drastically different. But those decisions made by the members across the aisle have put us where we are. Unintended consequences are things that we should be avoiding, which is why I speak in favour of this motion.

3:40

Another unintended consequence, if you'd allow me, Madam Speaker, is something that happened to me a couple of years ago. What was introduced was the SodaStream. Some people might know this. It carbonates water. I was giddy – I was absolutely giddy – about the SodaStream. I'll tell you why: because I am addicted to pop. I am. I'm happy to admit it. I'm trying to get off it, but what can I say? The SodaStream, to me, was a great opportunity to cut out the sugar and have the water.

One day I got a little bit gutsy and thought: what if you put juice into the SodaStream, not just water? The fact is that you have to put the syrup in after you've added the carbonation. I got a little gutsy and thought: we'll put some juice in there. My family wasn't around, and I thought that, well, I could get away with this in case the worst-case scenario happens, and the worst-case scenario did in fact happen. The SodaStream blew up, with juice all over myself, all over the floor, and I was left with a sticky mess to clean up, including trying to save the SodaStream.

Madam Speaker, all I wanted was some fizzy grape juice – that's all I wanted – but the reality is that the unintended consequences were a mess all over the floor. I relate that, in fact, to this province. If we do not consider all of the outcomes, all of the factors involved when we are making decisions, be they small, medium, or large, we could end up with a colossal mess. I do believe that we are heading towards that mess, and it is our job as this government to right the ship. But it starts with doing the proper consultation.

With consultation comes transparency. [interjections] I hear whispers across the aisle. They don't like the word "transparency."

Ms Renaud: It's laughter.

Mr. Schow: Well, okay. It was a funny story.

In any event, transparency is something that governments should also adopt and, in doing so, communicate with the local communities what they intend to do. This is something that I don't believe the federal government considered when closing the refugee and citizenship case processing centre, and it's something that is incumbent upon us to do if we're going to make decisions that will affect entire communities.

Now, with regard to Vegreville 280 jobs may not seem like a lot to some, but to the town of Vegreville it is a massive part of the population, jobs that we must protect. These employees who were let go were given an option to take a new position of employment within the city of Edmonton. However, that was an hour and a half away, and many, including single parents, were unable to make that transition in living and bringing their kids to the larger city. They wanted to stay in Vegreville, or they were unable to make that transition.

As we develop policy and as we make decisions that are going to affect both urban and rural parts of the province, we must consider all factors involved, and if we do not, we will find ourselves in a big, sticky mess and we will be deviating from the promise that this government made only months ago, through the campaign, to right the fiscal ship and to protect jobs and the economy in this province.

With that, Madam Speaker, I'll conclude my remarks by saying thank you for this opportunity to speak, and I hope that all members in this Legislature will vote in favour of Motion 502.

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

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am pleased this afternoon to rise and speak to Motion 502, brought forward by the MLA for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock. I do so partly in my role as the critic for Agriculture and Forestry and also partly as a result of my experience growing up, in part, in a small village myself.

I come from Thorhild. Thorhild I've brought up a few times in this House because it was a very formative experience for me living there and spending my summers there. Thorhild is a case in point to provide an example to this House as to what happens when a small rural Alberta population centre loses the threshold population that allows it to be viable. It demonstrates the risk at which many Alberta communities are at and the fear that many people who live in rural Alberta communities have over losing any possible government jobs that they might still be able to have in their community to centralization or for other reasons by decisions made by a provincial government that might in future decide to relocate those jobs and those departments' offices to another location.

Thorhild ended up becoming dissolved. It ended up now being administered by the county of Thorhild, and it lost its independence. It ceased to exist because that threshold population was lost. There were a number of different extenuating circumstances there, but that's what fate many rural municipalities wish to avoid by maintaining the provincial public services that they currently have in their communities.

Now, there's an intense rivalry for public investment in Alberta's small rural communities, and I've witnessed this very, very personally as a young person while my grandmother, Winnifred LaBelle, was a deputy mayor in Thorhild. I know there was an intense rivalry between two communities that were pretty close together, that being Thorhild and Redwater, just a few kilometres to the south. Ultimately, they battled to see who would get the lodge or the hospital. It turned out that Thorhild ended up getting the seniors' lodge and Redwater the hospital, but there was an intense fight between the two communities because they knew the value of having those public servants as employees bringing home stable

paycheques to their particular communities. Those two facilities still operate in both those centres right now and are still valued centres of employment in those two smaller communities.

The importance of the public service jobs that the province may provide by having services decentralized in a smaller rural Alberta community is just as important today as they were 50 years ago, when my grandmother was fighting to have the Thorhild lodge or the hospital located in their community.

Historically rural communities have struggled to survive as they end up depopulating and going to larger centres, and it's these public service jobs that allow many of them to hang on and survive and, hopefully, maybe even thrive while they try to attract other investments maybe from the private sector to grow their community and establish more people in that community. But if they don't have these public-sector jobs there to maintain that threshold as there's a transition from one economic activity to another, they may end up suffering the same fate as Thorhild has suffered and end up having to dissolve and become administered by the county.

These provincially funded service centres must have an economic impact assessment done prior to closure if indeed that's being contemplated by the province, so I support the private member's Motion 502, brought forward by the MLA for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock, wholeheartedly, in the knowledge that our rural communities fight every day to maintain services for their population, not only by having the public services that are there maintained but also to attract other professionals to the community such as doctors and other health care professionals.

I know, once again, in Thorhild – you're going to hear a lot about Thorhild from me – my grandparents were involved in making sure that a doctor actually stayed in the community because they had one, and the doctor left. Indeed, if they didn't have that doctor there, the community would be losing people because they would choose to move away. I remember going to Clyde just down the road, not too far from Westlock, perhaps even in the MLA for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock's constituency, and there was an X-ray machine in Clyde that was available for sale. My grandparents felt that if indeed they could have an X-ray machine in Thorhild, they might be able to attract a doctor, so we actually went and picked it up from a veterinary clinic, an old X-ray machine, that we broke the dolly on getting it moved, and moved it into Thorhild. That actually did help attract a doctor.

3:50

People in these communities will do anything they can to maintain their communities and help them survive. One thing we can do to help as a provincial government is make sure the economic impact assessment is done before a decision is made to strip these communities of the public service jobs they so dearly rely on. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'll try to keep my comments fairly concise. I know there are other members that wish to speak to this.

I am rising to speak in favour of this motion, as is what sounds like most of, or much of, the Assembly. I just want to point out a couple of different things, Madam Speaker. I do appreciate the member who put this forward as far as taking an economic assessment . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Sorry, hon. member. I hesitate to interrupt after only allowing a short period of time, but under Standing Order 8(3), which provides for up to five minutes for the sponsor of the

motion other than a government motion to close debate, I would invite the hon. Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock to close debate on Motion 502.

Mr. van Dijken: Okay. Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you for the opportunity to speak to private member Motion 502. It has truly been an honour to bring this forward to this Legislative Assembly.

I think what is being recognized here is the importance of these government-funded facilities and the jobs that they provide in small communities and how important it is to recognize and respect – it really is truly all about respecting those communities in any decision-making process going forward. I believe that Motion 502 is about recognizing the need for a fair process before a decision is made. I can't stress that enough. In the case of the immigration processing centre in Vegreville, the community was completely caught off guard and blindsided by the decision because they had never been notified or even consulted with before the decision was made, so their efforts to try and get the decision reversed were futile at the end of the day.

Having gone through that experience as an MLA and watching as that whole process went through, it spoke a lot to me about the importance of our role here to ensure that our communities are respected and that the proper consultation is done before any decisions to centralize or relocate government-funded service centres, offices, branches are made. We truly need to respect the communities that they're located in and let their voices be heard in a transparent manner.

I appreciate the input from all members, and I also encourage all members to vote in favour of Motion 502. Thank you.

[Motion Other than Government Motion 502 carried]

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 29: Mr. Rutherford]

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright.

Mr. Rowswell: Wainwright, yes. Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have the privilege to be elected to this Assembly by the constituents of the newly configured riding of Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright, an amalgam of portions of the former Vermilion-Lloydminster and Battle River-Wainwright ridings. I rise to give my maiden speech, a tradition for a newly elected MLA.

I'm an advocate for tradition. "Tradition is," to quote G.K. Chesterton, "the democracy of the dead." Conservatives believe in the principle of prescription, that is, of things established by immemorial usage. Prescription is the legacy of the dead. Edmund Burke called the principle of prescription the wisdom of our ancestors. He further opined that prescriptive wisdom is something far greater than any man's petty, private rationality. We would do well to reflect on this over the next four years. To those in this Chamber or without who might balk at this sentiment, I would point

out that the Assembly is, for very good reason, a bastion of tradition. A consequence of the Assembly observing prescriptive wisdom is that our province is provided with a measure of stability and repose.

Tradition is not convention. It is convention that affords me this opportunity to introduce to the House commentary regarding the riding of Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright, its people, geography, challenges, and opportunities. Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright has a population in excess of 46,000 and covers an area of 10,090 square kilometres. Its three most populated areas are reflected in the riding's title.

The biprovincial city of Lloydminster has the riding's largest population, approximately 31,400. Of that number just over 20,000 live on the Alberta side. Lloydminster is, given the right economic conditions, a thriving city. It has forward-looking, energetic school boards and is home to the Lloydminster Oilfield Technical Society. They host the biannual Lloydminster Heavy Oil Show, the last volunteer-run oil and gas show of its kind in Canada. Its 20th show will take place in 2020. It also has an active Concerned Citizens for Seniors Care Society, which watches out for changes to levels of care for seniors in Lloydminster and de facto the province.

Vermilion and Wainwright have populations of 4,150 and 6,270 respectively. Wainwright is home to a large Canadian Forces training base. The base hosts many multinational military exercises, adding colour to an already vibrant town. The Wainwright stampede is an annual four-day event held in June each year, a tradition since 1953. Vermilion is home to Lakeland College. Lakeland started life as an agricultural college in 1913. A second campus opened in Lloydminster in 1990. The courses now on offer are dazzling and numerous. Lakeland is home to energy, crop, and environmental applied research. It also boasts an energy centre which trains students as power engineers. Demonstrating versatility, it offers courses in interior design and manual trades, plus nursing, early learning and child care, not to mention a firefighter training school. With over 2,000 students, graduation convocations require three separate events conducted over two days.

The remaining one-third of the riding's population live, love, and work predominantly in and around the small rural communities of Edgerton, Kitscoty, Islay, Irma, Dewberry, Clandonald, Marwayne, Paradise Valley, Chauvin, Tulliby Lake, and a small portion of the First Nation reserve at Onion Lake. Each of these have their share of colourful characters and interesting traditions.

As mentioned, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright was created from portions of two former ridings. Before moving on, I would like to acknowledge the sterling contributions of the two MLAs who represented those former ridings. Both Wes Taylor and Dr. Richard Starke were popular, effective, and energetic MLAs. I now face the unenviable task of trying to fill not just one but two big pairs of boots. These men battled hard to resolve issues for their constituents. Dr. Starke was frequently engaged in matters arising from the biprovincial jurisdiction operating in Lloydminster. In Vermilion the lack of SL 4 places, producing the unhappy situation where elderly married couples can find themselves being separated, was something Richard worked long and hard to resolve. To use a football phrase, he definitely moved the ball down the field. I hope to drive it into the end zone. Through my initial investigation, that may be many plays from now.

Wes Taylor assisted Irma school to obtain a significant new build, which included a gymnasium and kitchen facility. Together these can combine to provide a much-needed community hall facility for use by the school and the wider community. By contrast, his efforts to secure replacement of the existing Wainwright

hospital, like the SL 4 accommodation problem in Vermilion, continues with me.

