



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
First Session

Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, November 5, 2019

Day 39

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta
The 30th Legislature

First Session

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Party standings:

United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, November 5, 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 to her government, to Members of the Legislative Assembly, and to all in positions of responsibility the guidance of Your spirit. May they never lead the province wrongly through love of power, desire to please, or unworthy ideas but, laying aside all private interests and prejudices, keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all. Amen.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Hon. members, we have a school group joining us in the gallery this afternoon all the way from Edmonton-City Centre, grade 9 students from Oliver school. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Also joining us in the galleries this afternoon are guests of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry: Alberta Canola directors and staff from all over the province of Alberta.

Also, joining us as guests of the Member for Edmonton-Glenora, welcome Constance Scarlett, Steve Baker, Daryl Zelinski.

Last but certainly not least, a very special welcome to grade 6 students following along in their classroom at Meadowbrook middle school in Airdrie, including Molly Pitt, the lovely daughter of our own Deputy Speaker. Hi, Molly.

Hon. members, please welcome our guests today.

Members' Statements

The Speaker: The hon. the Member for St. Albert has a statement to make.

Budget 2019 and Poverty Reduction Strategies

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Cuts to rent subsidies, cuts to funding for affordable housing, cuts to AISH, cuts to supports for foster kids trying to get their lives on track: this government isn't doing anything to help pull Albertans out of poverty.

To make matters worse, the Minister of Community and Social Services had the audacity to speak at the National Conference on Ending Homelessness right here in Edmonton yesterday, and she claimed her government was committed to pulling Albertans out of homelessness. This doesn't line up with anything her government has actually done. Just yesterday I asked the minister about her decision to close one of two shelters in Fort McMurray, and all I got were empty words and her pointing to other areas of her budget in an attempt to distract Albertans. Her tactics won't work, Mr. Speaker. More and more Albertans are realizing every day just how bad this UCP budget is. This government has introduced a budget that will see Albertans pay for more and get less.

I was proud to be part of a government that helped cut child poverty in half, and I have every confidence that our leader would have led us to cut it altogether in a second term. Now we have a government that seems bent on driving people into poverty, and they're doing this while cozying up to big corporations, giving them a \$4.7 billion handout. They're creating none of the jobs they promised.

My message is simple. To the minister: next time you speak at a conference about ending homelessness, can you at least be honest that your government hasn't done a damn thing to eradicate poverty?

Speaker's Ruling Parliamentary Language

The Speaker: Hon. members, the use of unparliamentary language, no matter the context, is always unparliamentary. The hon. Member for St. Albert is more than welcome to stand, withdraw, and apologize to the dignity of the Assembly.

Ms Renaud: I apologize for using the word "damn." I take it back.

The Speaker: You apologize for the use of unparliamentary language. Is that correct?

Ms Renaud: Yes.

The Speaker: I would encourage you in the future to be much more careful with your choice of words.

The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont is rising to make a statement.

Remembrance Day

Mr. Rutherford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As our government's military liaison to the Canadian Armed Forces it's my privilege to speak about Veterans' Week. Every November, from the 5th to Remembrance Day on November 11, we observe Veterans' Week, where we remember the service and sacrifice of the men and women who served in uniform since the First World War.

This year we mark the 75th anniversary of the Italian Campaign, held during the Second World War. From 1943 to early 1945 Canadian troops advanced north through Italy. As Canadians fought through Italy, one of the toughest engagements was the Battle of Ortona, where tight streets and large amounts of rubble prevented the movement of equipment, leading to house-by-house combat as troops moved through the town. After a week of street fighting, Ortona was liberated. Throughout the whole campaign Canadians encountered challenging mountainous terrain, harsh weather, and a bloody fight against battle-hardened German troops. More than 93,000 Canadians took part. There were 26,000 Canadian casualties, and almost 6,000 Canadians lost their lives.

The Italian Campaign exacted a high toll and stands as one of Canada's great contributions to the Allied war effort. From 1939 to 1945 the contribution of Canada was immense, with approximately 1 million Canadians serving in World War II. They, alongside the hard work of those on the home front, made a significant contribution to the war effort and ultimately the victory against the Nazi regime.

Of course, our women and men in uniform have continued to distinguish themselves with their service to our country. I urge you to take time during Veterans' Week to remember the service and sacrifice of those who served our country in uniform, including in Canada's longest war, in Afghanistan. Attend an event, say thank you to a veteran and to those who continue to serve in uniform, proudly wear your poppy, and take a moment to think of those who came before us who fought and died to preserve our way of life.

Lest we forget.

The Speaker: Lest we forget, indeed.

The hon. the Member for Banff-Kananaskis.