Although earlier I described the challenges set by these two men as unenviable, I truly welcome it. I am grateful to those who have put me in this position I am in today.

4:00

Accordingly, I would like to thank everyone who voted in the recent election. I'm an MLA for all constituents, not just those that voted UCP. I welcome feedback from all constituents. I truly believe we make better policy by discussing issues widely.

Having dealt with convention, I would like to return to the theme of tradition. On April 16 25,161 Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright constituents exercised their vote. My party received 79 per cent of that vote. The turnout was 76.2 per cent. It was the second-highest percentage in the province. This number reflects the desire of a rural population for change, a population whose chief economic drivers are the agriculture and energy sectors and whose cultural bedrock is their family, their community, and often their place of worship. My party offered that change, and we are steadfast in our desire to deliver it, not only economically but politically and culturally.

However, "change" is not the term I would choose to use to describe what Albertans are seeking. In the throne speech the word used was "renewal." I cheerfully adopt renewal in support of my theme. My constituents yearn for renewal of traditional values. They are tired of shifting, zeitgeist-generated, relative values that Edmund Burke long ago recognized as "floating fancies or fashions." Having campaigned and consulted in the riding for two years, I am confident that the majority of constituents agree with me that conservative values are traditional values. Conservative values are simply common sense. They are derived from common experiences. They're longitudinally evidence based.

So what are the attitudes and behaviours I've encountered that reflect these values? Let's begin with the belief in the rule of law and the scourge of rural crime. For Nathan Saunders, owner of Saunders Repair Service in Marwayne, having your house entered illegally, your workshop broken into twice, four private trucks and five customer trucks stolen, plus untold vandalism, this scourge is a ghastly reality. Yet despite being let down by the system, Nathan continues to believe in the rule of law and operates his business to the best of his ability. He has confidence that once the economy improves and the forces of law and order are once again given the tools to do the job, order will be restored.

Talking of economy and free trade, let me tell you about Leonard Lage, who owns a gas station in Kitscoty. Kitscoty is 23 kilometres west of Lloydminster. As Saskatchewan did not impose a carbon tax, gas station owners in the biprovincial city of Lloydminster received an exemption from it to protect them. Mr. Lage, 10 minutes away, received no exemption. This unequal playing field has all but put him out of business. Is Mr. Lage defeated? No. He battles on for now, this dreadful experience only cementing his conservative belief in free trade. He currently keeps his business afloat using his savings, and he himself is buoyed by the moral and emotional support of his extended family. Luckily for Mr. Lage, he has a strong, united family.

We conservatives promote the functioning of strong families. Families come in many sizes and shapes. Some families have children with special needs and often find their children barred from the natural pathways of education and work. This exclusion can undermine a family unit. In Lloydminster the group Inclusion Alberta exists to achieve as natural a pathway as possible into education and employment for young people.

One successful example of this is that of Shauna Clennin and her daughters Courtney and Kelsey. I initially connected Shauna with Inclusion Alberta when Shauna told me that her girls were being taught outside the mainstream in modified classrooms. With the help of Inclusion staff and the co-operation of school staff, Shauna continues to ensure Courtney and Kelsey are included in the mainstream classes and afforded real employment opportunities. Both Courtney and Kelsey have blossomed under this approach. Courtney now has a driver's licence and part-time work, and Kelsey is applying for her licence and is also employed. This demonstrates that a positive approach helps potentially disadvantaged people become confident, accepted, and self-reliant.

Self-reliance and keeping the fruits of one's labour is another conservative value alive and well in this riding. In 2008 the county of Vermilion River won the Alberta emerald award for developing an environmentally friendly and profitable use for well methane gas emissions. Reeve Dale Swyripa explained to me that methane emissions released when oil is extracted are restricted. This causes reduced oil production. But by designing a method of capturing the emissions, not only is the oil production increased, but the captured methane is now available to supply county of Vermilion River homes, businesses, and maintenance vehicles. Conserving the environment, reducing taxpayer burden, and helping the energy industry is a trio of triumphs.

Finally, I turn to my own areas of interest and concern. I have a natural conservative antipathy toward statism and its stultifying offspring, red tape and bureaucracy. For the immediate I want to help constituents who find navigating existing systems difficult. My constituency door will always be open wide to assist you. Long term we need to reform Byzantine bureaucracy and, additionally, should actively seek to reduce it. I'm delighted that this aim is the *raison d'être* of the UCP's Bill 2, the open for business act.

Fiscal prudence is my watchword. As a retired financial adviser I'm imbued with the desire to get value from every investment made and to guard zealously my clients' and now my constituents' money. Further, I believe that all proposed state activity must undergo a cost-benefit analysis and be subject to a priority review.

Finally, with regard to what was couched as climate change leadership, I am pleased that the carbon tax has been scrapped. In addition, I very much appreciate that there is to be an energy war room aimed at countering Canadian environmental groups. These groups take money from overseas foundations, with a covert aim of economically sabotaging Alberta. I expect Galileo would have appreciated the aid of a heliocentric war room back in the 17th century, when the consensus was against him.

Although I have spoken at length about tradition and conservative values, let me be clear on one point. Conservatism is not a force for resistance to change. I heard a quote recently which aptly describes the modern conservative view: conservatives are progressives who drive the speed limit. For my constituents and, I dare say, the vast majority of Albertans, nonconservative progressives drive too fast. They often careen off the road and take down fences.

I began my address with a quote from G.K. Chesterton; I would like to end with another. Chesterton advised, "Don't ever take a fence down until you know the reason . . . it was put up." We sit here in the summer-of-repeal session, attempting to replace a number of taken-down fences. Overwhelmingly, that is what my constituents voted for me to do. In addition, they'd like to see many fences refurbished and all fences properly maintained. I am grateful to them for giving me the opportunity to restore fences and mend many others. I am grateful my party exists as fence makers and promoters of the wisdom of our ancestors.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Comments or questions under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd like to thank the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright for his remarks in response to the throne speech. I'm hoping that the member would be able to comment a little bit on the responses he got from constituents at the doors during the campaign regarding some of the pledges that we made in our robust policy document. Further to that, if he could maybe comment on some of the responses he's getting now that we have begun to take action as a government and now that we are making promises and we are keeping promises. So if the member could elaborate a little more on what he heard at the doors during the campaign, and if he could tell us a little more about what he's hearing now that we are keeping our promises.

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

Mr. Rowswell: Yeah. The three main things that I ran on were working toward a balanced budget, deregulating as much as possible, and fighting back against the war on fossil fuels. The main thing that I heard was – Lloydminster is mostly an oil town, and a lot of the rural towns are impacted by carbon taxes. Carbon taxes were a big deal. People wanted to get rid of the carbon tax. I heard it everywhere I went.

Regulations were interesting. I mentioned the Lloydminster Heavy Oil Show. They had it during the nomination process. I went booth to booth at the trade show and asked them if they felt that they were overregulated. To my surprise, they said: not really. The ones that really liked it were the ones that sold safety equipment. They thought it was really good. I told the organizer that that's what I had heard, and he said: I'll find you lots of people that don't like the regulations that we have to deal with.

4:10

Then I went to the Oilfield Technical Society's meeting – they have one the first Monday of every month – and what I discovered was that it's not that they thought that they weren't overregulated; it's just that they were resigned. They felt there was no way that you can reduce regulation: "Once it's there, it'll never go away. It will just always be with us, so we've just got to learn to live with it." But then I asked: "Well, then, doesn't that cost you a lot of money? Doesn't that make you noncompetitive?" He said, "Yeah, and I have friends that have left and gone to Texas because of the carbon taxes, the regulation." They just found other jurisdictions that were easier to deal with, and they were waiting to see what happened in the election because that was going to be a decision that they were going to have to make.

After the election I've had comments. People in my constituency on average are very happy that the carbon tax is gone. They were happy for the open-for-business thing. I mentioned that I was out grocery shopping on Saturday, and the manager of the local Co-op store commented that he's really happy with the direction that we're going. You know, we ran on things, we got voted in, we're implementing them, and they're happy that we're doing it. That's what I've run into. So it's been a real positive experience, in my mind.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: A minute left under 29(2)(a). The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. You know, the hon. member has a lot of great things to say. My understanding is

that he is in a new constituency, with new boundaries. Of course, with that comes new challenges. Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright certainly is a very large area within Alberta, and I was wondering if maybe he can touch on some of the challenges that he faces as an MLA, especially a new MLA, in ensuring that he is responsive to all his constituents and, in talking about the diversity within that constituency, ensuring that he is providing the adequate amount of service as an MLA for the people in that area.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Rowswell: Thank you, and thank you for the question. What I've been trying to do is identify the different industry groups. For example . . . [A timer sounded] Do I quit?

The Deputy Speaker: Sorry, hon. member. You're out of time.

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

Mr. Amery: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Let me continue the ongoing tradition, albeit a little later than some, of congratulating you on being elected to the position of Deputy Speaker. Let me also take this opportunity, through you, to congratulate all of the members of this honourable Assembly on their recent election success. I truly look forward to having many positive debates about the issues that Albertans face in the coming years with each and every member in this House.

Madam Speaker, today is the first opportunity for me to rise before this Assembly and second the Speech from the Throne. It is a real honour to stand before you this afternoon because I join a government that has the vision, the plan, and the clearest mandate in recent history to take Alberta to unprecedented levels in the coming years.

First and foremost, it is with the sincerest gratitude that I thank the residents of Calgary-Cross for placing their faith in this government and for electing me to my first term as a Member of the Legislative Assembly for the 30th session. As I mentioned during my campaign many times, this seat belongs only to those residents, and I am committed and devoted to bringing their concerns to this government over the next four years. I'd like to take this opportunity as well to thank my extended family, my parents, my wife, my children, and the many supporters who worked tirelessly and who exhibited an incredible level of patience with me during this past campaign.

Madam Speaker, let me begin by telling you a little bit about the Calgary-Cross constituency. Calgary-Cross consists of the communities of Marlborough, Marlborough Park, Rundle, Pineridge, and Monterey Park, and it is located in the northeast quadrant of Calgary, that more than 50,000 people call home. It is, without a doubt in my mind, one of the most diverse constituencies in the province both religiously and ethnically and has one of the largest immigrant populations of any riding in the province.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

In fact, Mr. Speaker, more than half of the Calgary-Cross constituency identifies with a visible minority group. I am tremendously proud to be the elected representative of this constituency, and I would encourage every member to visit Calgary-Cross, where the food is as unique as it is phenomenal and the people are warm, hard working, and generous.

Mr. Speaker, it is truly hard to imagine what my parents envisioned when they immigrated to Canada from Lebanon, a very

small country in the Middle East, in the 1970s. Along with millions of other newcomers, my parents mustered up the courage to pick up and leave the only country that they ever knew, the only language they knew, the only political system they knew, the only society they knew to move to a country which seemed to be worlds away. They did it for one simple reason. They knew they wanted to seek a better life for themselves and for their children.

As clichéd as the story goes, Mr. Speaker, with almost no money and no idea of what to expect, they embarked upon a move to Canada and settled first in Edmonton, Alberta, where they worked hard. They ultimately moved to Calgary, where they raised five children in east Calgary, that we called home. It is no secret to most people in this Assembly as to where this story goes from here. Like all newcomers, through hard work and perseverance my parents made Alberta their home. As many of you know, I am very, very proud to tell you and the rest of the members of this Assembly, through you, that my father sat in this very Chamber for more than 22 years, where he was part of a team that helped Alberta become the economic envy of North America and, in fact, the entire world.