Family Violence Prevention Month

Ms Rosin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Hon. members and guests, November is Family Violence Prevention Month here in Alberta. It's our chance to show our support for the prevention of family violence. Family violence can happen to anyone regardless of age, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation. It happens in dependent and trusting relationships. It happens behind closed doors to people we least expect and even in the family of one of my closest friends. It takes a community to work together to prevent and put an end to abuse.

Our government is working hard to prevent domestic and family violence. On October 30 Bill 17, the Disclosure to Protect Against Domestic Violence Act, or Clare's law, received royal assent, which will allow individuals to easily access disclosure about their partner's history.

We want everyone in Alberta to be aware of where to turn if they are experiencing or are at risk of family violence. Awareness is an important step towards putting an end to family violence in our province. I'm proudly wearing a purple ribbon this month along with many of my colleagues here in the Legislature. The colour purple has been recognized internationally for many years to recognize family violence prevention.

We will also be reminding everyone what resources are available within our province. Our family violence info line is available 24 hours a day in more than 170 languages. Anyone can dial 310.1818 to speak to compassionate, trained staff who can provide information on how to get help. We also issue certificates through the safer spaces program so that victims of domestic violence can terminate a lease at no cost and leave an unsafe home. There are also many resources available at alberta.ca/endifamilyviolence, including fact sheets, posters, infographics, and more.

I encourage everyone today to get involved in Family Violence Prevention Month. Show your support on social media, attend family violence prevention events in your community, and let people know where they can turn if they are in need. We can all contribute to the safety of our fellow Albertans by raising awareness and supporting the victims.

Thank you.

2017 UCP Leadership Contest Investigation

Ms Ganley: Mr. Speaker, \$211,723: that is the total of the fines issued by the Election Commissioner in the UCP's ongoing and growing kamikaze scandal. The fines just keep on coming as more and more illegal activities come to light. While the Premier and his inner circle continue to try to dismiss these serious allegations as Twitter gossip, that just isn't true. Interfering with an election goes to the very heart of our democracy, and the UCP's refusal to admit the seriousness of these allegations suggests they think that they are above the law and even democracy itself. Collusion, obstruction, prohibited contributions, contributions made with someone else's money, giving others money to make contributions – and the list goes on – offences which suggest a complete disregard for both elections and laws. UCP insiders seem to think that these fines are simply the cost of doing business. They think that the old-fashioned notion of no one being above the law just doesn't apply to them.

The public deserves answers. They deserve a government that thinks that democracy and the rule of law and other fundamental institutions of our country are important and worth protecting. I remember a time not so long ago, Mr. Speaker, when one of the fundamental principles that underpinned conservatism was a respect for institutions. I guess that that time has passed.

1:40

This government and this Premier need to stop hiding, demonstrate some leadership, and be up front with the people of Alberta. Our children are watching us. They deserve to see elected members who demonstrate through words and actions that democratic institutions are worth while. People once fought and died for these values. Those children deserve to know that we still hold them dear. They deserve better than this UCP government cheapening everything we stand for. They deserve honesty, and, Mr. Speaker, there are over 200,000 reasons to believe that they are not getting it from this UCP government.

The Speaker: Hon. members, if you could do the Assembly a favour and ensure that all of the sounds on your electronic devices are turned to silent, I certainly would appreciate that.

The hon. Member for Camrose.

Volunteer Firefighters

Ms Lovely: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Like so many other small towns across Alberta, the city of Camrose is served by a fire department made up almost entirely of on-call volunteers, and today I'd like to take my member's statement to thank them for their work. The city of Camrose fire department is over 110 years old and currently employs four full-time staff: a chief, a deputy chief, an inspector, and a public educator. Besides these four, the fire service has 40 trained volunteer firefighters.

I had the opportunity to meet with Peter Krich, the fire chief in Camrose for the last 19 years. This past week his congratulations to his volunteers was obvious and incredible. He made it very clear that without those dedicated volunteers and their heart for service, a city like Camrose would not have anywhere near the same capability to deliver quality of service to our area. These volunteers regularly risk limb and life, purely out of dedication to service of their community. These volunteers make up a huge part of the firefighting force all across our province. Over 80 per cent of Alberta firefighters are volunteers. These men and women are ready to jump into action at a moment's notice, whether to help at the scene of a highway crash or a house fire. Their service should set an example for all of us to aspire to.

There's another part of this equation, though, Mr. Speaker. These people have to be allowed to leave work whenever a call comes in for help. As such, businesses who employ them have to be onboard with this as well. This is especially apparent in small towns, where the body of firefighters and volunteers is quite small. To those business owners who see this as a way to give back to their community and send off those volunteers, thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. the Member for Calgary-McCall has a statement to make.