Calgary-Cross is by geographical accounts a small constituency, but it is a great constituency. We have had the honour and the privilege of being represented by many great MLAs. I am both honoured and privileged to be the MLA for the communities which were once served by my father, MLA Amery Sr., and the late Minister Bhullar, whose memory and legacy remains strong and whose tragic and untimely death was a terrible loss for our province. The late Minister Bhullar was a dear friend to me. We travelled together, we went to university together, and we worked on various political campaigns together. He is dearly missed by all of us. I have no doubt in my mind that I have tremendous shoes to fill, but I also have no doubt in my mind that I have the best political adviser in this province.

Mr. Speaker, because of the hard work of my parents and the advantages that this province gave to us, I was able to attend university, where after many years I graduated with a law degree in 2010, and I opened up a small law office in east Calgary. It is also because of my upbringing, my work in the community, and my involvement that I became motivated to run in the Calgary-Cross constituency.

In recent years, Mr. Speaker, I saw the economic prosperity of this province declining. Our small office started to see fewer real estate transactions, fewer new business start-ups, and fewer commercial transactions and, instead, more family issues, more foreclosures, more bankruptcies, and more disputes between neighbours. We began to see less of the work that signalled economic prosperity and more of the types of work that indicated a troubling decline in productivity. It is also because of these remarkable changes that I observed in my own work that I started to look for answers. I found those answers in the policies of this current government. During the election this government made a promise to Alberta to get them back to work, and I am proud to report that within a few weeks this government has introduced four bills which are designed to energize our economy and simply get Albertans back to work.

4:20

The first of those, the carbon tax repeal act, was a core promise during the campaign and the first bill introduced before this Assembly. If passed, it will remove a debilitating consumption tax which has targeted families and businesses alike indiscriminately without addressing the very environmental concerns that it was purported to do. It was, in my view, the single greatest concern for Albertans as I campaigned from door to door.

The next bill, the open for business act, Mr. Speaker, is one that I am truly proud to support and advocate for because this bill will alleviate some of the greatest challenges that the job creators of this province have been struggling with since changes were made by the previous government. I campaigned on the promise that our government would foster and support economic initiatives, and I am fully in support of this bill and the changes it will provide if it is enacted into law. The vast majority of Albertans either operate a business or work for one, and as a government it is simply incumbent upon us to do everything within our power to ensure their success.

Next, Bill 3, the job-creation tax cut. Again, Mr. Speaker, we campaigned on one simple philosophy, that our role as government would be to support and promote those who employed Albertans. Recently the hon. Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women said that Alberta was once the gold standard of economic development in this country, and I genuinely believe that with this bill it will once again make Alberta the gold standard for investment, both foreign and domestic.

Finally, the Red Tape Reduction Act, Bill 4, was our government's promise to encourage Albertans to invest in this province, to take risks, and to make choices for economic success without worrying about bureaucratic barriers, delays, and costs. With this bill we will send a message to all Albertans that this government is ready to embrace and encourage their ideas without burdening them with unnecessary challenges.

Many of the stories that you've heard from my colleagues in their own maiden speeches are not unique. Albertans across the province were universally concerned about the previous government's policies. It was obvious that Albertans were struggling. They were concerned about the reports of unprecedented job losses and the unemployment rates that we were all witnessing, they were concerned about uncontrollable spending and the ballooning provincial debt, they were concerned about the assault on our natural resource industry, and they were concerned about the former policies which were designed to create barriers, not support, for Albertans looking to raise a family or start a business.

And so I say to the business owner in Marlborough who told me at his door that he was struggling to keep his small trucking business afloat: help is on the way. And to the woman in Monterey Park, who took my wife and I in during the storm that we had during the campaign and told us how she had lost her job more than a year and a half ago in the oil industry: help is on the way. And to the thousands of Calgary-Cross residents and the millions of Albertans who have struggled to find work to pay their bills, to keep a roof over their heads, and to keep their businesses afloat: help is on the way.

On April 16, 2019, Mr. Speaker, Albertans spoke loud and clear. They gave us an unprecedented mandate for the next four years, and in less than one month in this Assembly we have introduced four bills that were designed to do exactly what we said we would do. Promises made, promises kept.

Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker: Under section 29(2)(a), I see the hon. Member for Calgary-West.

Mr. Ellis: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, there are a lot of firsts in this Assembly, and we've talked previously about having two brothers that are a part of this Assembly for the first time, I believe, in Alberta's history. One thing is very unique not only just for myself but for also the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays, that both he and I sat in the same caucus as the previous member's father. I will say that I'm very honoured to have sat with the Member for Calgary-Cross's father. He is

correct that this is a man who has had 22 years of experience. He is very wise. I saw him only a few days ago, and he's still wheeling and dealing as if he's a current member of this Legislature. I can tell you that right now.

You know, it's really an honour to be in this Assembly, to be a part of, in his case, a family tradition, one that I'm sure we can only hope goes on for years and years to come. I know that every time I see his father, his father is very proud, beaming with smiles across his face with what his son has accomplished. In my short time of getting to know the hon. Member for Calgary-Cross, I have certainly been impressed with what he has done and what he hopes to do for the people of Calgary-Cross.

I myself, as many of you know, policed in the city of Calgary. Please, hon. Member for Calgary-Cross, I believe you have an area which is called 17th Avenue S.E. in your constituency or close by? Real close by, right? That 17th Avenue, which I know many people from Calgary-Cross would attend on a regular basis, is quite commonly known as International Avenue in Calgary. It speaks to the diversity of not only the area but the area within Calgary-Cross which the member has touched upon, just the cultural diversity, people that are new immigrants, people that are like his father, who came 20-, 30-plus years ago, second-, third-generation folks that are from the area, that live in the area.

I think it's important, and I'd like to ask this member if he could just continue to talk about the diversity within his riding and, in fact, within that whole area of Calgary, because I think it is not unique to Alberta in a sense that we are all very diverse. But that area in particular: they were hit very hard with the downturn in the economy, with some of the unexpected challenges that the people were facing in that area. Maybe he can expand upon the cultural diversity and the challenges that those people have experienced and talk a little bit about the hope that he being elected in the Legislature will bring.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Amery: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Calgary-West for that summarization and the question. I think that the Calgary-Cross constituency does in fact represent one of the most diverse constituencies in the province. Certainly, the challenges that we face are not unlike those that are faced by other constituencies in Calgary. We have a primary concern with making sure that our economy improves. We have a primary concern with ensuring that people maintain their businesses. We have a concern that people keep their jobs. That's very, very important to all residents of Calgary-Cross.

I think that one of the strengths of our riding is that cultural diversity. Calgary-Cross presents an incredible mixture of different religions, different ethnicities, different languages, and certainly I am tremendously proud to be able to find, you know, every type of cuisine in the area, every type of cultural event. It's an incredibly diverse area, and I couldn't be prouder to represent that constituency. Certainly, that is not a weakness but our strength. Calgary-Cross has the unique . . . [The time limit for questions and comments expired]

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

4:30

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Any other members looking to speak? I believe I see the hon. Member for Grande Prairie standing.

Mrs. Allard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise in this Assembly today as the Member for Grande Prairie. It was an

honour to attend the reading of the Speech from the Throne on May 22 by Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor.

I would like to extend my congratulations to you, Deputy Chair of Committees, to the Speaker, and the Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees on being elected by your peers to preside over this, the 30th Legislature of Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, as a new MLA I have found these last few weeks to be both exciting and challenging, and I have greatly appreciated all of the Legislative Assembly Office staff for being so patient, professional, and helpful in my orientation to this new role.

I would also like to congratulate the new Clerk on her appointment as the ninth Clerk of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta.

It is a great honour for me to stand here today and represent the constituents of Grande Prairie, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank them sincerely for trusting me with this role. In my many months of knocking on the doors of my constituents, I was privileged to hear their concerns. I heard over and over again the need for jobs, the concern over Alberta's future, about health care wait times, pipelines and the lack thereof, increasing costs of living, and the worry about our province's economic uncertainty.

I was humbled to hear stories from people at their doors and often surprised by the willingness of people to share from the heart in deeply personal ways. Stories of the recent death of a loved one, the challenges of an abusive relationship, concern about completing a trade certification, concern about having a job in the future, the suicide of a child just the night prior, the concern over rising housing costs, and the defeat experienced within the cycle of addiction, to name a few of the more emotional disclosures I witnessed. I was humbled to be entrusted with these deeply personal and often painful stories, and it shifted my perspective on the task of door-knocking from a campaign job to an honour and a privilege. I quickly realized that my role was to listen more and talk less, and I was happy to do so. I found that people were incredibly moved to know that I was doing just that.

There are two local issues that were voiced repeatedly in Grande Prairie. The first is the Grande Prairie regional hospital build, which has been fraught with delays and cost overruns for years. The second is the twinning of highway 40. Highway 40 is a major route of transportation and development for our energy sector. These two projects are important not only to my constituency but also to the province as they provide opportunity for economic development, expansion of service to Albertans, improved safety on our highways, restoration of confidence in Alberta's economy, and critical learning as we endeavour to reduce regulatory burden and red tape by at least one-third over the next four years.

We have a responsibility to Albertans to manage the finances prudently while continuing to make critical investment decisions to renew the Alberta advantage and to restore our province to economic stability once again. I am confident in this government to lead well, and I would like to congratulate the members of Executive Council on the critical work you have commenced in the last few weeks. I am excited to work in support of Premier Kenney and cabinet to truly make life better for all Albertans.

Some Hon. Members: Name.

Mrs. Allard: Oh. Sorry about that. The Premier.

As I stand here today, I want to thank my family, without whom this privilege of representing Grande Prairie would not have been gained. My husband, Serge, and our three children, Nicolas, Alexander, and Isabelle, have been behind my efforts from the beginning, and I'm so grateful to them for their patience, love, and support throughout this process.

I am tremendously blessed and humbled to have had so many wonderful people who worked tirelessly to assist me in becoming their voice in the Alberta Legislature, and I would like to express my sincere gratitude to each one who helped me get here. I stand before you today as the first woman to represent Grande Prairie in the Legislative Assembly in our province's history, and I am humbled by this distinction.

Grande Prairie is known as the Swan City because of the beautiful trumpeter swans that migrate and nest there. It is a young and vibrant city with a diversified economy, which provides many opportunities for investment and employment. The city has established industry in forestry, oil and gas, agriculture, construction, and all of the service industry supports for these key pillars of our economy.

As a young entrepreneur and job creator I came to Grande Prairie in 1997, and I count myself fortunate to have made the city my home. I have never looked back. What I experienced was, I believe, representative of Alberta, a city at work with a can-do spirit and a welcoming environment that celebrated my family's investment and rewarded our hard work.

Until 2015 I had never aspired to hold public office, but I became deeply concerned about our province and the future opportunities for Albertans if we didn't address the slumping economy, ballooning debt, and regulatory burden that further hampered economic growth. My hope for our province is to renew Alberta as the economic engine for Canada and a land of opportunity for our future generations. I believe we have a responsibility to steward our province's resources and to leave this land in a better position than when we found it. I want the opportunities that I enjoyed as a young entrepreneur to be available for future generations of Albertans, including my own children.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to stand in this Assembly today as a member of this government caucus with the confidence that this dedicated team, under the leadership of our Premier, will renew the Alberta advantage and work tirelessly on behalf of all Albertans to restore the province to a land of opportunity for our future. I am committed to working with my colleagues to further this vision and support Alberta's energy sector and the building of new pipelines. I believe that Albertans are some of the hardest working, most innovative and creative people in the world, and when we unleash our collective potential is when we will return to long-term prosperity.

The city of Grande Prairie was one of Canada's fastest growing cities between 2001 and 2006. The city population is currently projected to double over the next 20 years. When I moved there in 1997, there were approximately 25,000, and today we have almost 75,000, so the city continues to grow rapidly. This growth creates tremendous opportunity for the city. One exciting development at present is the transition of the Grande Prairie Regional College to become a university. I am very supportive of this change and support increased local postsecondary opportunities from university programs to trades and technical training to allow our city's students to pursue a variety of higher education options at home.

With rapid growth also comes challenge. Sadly, Grande Prairie was named Canada's most dangerous city in both 2015 and 2016. While I am grateful for the strides made since 2016, I am concerned about this phenomenon, and I'm committed to work to further improve and to hopefully make Grande Prairie one of Canada's safest cities in the future. To quote a hero of mine, Anne Frank, "how wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world." It is because of my concern over this issue, shared by my constituents, and fuelled by the inspiration of Ms Frank that I have agreed to serve as vice-chair on a rural

committee under the leadership of the hon. Minister of Justice as the chair and in co-operation with the Member for Highwood as the co vice-chair.

Grande Prairie leads Alberta in entrepreneurial startups per capita and contributes a great deal to Alberta's overall wealth. I believe that entrepreneurs are the economic engine of our local economy, and I'm very proud of my city's leadership position in entrepreneurialism. The city is a tremendous community that offers a high quality of life and many opportunities for citizens to get involved.

One characteristic that has always stood out to me in Grande Prairie is the generosity of the people there. I have watched with a great sense of pride repeatedly as our community has rallied behind important causes such as Big Hearts for Big Kids. This initiative, under the vision and leadership of Grande Prairie's very own Tenille Townes, has raised over \$1.5 million over the last nine years in support of Sunrise House, which is the northernmost youth emergency shelter in the province. I am so proud to call Tenille a friend and to have supported her vision for the care and support of vulnerable youth in the city of Grande Prairie.

I would also like to congratulate this daughter of our city on her dedication and tireless work as a singer-songwriter and on her recent accomplishments internationally as an artist in being named on the verge by iHeartCountry and for being nominated by CMT for the breakthrough video of the year for her song *Somebody's Daughter*, which, true to Tenille's passion, illuminates the reality that everyone has a story, and even the person on the corner holding a cardboard sign is, in fact, somebody's daughter.

The city of Grande Prairie is fortunate also to be home to the largest all-boys choir in North America. Under the exceptional instruction of conductor Jeannie Vanwynsberghe Pernal the choir has been awarded first place multiple times provincially and twice nationally. Conductor and founder Ms Pernal has a vision to provide exceptional choral training for boys and young men while also teaching them to live with three core values: camaraderie, mentorship, and service. Grande Prairie has been incredibly fortunate over the last 18 years to watch the Grande Prairie Boys' Choir form, grow, and excel to the national and international level. I would like to thank Ms Pernal and her family for their dedication to our community and the significant contribution to the arts and the development of fine young citizens in the city of Grande Prairie.

4:40

At this time I would like to thank those who have gone before me from my area as representatives in this House. Even though my riding is new, my predecessors represented it well, most recently Mr. Wayne Drysdale, who served from 2008 to 2019, and the hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley, who serves in this present caucus also. Their contributions and the contributions of those members before them have had a tremendous influence on the quality of life in the region, and I hope to continue building on their legacy.

I will take a moment now to mention a new friend and mentor, Mr. Marvin Moore from DeBolt, Alberta. DeBolt is just 45 minutes from my door. Mr. Moore was first elected under Premier Lougheed, and he served in this Assembly from 1971 to 1989. Mr. Moore then returned years later to support Ralph Klein in his bid for the party leadership and continued to serve as an adviser and campaign manager for four provincial campaigns for Premier Klein. Mr. Moore, along with his wife Fran, has served the people of Alberta faithfully, and I would like to recognize them in this Assembly for their tremendous contribution to our province and thank them for the time they have invested in the greater good of Alberta and in me personally as a newly elected member. I can't

express my gratitude adequately for the kindness and support they have shown me these last months.

I suspect I may be the member who has written the most drafts of my maiden speech, and I've certainly thought and overthought about what to include. I believe this task has deepened my sense of purpose and responsibility to serve as a member in this House and underscore the honour of being included in such a select and distinguished group of so few Albertans to join this Assembly.

When I first decided, with much contemplation and trepidation, to take the leap into this unfamiliar world of politics, I really had no idea the extent to which my life would change and my grit and determination would be challenged. My utopian ideals of democracy were challenged repeatedly, and I took great comfort in the words of Winston Churchill. "Indeed it has been said that democracy is the worst form of Government except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time."

I will close with this. In the words of Theodore Roosevelt, from 1910:

It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, and comes [up] short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least [he] fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat.

I want to congratulate all members of this House for daring greatly to step forward and put themselves in this arena. I wish each one success in their role and hope that the 30th Legislature will be historic in improving life for all Albertans. I understand the tradition of my predecessors was to be brief, and it seems I have continued in that tradition.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Under 29(2)(a), I see the hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley standing.

Mr. Loewen: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to listen to the Member for Grande Prairie give her maiden speech today as she's now representing part of the area that I previously represented. I'm actually quite honoured that she has the position she does, and I know that she's going to do such a fantastic job representing those constituents.

As I think about Grande Prairie now, of course, we had the economic slowdown, and fortunately Grande Prairie didn't have quite as bad a slowdown as other parts of Alberta. I just want to see if the member would maybe talk a little bit about some of the companies that have helped Grande Prairie through these hard times, like maybe G Seven Generations and some of those companies, maybe just take a few minutes to talk about that. I know there's presently a fair amount of construction going on in Grande Prairie, and I know some of the businesses there – I think, probably, that entrepreneurial spirit from the Peace Country is there, where people are willing to take risks and take chances even when things are a little bit slow.

I know there's a big Canadian Tire that's, I think, just finished and opened just recently there, and I think the largest Ford dealership in all of Canada has just been built there, too. So there are a lot of different things going on there. When things have been slow, I think the people of Grande Prairie have really come together and really done a great job as far as trying to keep the economy going there

and keep the people working and that sort of thing. I'm just wondering if the member would just maybe continue a little bit along those lines.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

Mrs. Allard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yeah, it's my pleasure to talk about those things. The Ford dealership – I believe you're correct – is the largest in Canada, and the Canadian Tire is the largest single floor in Canada. There's a larger one in Edmonton, but it's on two floors.

I guess the broader question is really about the entrepreneurial spirit in our riding and in our city, and I would say that that's one of the things that not only drew us to Grande Prairie but has kept us there, the drive and the can-do attitude of the people. There's a visionary perspective that looks past today or the challenges and finds ways around it. I really appreciate that, both as a private citizen and as an investor in the community there as well. I've been very blessed to live there. The community has been very good to us, and I really appreciate companies like G Seven Generations, that was mentioned, that see past an economic downturn to the future of our province and the future economic activity that we will one day experience, hopefully one day very soon.

I'm also very proud to talk about other companies that are looking right now. I won't name names, but there's other significant investment coming to the region. It's my personal belief that Grande Prairie and area lead the province in economic upstarts, and as an engine for the province in terms of future investment and economic development, I think we'll be the place to watch.

Thank you so much for the question. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Any others? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-West.

Mr. Ellis: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I want to take a moment to congratulate the Member for Grande Prairie. I can tell that she put a lot of heart and effort into that speech, and certainly it paid off. I'm very proud of what she has said and proud to get to know her over the last, you know, short period of time.

During her speech she touched on the fact, you know, of course, that she is from Grande Prairie. I was fortunate, not unlike a few colleagues of mine who were able to work with a former Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti, Mr. Wayne Drysdale – it's interesting that I'm able to say his name now in this Chamber as he's no longer a member of this Legislature. He was a wonderful representative of that region. He was somebody who many of us in our caucus, whether the UCP caucus or when I was part of the PC caucus along with my colleague from Calgary-Hays, certainly considered a friend. I learned a lot from him as to some of the challenges that Grande Prairie was facing over the last several years.

The member had indicated and only touched briefly on rural crime, and rural crime is a problem, not just in other parts of Alberta but especially in places like Grande Prairie. As somebody who sat in on that meeting, the initial inaugural meeting of this rural crime committee, which was started by my friend from Calgary-Elbow, the hon. Justice minister, I could tell how passionate she was, how excited she was to be a part of this, looking at actual actionable items that she can bring to the table in order to help solve this crisis which is facing people in Alberta.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Do I see any other members wishing to speak?

Mrs. Sawhney: Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure today to rise in this House to speak and to deliver my maiden speech. I would like to start with a quote: dreams take time, patience, sustained effort, a willingness to fail if they are ever to be anything more than dreams. I found this quote on a tiny little card in a Hallmark shop many years ago, decades ago. It deeply resonated with me as I reflected on the qualities required to effect change and achieve important milestones. I kept this little card on my desk at work, right by my computer, even as I changed jobs over the years, and it was a daily reminder of the things that I wanted to accomplish. This quote was a confirmation that I'm indeed a dreamer, and to be a dreamer is not to be whimsical or fanciful; it's to chase after the outcomes that you believe in, the positive outcomes that create positive experiences for others.

4:50

Like many Albertans, I'm a daughter of immigrants. My parents came to Canada in the late '60s and ultimately settled in Calgary in the northeast community of Rundle. My father, Harpal Singh, is an educated man, a teacher. But with only \$8 in his pocket when he arrived in Canada with a young family, he was too overwhelmed trying to earn a living to think of upgrading, his dream of being a teacher lost to the harsh, practical realities of life. My mother, Harcharan Kaur, came equipped with the equivalent of a grade 10 education and a whole lot of attitude. This combination of parents created a household that was strong in expectations and aspirations. In order to provide for my brothers and I, my dad worked at CPR, and my mom worked in various low-paying jobs until she decided that enough was enough. She enrolled in a maintenance course, completed it with flying colours, and landed her dream job, a solid, good-paying job with benefits in public works with the government of Alberta.

Now, since I've been elected, a number of people have asked me if I've ever been to the McDougall Centre in Calgary, and I tell them: many, many, many times over the years. You see, the solid, good-paying job that my mom landed was as a worker in the housekeeping department at the McDougall Centre. She kept that place spic and span for 18 years, and I'm so very proud of her service. She worked the noon to 9 p.m. shift in the evening. It's a tough shift for a working mom with three kids. I was in university during some of that time, and occasionally on my way back from evening classes, taking the C-Train, I would drop by and go see her so that we could take the train home together.

During those times she would often introduce me to visiting dignitaries, staff, politicians, MLAs, ministers, and she would say with great pride that her daughter was a student at the university. Then she would ask them to keep me in mind for a job because I was graduating soon. She would say to me: if you're lucky and if you work hard, you can get a job at the land titles office. Well, Mom, I never did get that job at the land titles office, but how do you like my job now? Dreams can take you places you never thought that you would go.

My mother's story is compelling. I always tell my children that it's important to understand where you come from in order to understand where you want to go. The unknown path laid before you is always better navigated by reflecting on the travelled trails behind you because, ultimately, opportunities are hard earned by others before you, such as my opportunity to go to university, one that my mother never had. Opportunities that are squandered are a tragedy of immeasurable magnitude.

Mr. Speaker, I'm from the Sikh faith, and my parents and I often speak in Punjabi. Like so many Calgarians of all walks of life, I say with great pride that I'm a northeast Calgary girl. It's where I spent 40 years of my life, first in the constituency of Calgary-Cross and

then in Calgary-McCall. As a high school student I took the bus to James Fowler, a long bus ride that many students are still experiencing today. I made lifelong friendships on that bus ride. Some of those individuals were key strategists in my campaign because they know what these communities need.

I then went to the University of Calgary, met my wonderful husband, Gurpreet, and together we started our careers in the oil and gas industry. We bought our first home in the community of Whitehorn. As our family expanded over the years, all four of my children – Raman, Saiva, Nishan, and Avani – were born in the Peter Lougheed hospital. We immersed ourselves in family, work, and volunteerism. One of the highlights of our time living in Castleridge was when Gurpreet and I coached basketball. We are still very proud of our PSA bantam girls basketball team, who astounded their competitors with their tough play in winning cities and provincials in basketball over a decade ago.

I have the extraordinary privilege of representing the constituents from Calgary-North East, and my gratitude for their support knows no bounds. Being their MLA is an honour I take seriously every day.

Calgary-North East is a new electoral district. On the eastern end we have the communities of Cityscape, Redstone, Skyview, and Cornerstone, and to the north we have Livingston. These are all new communities that are experiencing rapid growth but still waiting for much-needed infrastructure to catch up. Now that the weather is getting warmer, you'll start seeing more and more seniors' groups meeting in the parks, outdoor festivals, and dancing get-togethers by women's groups in these communities. The busy boys will be planning their barbecue schedule while giving a helping hand to their neighbours. Dazzling, colourful, with the tempting smells of a variety of ethnic cuisines everywhere: it's a delightful experience to be in the community of Skyview, for example, when the outdoor festivals are under way. I would invite everyone in this Chamber to join me sometime this summer to attend one of these events.

But, alas, Mr. Speaker, it's not all festivals and fragrant foods; with the arrival of so many newcomers in the area also comes a real problem of underemployment. There are many, many highly qualified and educated individuals who are working in jobs that are not commensurate with their skills and potential, exactly the same situation that my father faced when he came to Canada many years ago. This is why I'm immeasurably proud of our Alberta advantage immigration strategy, particularly the fairness for newcomers program, which my colleague the Member for Calgary-North, the parliamentary secretary of immigration, is helping design. This program will help newcomers achieve their dreams of actually working in the fields that they studied and trained in.

On the west side of Calgary-North East we have Coventry Hills and Harvest Hills, the heart of the Northern Hills community, which is now divided amongst several electoral districts. While the heart of the Northern Hills community still resides within my riding, so does the steely spine of the community, as demonstrated by the passionate advocacy positions held by community members. These advocates have created strong and stirring dialogue on much-needed infrastructure in the area: the north Calgary high school, the green line, a health centre, and more. This is an area of strong community pride, beautifully exemplified by the creation of the Northern Hills mural, the longest outdoor mural in Canada, reflecting the values of community, for community.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

My job as an elected public servant is to speak for all of the constituents, to make their collective dreams for Calgary-North East come true, and the dreams are simple wishes indeed: schools

and school buses, access to public transportation, fairness to newcomers, and, most of all – most of all – a revitalized economy that provides employment opportunities now and for future generations.

As an oil and gas worker for over 23 years I would be remiss not to speak of the industry that I love and that has given me and my family and indeed our province and our nation so much. I have seen times of great prosperity in the sector and, in more recent times, the severe lows. I know what it's like to lay off staff. It's a terrible experience, and it stays with you for a long time because you never stop worrying about those families. I was by my daughter's side when she lost her job as a reservoir engineer due to the closure of her head office. I can tell you that it's another tragedy that we are not seeing enough young, bright faces of new graduates in downtown Calgary or Edmonton. We're just seeing a sea of vacant office spaces.

Let's talk about some facts. As a country we are blessed to have the extraordinary gift of plentiful natural resources, including hydrocarbons. We have the third-largest oil reserves in the world, and we are the world leaders in producing and exporting our products. The vast majority are from Alberta. What is not spoken of often enough is the diversity of our products. We have dry natural gas; light, medium, and heavy oil; oil sands; condensates; and more. I only mention this because diversity in product is going to become more important to meet changing demands as time goes by in our economy.

We also know that world oil demand is going to increase, some credible numbers suggest, by 30 per cent beyond 2040, and Alberta must be the leader in meeting this demand. Our government is committed to putting our province on a trajectory to make sure this happens, as am I.

5:00

I'd like to talk a bit about the people I've worked with over the years: engineers, accountants, geophysicists, geologists, petrophysicists, support staff, economists, HR specialists. These are people who care about economic prosperity and the environment. They are parents and grandparents who provide for their families and understand that these goals are not mutually exclusive but are, in fact, complementary.

Alberta also plays a prominent role in innovation and the creation of new technology designed to curb carbon and methane emissions. We need to create the conditions to further unleash this innovation so that our oil and gas sector can export these new technologies internationally to help curb global GHG emissions.

I've also had the opportunity to travel and see the operations of oil and gas fields in other international jurisdictions, including eastern Europe. In this province I've been to Taber, High Level, Steen River, and other areas, and I can tell you that Canada, Alberta are, head and shoulders, a leader in the ethical production of oil and gas. There really is no other comparison to any other jurisdiction in the world. I've seen it with my own eyes.

As we move forward to heal and advance Alberta's interests in our energy sector and economy, I'm also deeply cognizant of the vulnerable members in our province. As the new Minister of Community and Social Services the numbers of Albertans who rely on us to help improve their lives are significant. We have over 60,000 AISH recipients. These are not just unknown faces or unknown names. A few of them are family members with disabilities who go to work every day with smiles on their faces. We have thousands of families who rely on the PDD program and the FSCD program. We have unknown numbers of Albertans experiencing homelessness, domestic and/or sexual violence, and

we have folks dealing with tough times who just need a helping hand.

I want nothing more than to see prosperity return to this province so that as a government we can do more to provide vital social services to the most needy, the most vulnerable in our communities. There's a whole lot of work ahead of us, and this work is not going to be easy – it's going to be back-breaking at times – but we have a talented, experienced, and motivated team that is focused on the task at hand.

I know that I speak for all of my colleagues, Madam Speaker, when I repeat the words that I said at the outset. It will take time, patience, sustained effort, and a willingness to take risks to realize the dreams and goals for our province. As for myself, I know that I have a very specific job as a team member of this government to do my part and, as always, to go above and beyond to fulfill my duties. I will fulfill my duties by working with everyone in this Chamber, and I would like to offer a heartfelt and sincere thank you to each and every one in this House for their commitment and service to the province of Alberta.

My final statement is one of hope and optimism; as we say in the Sikh tradition, to be in a state of *chardi kala*. This term, *chardi kala*, embodies the notion that even in times of adversity and times that challenge us emotionally and physically we must always aspire to maintain our optimism and joy because that is what will determine a positive path forward for all of us to fulfill our dreams.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: I will recognize the Member for Calgary-West.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you very much, and thank you to the minister for those comments. It was an excellent speech. You know, I've been trying to make sure that all members in the House, of course, get their maiden speeches done. I think it's very, very important. I remember five years ago myself, when I did my first maiden speech, putting in the thought and recognizing my constituents, recognizing the people that came before me, recognizing family. Minister, I think you hit the nail on the head there. So very proud of that.

The minister touched a little bit about her constituency of Calgary-North East. I had an opportunity one time many, many years ago to be the incident commander, the sergeant, in charge of that particular area. It is an extremely ethnically diverse riding. She is of Sikh origin. And I can tell you that there are certain communities there – and when I say communities, I mean entire neighbourhoods – that are of one specific cultural group, which is great. But, you know, from a policing perspective it also provides us challenges in the policing world.

I can tell you that, you know, this minister is the right person for that area. The way she's able to articulate, respond to the needs of the community members, especially in her position that she currently holds, ensuring that the needs of that community that she represents are also reflected in government and in this Chamber: for that, I am certainly proud to know her and proud to call her a friend.

You know, another thing with Calgary-North East. We touched on the diverse population there. But I'd like the minister to maybe expand a little bit, especially in her short time here not just as a minister but, I mean, as the MLA for Calgary-North East, on some of the we'll call it demands on your time – right? – to be a part of groups or to be a part of events that occur almost virtually every weekend, sometimes Friday, Saturday, Sunday, sometimes in the mornings and the evenings, and kind of finding that balance between representing the people in that neighbourhood as well as making sure that you have time for your kids and your husband and

the family that you're a part of. Maybe you can touch a little bit about the excitement and challenges and the way you're able to find that work-life balance.

Thank you.

Mrs. Sawhney: Thank you for the question. It sounds like this is a question about work-life balance, which is something that a lot of people struggle with on a daily basis. But, certainly, I feel very privileged that I'm in the position that I'm in now. There are a lot of demands on time, and the constituency of Calgary-North East, as was mentioned by the member, is very diverse. It's not only ethnically diverse, but it's also diverse in the sense that we have communities that are only a decade old on one side of a major highway, and then on the other side of the major highway we have communities that have been there for over 35 to 40 years. Sometimes you're looking at different kinds of community events that you have to be present at on either side of the highway.

I do have four children – I did mention that – and one of the ways that I balance my time is that with any event that I go to, any one of the four kids actually attends with me. Not only is it a great educational opportunity for my children, but it's also a way for me to be present for my constituents at some of these very important cultural events that are ongoing. Certainly, this upcoming weekend is filled with all kinds of events. There is going to be some celebration of Eid events, and there's also going to be some community association events. Luckily, my family is very flexible in this regard, and my children are happy to accompany me.

Thank you.

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

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the speech. I remember actually that it's a little bit difficult sometimes to stand up and do it for the first time, so good job. I had a question for you. I certainly understand that it's important to be able to walk and chew gum at the same time, so to be able to work on creating employment...

The Deputy Speaker: Sorry, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism.

Ms Fir: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to respond to the Speech from the Throne, and I would also like to congratulate you on your election as Deputy Speaker. It is also my first speech in this esteemed Chamber. I stand here today thanks to the trust and hopes of the voters of Calgary-Peigan. They endorsed me and selected me to represent them here in this Chamber, and I am honoured to stand here on their behalf.

Before I begin, I would like to thank some people: my incredible family and friends. But for them, I would not be here today. Their tireless volunteering and hours that they donated in helping support me throughout my election campaign I will forever be grateful for.

5:10

As many of my other colleagues have mentioned, I too come from a hard-working immigrant home. My parents immigrated to Canada from what was then Yugoslavia and is now Slovenia, seeking a better life for themselves and their future children. They came here with the desire to work hard, and they did that from the very beginning. My father was a carpenter, and my mother initially worked many years as a waitress before working very hard in the meat department at a grocery store, which she still works at today.

The greatest character trait they taught my two sisters and I through example was that there is no substitute for hard work.

While I was born in Cranbrook, B.C., we moved to Calgary when my sisters and I were very young because there was not enough work for my father to be employed full-time as a carpenter. Rather than sit back and do nothing, they went to where the work was, and that was in Calgary. I'm so glad we did land in Calgary. I worked hard to earn my bachelor of commerce degree at the University of Calgary and proudly spent my career in the oil and gas industry, an industry that I'm so proud of for having the highest standards in the world for clean, safe, ethical operations, reclamation standards, and human rights standards. I'm so proud to work in that industry.

As the Premier said on the day our caucus was sworn in, we must not forget that it is a deep privilege to govern and serve on behalf of all Albertans.

My riding is a new riding in southeast Calgary called Calgary-Peigan, and it is made up of four other ridings. A large part of it was part of Calgary-Hays, Calgary-South East, Calgary-Acadia, and the former Calgary-Fort. I'm honoured to have, as I mentioned, a large part of my riding formerly be in the Calgary-Hays riding, which my fellow member and the Minister of Transportation was the MLA for. It encompasses the communities of McKenzie, Douglasdale, DouglasGlen, Quarry Park, Riverbend, Millican, Lynnwood, Ogdén, and Dover. I've gotten to know the amazing and diverse constituents of this riding through knocking on thousands of doors and listening to their issues and their concerns.

To stand in this Chamber is to stand in the legacy of those who have gone before us, to stand in the same room where Alexander Rutherford stood to establish the University of Alberta or where Arthur Sifton fought for control over our province's natural resources, a fight that continues to this day. This is the Chamber where Ernest Manning served as our province's Premier for 25 years and where Peter Lougheed formed a government that lasted longer than any other in Canadian history. It is a huge responsibility and a near-unique privilege.

Our government received the largest voter endorsement in our province's history. We received more votes than any successfully elected political party in the 114 years that Alberta has been part of Confederation. Albertans overwhelmingly voted for positive change from the previous government. With record voter turnout, 55 per cent of the vote, and the most votes cast for a single party in Alberta history, we have a historic mandate to get Alberta back on track. We will grow jobs, grow the economy, and stand up for a fair deal for Alberta.

We've already seen signs of hope in that regard. With the Senate transport committee rejecting Bill C-48 and the Senate making hundreds of amendments to federal Bill C-69, Albertans are once again being heard in Ottawa. This is a tremendous honour. It is also a tremendous responsibility as we face the adversity present in Alberta's economy and the task of undoing the damage to our fiscal and economic situation perpetrated by the previous government.

A story that often comes to mind for me is that when I was door-knocking – and I had been door-knocking for over a year and a half – I remember coming across a home in one of the communities and speaking to the homeowner, who was very emotional and wasn't sure how much longer he and his family would be able to hang on. He had been unemployed for a while, and he was hoping he could just hang on until the election and see the outcome. Well, months later, when I came across that home again to knock on the door, there was a for-sale sign on the front lawn and a lockbox on the front door. While that initially caused me to be very upset, it strengthened me and steeled me to continue door-knocking and continue to work hard so that we could eliminate others that were going to face that uncertain future.

With the election of our government, help is on the way, and hope is on the horizon. This throne speech marks a spring session of renewal. I am proud to be part of a team that will be obsessed with job creation, driving investment, and showing the world that Alberta is open for business. This is part of my mandate as Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism. My mandate is to return our province to the proud tradition of a free-enterprise economy, with opportunity for all.

Our government will develop a smarter approach to innovation. Under our mandate Alberta will become a global hub for cutting-edge technology. We are creating the best business environment in Canada. Alberta is open for business, and we are working to ensure that businesses across Canada and around the world know that Alberta is the most attractive place in North America for creating jobs and investing. In doing so, we are sending a new message across Canada and around the world with our election that Alberta is open for business.

Our tourism sector is going to be a key part of that mandate. Our government knows that a strong tourism industry creates jobs and economic growth in Alberta. That's why we're going to build a 10-year tourism strategy to help grow the sector and bring in more investment. We'll be looking for innovative ways like private-sector partnerships to promote and market tourism, with the goal to double tourism investment in our province, to \$20 billion, by 2030. We're going to cut red tape and streamline the rules and regulations that impede tourism investment and development, and we're going to work hard to show that Alberta is open for business.

We will attract more flights to Alberta. These flights will bring more tourists and investors to our province and support Alberta businesses who want to explore new opportunities in key markets around the world. We will work every day to make Alberta the best place in North America to live, work, start a business, and raise a family.

We have a positive, common-sense plan to get our economy back on track and renew the Alberta advantage. We will be sending a clear message to our partners across Canada and around the world: invest here; innovate here; we are open for business. Over our four-year mandate we will cut red tape on job creators by one-third.

Our very first piece of legislation removes the disastrous carbon tax, the largest tax cut in Alberta's history, and this repeal will create at least 6,000 new jobs and put money back into the pockets of families and job creators.

Our second piece of legislation will restore the secret ballot and balance to Alberta's labour laws. Restoring workplace democracy and bringing balance to labour laws is just one of many initiatives to help workers and get job creators investing in Alberta again.

As our third piece of business we are lowering the tax on employers to the lowest in the country, creating at least 55,000 jobs and growing the economy by almost \$13 billion, a marked difference from the previous government, which raised taxes on job creators by 20 per cent on day one. This is a marked difference from the previous government. In the last few months of the former government's term nearly 200,000 Albertans were out of work, office vacancies in Calgary and Edmonton continued to climb, and Alberta was headed towards \$100 billion in debt.

Our GDP growth continues to lag behind many other provinces. Wage growth was lower than the national average under the previous government, and many forecasters expect Alberta's GDP to be among the slowest growing in 2019. Our efforts won't reverse the trends overnight, but we will take bold, decisive steps to improve Alberta's competitiveness and reduce the burden on our job creators. We are going to turn that around. We are going to renew Alberta's economy and restore our status as the economic

engine of Canada, we are going to get a fair deal for our resources, and we are going to get Albertans back to work.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Comments and questions under 29(2)(a)?
The hon. Minister of Transportation.

5:20

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for her speech. I think it's a message of hope and renewal and a message of looking towards the future. I can tell you that the hon. member worked very hard to get herself elected and put her heart and soul into this. I know that in several ways.

The hon. member came and talked to me early on in the process, even before her nomination. Thereafter we actually shared a campaign office along with the hon. Member for Calgary-South East. The three of us kind of coexisted in a campaign office, and to this day we're coexisting. She's in the midst now of evicting me from my constituency office, which will become her constituency office, but between now and the time that I'm fully evicted, she's been generous enough to let me camp out there while I'm looking for a new location.

Madam Speaker, in hearing the hon. member's speech, I know how proud she is of her parents and her family and how hard they have worked along the way for her. Also, this hon. member has experience in the energy sector. With all of that, how do you see, you know, your experience growing up in that immigrant family and your experience working in the energy sector? What are you going to take from that that's going to make the biggest difference not only as an MLA but also in your role as the minister of economic development and tourism? Where do you see the strengths that are going to help you the most, and if you want to comment, what do you need to learn?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister of economic development and tourism.

Ms Fir: Thank you, and thank you for the question. Madam Speaker, as I mentioned, the greatest thing I learned from my parents was that there is no substitute for hard work. They were able to provide a comfortable – not lavish or extravagant but comfortable – safe upbringing for myself and my two sisters just through their hard work. They were so grateful to be able to come to this country, and from the day they landed, their two goals were to immediately learn the language – proudly maintain their current cultural heritage but learn the new language – and immediately get to work at jobs where they could contribute and be self-sufficient for themselves until they could master the English language and then, in my father's case, go on to carpentry school and, in my mother's case, do progressively more challenging service-level jobs as she mastered English.

What they taught through their example was that through hard work, not necessarily through luck or gifts or help but through hard work, you could provide for yourself and your family. My sisters and I, from the day we were old enough to have jobs, whether it was babysitting or cutting lawns or gardening for neighbours, paid our own way throughout high school and university. It's that type of hard-work ethic that I hope to bring to the role of Member of the Legislative Assembly for the constituents of Calgary-Peigan.

It is such an unbelievable honour to be able to sit in this Chamber and be a voice for my constituents and to have the incredible honour and privilege to be selected as Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism, where I have the amazing opportunity and honour to be able to represent and sell Alberta to the world: to the rest of Alberta, to the rest of Canada, and globally to the world. I

am so proud of this province and the hard work that Albertans exemplify, the quiet confidence that Albertans have, the generosity that we have to our neighbours both within our cities, our towns, and across the country.

With respect to my career in the private sector, having spent my career as a human resources adviser in the private sector for almost 20 years, I hope to be able to bring the skills of collaboration and problem solving and working with others and respect and kindness for others but also be willing to make those fair, tough decisions when need be. I hope to be able to bring that to the role of MLA.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain.

Mr. Turton: Yes. Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you, all, for the opportunity and the privilege to stand in response to the Speech from the Throne. With gratitude I recognize the delivery of a plan for Alberta by the Honourable Lieutenant Governor, Lois Mitchell. I'm honoured to represent the people of both Spruce Grove and Stony Plain in this capacity under the leadership of the hon. Premier, Jason Kenney.

First, I wish to acknowledge the vibrant history and culture of indigenous nations here in Canada. I also wish to recognize that the land upon which my constituency resides is home to our closest neighbours, the Cree and the Nakota. This area of Treaty 6 territory is also home to the Métis nation and many other indigenous groups. I wish to acknowledge the unique story of this land by continuing to work towards strengthening relations with neighbouring indigenous communities, which include the Enoch First Nation to the east of my riding and the Paul band First Nation to the west.

I would like to congratulate all the new and re-elected MLAs. It's clear that democracy in our province continues to prevail, and I'm confident that the people of Alberta will be served by our new government in a manner that is representative of the values of Albertans. I'd be remiss if I didn't thank the people of Spruce Grove and Stony Plain, who elected me to this seat, entrusting me with their voice in this Chamber, and I hope that my words and actions here might represent them well.

The constituency I serve has seen shifts in its physical boundaries, but one thing that has remained constant since 1905, when we were first created, is our values of hard work, entrepreneurship, and dedication to family, and these traits have defined this riding since the two communities came into existence over a hundred years ago. The constituency of Spruce Grove-Stony Plain is rich with history and tradition. While our constituency is only a couple of minutes west of Edmonton, we have a unique history derived from the strong agricultural roots of the families that settled this area well over a hundred years ago. This deep agricultural heritage continues to show itself with our vibrant agricultural societies in Spruce Grove, which hosts one of the few standing wooden grain elevators west of Edmonton, along with cultural destinations like the Pioneer Museum and the multicultural centre located in Stony Plain.

Stony Plain, one of the communities in my riding, prides itself on being a town with a painted past, and this is shown by the proliferation of murals gracing our downtown core, showcasing local artists and our strong historical connections. The rich, vibrant character that Stony Plain is based upon is a result of the hard-working original families that settled this area, many of which still reside in Stony Plain.

While Stony Plain has deep agricultural roots, it continues to look outwards as well by partnering with the town of Shikaoi, Japan, as one of the dozens of communities around Alberta participating in the community twinning program. This initiative provides the

residents of both Shikaoi and Stony Plain with the opportunity to experience and learn about different cultures, to the betterment of all of our residents. This has continued to grow and strengthen throughout the years, providing a unique and innovative way to build community. Our Shikaoi park in Stony Plain continues to be a community gathering place for residents throughout the area and truly is a gem to our town. It exhibits the belief in communal co-operation that the municipalities in my riding exemplify and showcase so well.

The city of Spruce Grove, which forms two-thirds of my riding, continues to be one of the fastest growing communities in Canada, with one of the youngest average ages in the province. This community prides itself as a vibrant commercial centre, and its excellent recreational facilities are the envy of many communities throughout the province. Facilities like the Border Paving Athletic Centre, the Fuhr Sports Park, and the TransAlta Tri Leisure Centre continue to offer enhanced recreational opportunities that are not found in many other mid-sized communities.

[Mr. Hanson in the chair]

Mr. Speaker, you'd find it interesting that, outside of Edmonton and Calgary, there's nowhere else in the province that has two separate communities of this size that are as interconnected as the communities of Spruce Grove and Stony Plain. Our riding is a strong example of the municipal co-operation displayed throughout Alberta and continues to showcase our strong ties with our regional neighbour, Parkland county. The two communities of Spruce Grove and Stony Plain partner repeatedly with Parkland county on our joint initiatives such as the TransAlta Tri Leisure Centre, which receives over a million visitors every year, and the Stony Plain heritage pavilion, which seats over 500 people and hosts numerous community events every single year. These two great initiatives are perfect examples of how our region understands that we are stronger when we work together, and I look forward to strengthening those bonds with our community groups for the betterment of everyone in Spruce Grove and Stony Plain.

5:30

Not only do we work to enhance our cultural and recreational options as a region, but the two communities continue to work together on new projects such as the new integrated RCMP facility, which will open soon, as well as enhanced transportation connections which bring our residents to the core of Edmonton. These projects enhance the quality of life for everyone in my riding.

Mr. Speaker, it's not only among our local municipalities that there have been strong levels of co-operation. One area where I see an opportunity for relationship building is with our First Nations neighbours, particularly the Enoch Cree nation to the east and Paul band nation to the west. We made positive strides in the past to build trust and strengthen this relationship, and I welcome the opportunity to continue dialogue about how all of our residents can prosper. I am pleased to say that every year Stony Plain holds an event called Aboriginal Day, which is a growing celebration showcasing First Nations culture, with visitors from all over northern Alberta attending.

The relationship between my riding of Spruce Grove-Stony Plain and the proud Enoch Cree nation will be strengthened with infrastructure projects such as an enhanced highway 628, which is a major need for the residents west of Edmonton. I look forward to continuing to promote projects like this moving forward, which will reap rewards for all of our residents. This government has made it a priority to enhance the opportunity for shared prosperity with our First Nations. Improvements to infrastructure that will allow our neighbours in Enoch Cree nation and Paul band First Nation access

to jobs and markets are a major step towards realizing their economic potential.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Spruce Grove and Stony Plain is an area that I know very, very well. My parents and family came to this area over 20 years ago, and I graduated from a local high school in Spruce Grove called St. Thomas Aquinas. Because it's such an amazing community, I've chosen to raise my own family in this incredible area that has given so much to me. Over the last eight years I've had the privilege of serving as a city councillor for the city of Spruce Grove, and I understand the challenges that face my riding.

You know, representing two young communities means that education is always top of mind with parents and families, and I'm proud to say that my riding is a showcase of educational choice. On top of our two local school boards we have a vibrant home-school program and two dynamic and growing private Christian schools to provide parents in my riding with ample opportunities to have their choice of school, which I am thankful our government will continue to support.

Our riding will have to deal with the after-effects of the previous government and their accelerated coal phase-out. There have been real, negative effects to hundreds of families in my riding who relied on work at the coal-fired power plants west of my riding, at Genesee, Keephills, and Sundance sites, to pay their bills and to pay their mortgages. As a dual-ticketed tradesman that worked at those individual sites for many, many years, I understand the negative impact that the accelerated coal phase-out by the previous government has had on families in my riding.

Diversity is a major factor, both culturally and economically, and it's vital we maintain this awareness when looking to the future. How we approach serving the needs of my constituents will be greatly impacted by this ever-increasing complexity and will require innovative, thoughtful decisions that will provide for long-lasting and sustainable solutions. We must allow ourselves the creativity and imagination to think beyond the next four years. This is how our community and all Albertans will flourish, no matter what challenges we face moving forward.

That is why, Madam Speaker, I am proud of the decision by NAIT to have one of its satellite campuses locate to Spruce Grove to provide enhanced educational opportunities for Albertans who want to learn blue-collar trades. I would also like to commend the councils of Spruce Grove and Stony Plain for looking at options such as enhanced library services and fibre-optic cable for high-speed Internet to ensure that the youth in my riding continue to have access to digital roadways to help them in the future.

Madam Speaker, our riding of Spruce Grove-Stony Plain is a diverse riding that has a rich history of hard work, entrepreneurship, and working with our neighbours. It is a privilege to serve this incredible riding, and I would like to thank this Chamber for allowing me to tell a little bit about the area that I am proud to call home.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Horner: Yes. Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd like to commend the Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain for a great maiden speech, response to the throne speech. It resonated with me when he was speaking to the effects of the accelerated coal phase-out – in my riding of Drumheller-Stettler we have two coal-fired power plants – and the issues and struggles associated with the

people working there, that continue to work there, attempting to become retrained and repositioned to maybe working in a different field. It puts a lot of pressure on the entire town and community. I'd appreciate hearing more about that and hearing about his experience working in those great plants. I know that when I toured those facilities, I was blown away by the pride and what a great career and workplace that can be, so I'd love to hear more about that.

I'd also like to hear a little more about the trades background. I know that within our platform we have a lot of direction and priority towards the trades. I think we lose 3,000 skilled tradespeople every year till 2025 that we can't replace. Maybe the Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain could speak to that and that direction and priority from this new government.

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

Mr. Turton: Yes. Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you to the Member for Drumheller-Stettler for asking the question. I know this may surprise many of the members here given my calm, shy attitude, but coming out of high school I wanted to be an actor. I remember discussing it with my parents at the time. I put forward on the table that I wanted to go to Montreal for acting school, and my parents put on the table that, you know, they wanted me to take up a trade and work the oil patch. We took a vote about it, and then I went and got a trade and worked in the oil patch because you got to listen to mom and dad or else you're going to pay rent.

I'm proud to say that I have a long history of working in the trades. I'm a dual-ticketed tradesman – a journeyman carpenter, a journeyman scaffolder – and I have worked at every industrial site as a member of the carpenters' union, from Shell Scotford in the Industrial Heartland all the way out to Genesee power plant. So I've a lot of experience working in the trades, Madam Speaker.

I'm also proud to say that in 1999 my very first industrial construction job was actually at the Genesee power plant. I remember going there as a second-year scaffolder, all excited to begin this new path in my working career, and stepping out on the 14th floor in the boiler house and looking down between the catwalks and all you see is space, 14 storeys of air, and being so scared, thinking that somehow I was going to, you know, fall through the grating that was holding up all this large equipment.

You know, the trades have provided for my family for so many years. When I would go through those plants at Genesee, Sundance, and Keephills, all I talked about with people from Edmonton was wanting to pay their mortgage for their family. At the 2007 expansion, K3, which was the purest example of the best technology that power plants had, there were over 30 or 40 busloads of workers from all over the Edmonton area going to work at that site. You know, it's had a major impact.

When I was door-knocking even this last election, I'd come across people in their homes, and they'd say: "You know what, Searle? We knew that the coal phase-out was going to happen. We knew that the federal government had put in place 2029, 2030. We knew the end of coal was going to happen. What we didn't expect was the accelerated coal phase-out to happen." That was the part that caught families in my riding off guard. They thought they had 12, 13, 14 years to be able to plan for this. It was a pragmatic phase-out from coal to natural gas. Private enterprise was going to pay for that investment. The workers knew this was going to happen. The larger companies, TransAlta and Capital Power, knew the long transition that was going to be happening. Everyone was on the same page. But when the previous government was first elected in 2015, what workers didn't know was that within 24 months they would have to deal with the reality that hundreds and hundreds of

layoffs were going to have to happen in those areas. It caught families off guard.

I remember, Madam Speaker, coming across one house, and there was a young mom. She said: you know what, Searle? I guess I just said my name. I don't know if that's allowed. Anyways, she said: you know, Searle, I'm a broken household. I guess I did it again.

An Hon. Member: Twice, hon. member.

Mr. Turton: Yes, I know. I'll pay the price afterwards. She said: I'm a broken home now because . . .

5:40

The Deputy Speaker: The clock has saved you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. minister from West Yellowhead.

Mr. Getson: Just member, but thank you for giving me a quick promotion on the spot.

The Deputy Speaker: Pardon me. The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

Mr. Getson: Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the chance to rise here and also for your help and guidance for myself and the other greenhand MLAs that are here. I'd also like to thank our Premier for his vision and determination in merging these two strong-willed political parties and, might I add, pulling together some of the highest qualified and hardest working Albertans that this Assembly has seen in some time. I'd like to thank fellow MLAs for setting aside your personal lives, too, and serving all Albertans regardless of the political party that you belong to.

Most of all, I'd like to thank the folks in Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland for giving me that job interview, for telling me what matters to you, and hiring me to be your voice in this great place for the next four years. Thanks to all the volunteers that stepped forward out of the woodwork to prop up this farm kid from out west and get me to this place. My wife, Lara, and our four amazing kids – I better read their names right – Leif, Roen, Faith, and Cora: thanks for giving me your permission to step forward and help out our friends and family at this time.

As you can tell, I'm about as nervous as a long-tailed cat in a room full of rocking chairs. It's not normally because of speaking in front of people; it's just the reverence for this place, for what it kind of sets out, the importance that we have here and the impacts that we can make on everyone's lives.

I'd like to talk about my constituency, if I may, and tell you a little about the people there and what we have and why I'm honoured to represent them. We're located on the borders of everything with the redraws here. We're located on the border of Morinville, St. Albert, Edmonton. Highway 2 is our border to the east, and highway 16 is our border to the south, with the exception of Lake Wabamun, where we duck a little bit south. We go as far as highway 22 out towards Entwistle and Evansburg, and we pick up all of Mayerthorpe and Green Court.

We're proud to call the three First Nations reserves there – the Paul, the Alexander, and the Alexis – fellow Albertans, friends, neighbours, and partners in building a better Alberta together.

We have two airports, one located in Villeneuve, which is home to the Edmonton Airshow – if anyone wants to partake in that and you're in my area, come on out and I'll buy you a beverage – and a smaller one located up in Mayerthorpe, a smaller strip there. In our constituency we have the honour of holding the most summer villages, 17 in total. Our constituency includes Lake Wabamun,

Lake Isle, Lake Nakamun, Lac Ste. Anne, which is sacred to the local folks and has been a national historic site for a number of years, along with the Sturgeon, Paddle, and Pembina rivers. We have two distinct, notable historic bridges. The Pembina train trestle crosses the Pembina River between Entwistle and highway 16, and up in Sangudo there's another large, free-standing structure that's quite notable.

We also have two Hutterite communities that call our area home, and that's the Rocfort colony as well as the Morinville colony. There are also a number of seniors' lodges in our area that provide really good homes. We're going to have to talk about the needs of our aging population because these folks are the glue that holds our families in a lot of our small towns together. We have a lot of long-standing families that can trace their heritage back to the founding fathers of these communities and, in fact, the province of Alberta itself.

There's a vast array of people that live out in Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland. They've got lake-lot living, summer villages, small towns, villages, acreages, estates, modular home parks, rural retreats, farming. The topography – and I'm going to tell you: a little part of God's country out here – varies. You've got rolling topography, grassy hills, lakes, rivers. You've got access to larger major urban centres. There are fertile flatlands in the east, which are used for grain production, seed potatoes, hay production, especially crops. Of course, we talked about the agriculture as far as the cattle, and, I might add, some of the best families are producing some of the best breeding stock you can find right from that area.

I've seen first-hand the community spirit of folks stepping in to help out other communities or other members who are failing and have done everything to bring attention to try to raise funds to keep what they have. I can't tell you how many local community groups and ag societies do their part to keep these places and functions in service. They are the glue for their areas, great organizations such as the air cadets, the dance groups, lots of sports leagues, the 4-H clubs. They keep all the parents and the kids busy. There are rodeos, hockey tournaments, festivals, and other community events. There's a bit of a unique event as well. Every year the town of Evansburg nominates the town grouch. When you get a badge put on your chest for being the most cantankerous in the area, make no mistake, Madam Speaker, folks in my constituency are not afraid of speaking their mind.

The industries and the pillars in the economy in the great Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland are diverse. We have agriculture, manufacturing, construction, forestry, mining, coal power generation, a new frac sand wash plant for industry, technology, and even aerospace out of the Villeneuve airport, of course registries, insurance agents, medical services, grocers, and all the other service industries. I'd like to highlight the importance that the small restaurants still play. There are not a bunch of food chains out in our area. There are still the family owned-operated businesses. There are still the coffee shops where farmers and locals will gather together at 6 a.m. to hold senate in their own committees to share what matters to them, and this is where I met probably most of the people in the area, with genuine stories.

You know, I found it interesting that when I grew up, I was always told a bunch of things. You're always told to do things: work hard, be honest, treat others with respect, judge a person by his character, live and let live. Also, don't bother people at their homes, at their work. Don't bug them on the phone or in person. Never bug someone when they're trying to enjoy a meal, don't ask for money, don't brag, be self-reliant, and stand up for yourself, your family, and your friends. Most of this room realizes that when that goes into a campaign, it kind of contradicts most of those lessons that were

taught to you, so you're knocking on peoples' doors, you're phoning them, you're bothering them at work, you're bothering them when they're having a meal, and you're showing up to shake hands and take pictures and show yourself off.

I realize now that there was a wisdom in that process. I never would have been able to meet as many people as I did or connect with them in that personal way unless I broke down those boundaries, that comfort zone. I was even convinced to put a truck rack on my truck so I could be seen by everybody driving down the highways.

The everyday people of Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland have concerns, and here are some of them that I heard throughout the campaign. Too many people are out of work for some time or face a large reduction in hours. Owner-operators can't hit their margins. They're dealing with higher operating costs, input costs, and just trying to keep alive. Annual rent cost increases for the folks out in Parkland Village, \$50 a year, may not seem like much, but right now it means an awful lot. The premature phase-out of coal-fired power generation – this is a quote from one of the truck drivers I met early in the morning. People in my area: they don't want handouts, just for a government that lets me get to work and stops picking my pockets while simultaneously choking out the industries that I work for.

I met seniors on fixed incomes that turned their heat down as low as possible during the cold snap back in February. They were no longer able to buy what they called "good groceries" and decided how cold they could get the house down to. I saw kids crying and upset in school, wondering where mom and dad were going to be and if they had a job or a home to go back to.

I heard from small-business owners. Their returns were diminished. They were just trying to keep things alive and not taking an income for themselves for a couple years and managing to keep the two or three employees they have.

I heard that too many people were heading out of the province or out of the country, where our industries are respected and still wanted and our service is still required, as we've heard here earlier in the day.

I've heard lots about the education, the fact that we need high-speed Internet access, the fact that we need to get back to basics, and that transportation costs for moving our kids around the rural areas are pretty tough. Like many other members I've heard about rural crime: response times and severity of the incidents are increasing, the acreage owners' rights, the farmers' rights, and what they can do to protect their friends and families and their neighbours when they're an hour or more away from the nearest police station.

You know, I reviewed several other members that came before me in their maiden speeches, and it was pretty interesting to hear that some of those folks, too, had that same reverence for this place and were also tongue-tied and nervous the first time they were saying it. There were some common themes that also rippled through here from our area. They still had concerns over the economy, the roads, the education, the agriculture sector. A lot of these things have improved since their time, so I know for sure that their voices were heard here and that our area was valued as part of the fabric that makes up Alberta.

We still need, however, more help. Not a handout; we need help to help drive the economic engine of our province. A large majority of the folks in my area are true patriots, captains of their industries. They are the types that hold so many of these communities together. These are the men and women that are contributors to this economy but also the social fabric and overall well-being of our province.

I'm proud to note that our region has also produced some notable figures here. Again, 13 ministers came from our areas, notable ones Peter Trynchy, Frederick Lindsay, George VanderBurg, and most

recently Oneil Carlier; two Deputy Premiers – they happen to be Horners, so there is a Horner in every corner – one Speaker of the House, Mr. Ken Kowalski; and three Deputy Speakers and chairs. I'd like to particularly mention Mr. Kowalski and Mr. Lindsay and also Mr. Purdy, who had offered me support and advice during the campaign.

5:50

I'm told by my constituents that they can relate to me because of the journey I've taken to get to this point in my life. I grew up on a farm, worked in the forestry sector, worked with a small road paving company, went to college, got a job with a larger contractor, worked across Canada, helped to build mines and fibre-optic networks. I worked on industrial projects in the energy sector, wind farms, tankage, transshipment facilities, and yes, pipelines from here all the way down to Chicago.

I've also started a small consulting firm and taken the knowledge that I learned from the construction side of things and worked for companies such as Encana, Cenovus, TransCanada, and at Enbridge. While I may have gone to NAIT and become a civil engineering technologist, I can tell you first-hand that I went to the university of Enbridge. That's where I got very involved in those projects and how to run and manage people. I'm also a private pilot, a farm kid at heart, and a family man who's immensely proud and protective of his wife and children. I will never forget where I came from or the value of a dollar.

When I was travelling the U.S. and explaining to folks where I was from, I'd tell them it was Alberta, and when they needed a point of reference, I'd tell them it was Texas north. Everyone knows you don't mess with Texas. I think we Albertans had that same persona, and we need to reclaim it again. Our provincial motto is strong and free for a reason. Our forefathers nailed it. That is who we are, and that's the blood that runs through our veins.

During my travels over the years I read many books, trying to get even more knowledge from history and those other great leaders and conflicts that have gone before us and how they resolved those and how they took care of it. One that jumped off the shelf in an airport in Minneapolis was *Engineers of Victory*, and it was written by a man by the name of Paul Kennedy. It was his analysis of how the Allies won power over the Axis, and he did this great synopsis at the end. If I may, Madam Speaker, this is something that I posted on the walls of my office over the years and would like to share with the hall.

In sum, the winning of great wars always requires superior organization, and that in turn requires people who can run those organizations, not in a blinkered way but most competently and in a fashion that will allow outsiders to feed in fresh ideas into the pursuit of victory. None of this can be done by the chiefs alone, however great their genius, however [great] their energy. There has to be a support system, a culture of encouragement, efficient feedback loops, a capacity to learn from setbacks, [and the] ability to get things done. All of this must be done in a fashion that is better than the enemy's. That is how wars are won.

The second item I'd like to share with you is a famous poem that probably a lot of you have heard. It was in those times of solace where you needed to get back to reality and not see the hurdles for what they are but step away from them and see them as the opportunities that they could present. God grant me the serenity to accept the things that I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference. During my campaign I had a simple slogan that seemed to really resonate with the folks in my community. It was simple: Let's Take Our Province Back. We must now get to work on the commitments that we made to our Albertans.

Both of my grandfathers served in World War II and my great-grandfather before them in World War I. My grandpa Ophus was from North Dakota originally, and he chose Alberta as a place to settle. He received a call from a recruiter in the U.S., and it kind of went something like this, if I may digress. He never talked about the war very much, but this one kind of stuck out. Essentially, the recruiter was asking him to serve for the U.S. He was being recruited. He tried to stop and say that he couldn't. Well, the recruiter went off on him, and the dialogue got more and more forceful and finally to the point where he was going to put him in jail, et cetera, et cetera. My grandfather said: well, I can't. Finally, when the recruiter ran out of steam, he said: I can't because I already signed up for the Canadian military, and I'm deploying to Europe in two weeks. That's my family. That's where I come from. That is an Alberta story that resonates in our area.

My grandfathers volunteered to take bullets to defend our freedoms, to keep their loved ones safe, and to make sure that our way of life would never be taken from us. They laid down the groundwork of the foundations of our province with their sacrifice and hard work. At this moment in our province's history I heard the call to serve, not in quite the same way as my grandfathers did; I didn't have to face down bullets. But if I have to face the occasional jibe or joust in this room, I think that's okay, and that's fair game.

This province, my family, and my neighbours desperately needed a change after the years that we've been going through in the last four years and to allow this province to live up to its full potential. I'm very proud to serve this government in the UCP caucus with these noble Albertans that feel the same way about our province and who have committed to making a better future for their children and their families. I promise to do all I can for the people who believed in me and trusted me to represent them. I'll try to be their voice. The slow dance to socialism is over. I'll do my part to ensure that Alberta stays strong and free forever.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Ellis: Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the member for those comments. I believe that, you know, from what I've seen, he's certainly been a great representative for the people in his community, and I think he will continue to be a great representative for the people in his community.

You know, having been able to get to know the member over the last several weeks, especially in my role, of course, as the chief whip, I've already seen the passion to try and make the community a better place. I've seen the passion, as we're facing these challenging forest fires in northern Alberta right now, of him trying to come up with solutions that are going to help people to try to prevent forest fires from happening in the future. I think he touched on that with one of his questions he asked earlier today in question period.

You know, with that passion, of course, I know that this member spent a lot of time door-knocking and talking to constituents, really getting a pulse for that community which he represents, and I'd like for him to maybe just touch a little bit on some of the stories. I know that with all of us who door-knock always have those stories that really stick in our minds with that one person or multiple people that really kind of set us straight, that let us know the challenges that they're facing, whether it be the economy or some adverse policies that may have affected their livelihood, as an example.

Could the member please just let this House know about some of those wonderful, challenging stories that he's experienced? Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

Mr. Getson: Yes, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the question and the chance to speak freely and with candour on this.

There were a number of stories that jumped off the page. There are three that I'll share with you right offhand. Literally at 6 a.m. at the Onoway UFA I'm filling up my truck and another gentleman was filling up his rig, and again with that darn bubble wrap. People wouldn't have known who I was, traditionally, in this community, being as big as it is, and with the projects that I worked on in Canada and the U.S., I was always one of those folks that was gone and away from home.

This young gentleman comes over and says, "You're running for the UCP." I said, "Yup." He said, "What are your chances?" I said: "That's up to you. I'm just here trying to do what I can. It's up to you, and every vote counts in this one. Make no question, there's an ideological difference between capitalism and socialism, so I'm looking at you." He says: "Well, my dad and I have four different tractor-trailer units. We're a small group, and he's built it up over a couple of years. I'm running it." And he says, "You know, with this damn carbon tax we're running a margin so low that we would have put that money into maintenance on our trucks." He says: "We're down so low keeping two trucks running because the jobs are drying up. We can only run so much. We can only charge so much because of our running rates." He's the gentleman that said that comment about someone choking him while they're picking his

pocket. Quote, unquote: I don't want a damn handout; I just want to do my job. Those are the types of things happening in our area.

A senior citizen on a fixed income out in Alberta Beach – a proud man, a strong man, worked his whole life – comes up and talks about the impacts of the economy on his fixed income, the fact that he had to pick how cold he could take his house down to, the fact that he was too proud to go ask for handouts, never would in his life and wouldn't start now. The running joke that he said was: they give seniors a \$3 increase while they take another couple hundred dollars out of my bank every month. Those are the impacts that some of these potentially well-intentioned ideas about transference of tax going to save the environment have caused real people in these areas.

The premature phase-out of these coal plants. A number of mine workers, highly skilled people, very proficient in what they do, considering the technology that they had in place that members like Mr. Lindsay had brought forward before, where you could actually run these plants and have less NOx and SOx than you would if you ran them full on gas: prematurely phased out. These are real people moving and leaving our area or trying to find something else. It really impacts us. We might have the best intentions, but unless we do some analysis and make a business decision and base it on efficiencies and practicality . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but seeing the time, this House stands adjourned until 7:30 tonight.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6 p.m.]

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