November 1984 Violence against Sikhs in India

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize the victims and survivors of the November 1984 Sikh genocide. During the first few days of November 1984 thousands of Sikh men and women were brutally massacred in broad daylight on the streets of Delhi and across other cities, and many more were displaced. They were all targeted and killed for one reason: they were all Sikhs.

Mr. Speaker, all efforts to save them clearly fell short. Civil society, the state's institutions, and the international community, who all share the basic responsibility of protecting everyone's dignity, everyone's rights, and everyone's life, liberty, and security, completely failed them. The Sikh community here in Alberta and

around the world has been living with that pain and trauma for the last 35 years.

I have the honour of knowing many of the survivors and listening to their stories. They all see it as a genocide and a crime against humanity. They're all grieving. They're all still looking for answers. They are still looking for justice. Some believe that had justice been served in this case, the February 2002 Gujarat massacre could have been avoided.

Mr. Speaker, to all those who lost their lives in this extremely prejudicial tragedy, we remember you. To all those who are survivors of this tragedy, please know that we recognize your pain, we acknowledge the injustice, and we are ashamed of being bystanders. To all my colleagues here, let's stand together with our Sikh community as they seek justice and reconciliation and commit to ensuring that there will never be a November '84 again.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Property Rights

Mr. Barnes: To fully understand the importance of property rights to Albertans, we must first understand why they were created to begin with. Originating in Europe during the Renaissance, property rights developed as international trade by merchants gave rise to mercantilist ideas. This was only further supported in 16th-century Europe as Lutheranism and the Protestant Reformation advanced property rights, emphasizing the Protestant work ethic and religion views on destiny. These principles served as the underlying pillars of the capitalist system and the basis of wealth creation. However, the system we more closely resemble today is a result of demand for human rights in the 17th century in revolutionary Europe. This is where the right to private property truly emerged.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I've stood in this House time and time again to advocate for stronger property rights for all Albertans, property rights that aim to protect the economic and political desires of individuals and families and which protect people from the growing encroachment or misuse of government power or that of other citizens. I believe that a society that sees an erosion of property rights also sees the deterioration of other human rights. We are seeing this deterioration in Alberta every day as criminals continue to abuse the property rights, especially of rural Albertans, through trespassing, vandalism, theft, and so forth.

Mr. Speaker, rural Albertans do not feel safe. We hear horror stories every week about how people are attacked or threatened. We hear stories of criminals stealing equipment, trucks, and tractors, that rural Albertans depend on. People's lives and financial livelihoods are at risk. We need to take a hard stance against this kind of behaviour.

Not only have these hard-working men and women built our province, but they have also created wealth and prosperity for all Albertans. Mr. Speaker, they deserve to have their property rights and, ultimately, their freedom protected so they can create wealth on their land and live their life with their family safely.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Cross has a statement.

Child Poverty

Mr. Amery: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to speak about an issue that I'm very passionate about because it affects a disproportionate number of constituents in Calgary-Cross. Child poverty is an issue that many Albertans still have to deal with, and certain parts of our province have much higher rates of child poverty than the provincial average. Although Alberta has the lowest child poverty rate in Canada at 5 per cent, I think I can speak

on behalf of everybody in this House when I say that 5 per cent is still too high.

The Canada census defines family poverty as being under a certain threshold of annual after-tax income. For a family of four that number is \$38,920. Mr. Speaker, according to those figures, certain parts of Calgary-Cross have poverty rates as high as 70 per cent.

Families that face immense financial difficulties are not a problem that our government can simply avoid. Children that are raised in poverty are much more likely to resort to crime and self-harm later in life. This phenomenon can be seen when the maps of crime and poverty are compared. The results are nearly identical.

According to a study by the Urban Institute, nearly 30 per cent of children who grow up in low-income families never complete high school, chronic absenteeism is three to four times higher, and they are much more susceptible to bullying from their peers. This issue not only has consequences in the present times, but it will also have lasting consequences for generations if not addressed. Although the numbers are inflated due to the high economic recession in Alberta, northeast Calgary has always faced significantly higher rates of poverty than the rest of the city.

Mr. Speaker, I stand to urge our strong and united government to combat poverty and help struggling Albertan families. Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, prior to moving to Oral Question Period, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview has a statement to make.

Member's Apology

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have great respect for the role of the Speaker and the traditions of this House. Yesterday my passion for defending Albertans who need us to stand up for them clouded my judgment. Out of respect for the traditions of this Assembly and the complexity of your role, Mr. Speaker, I apologize to you and to the members of the Assembly and withdraw comments in posts on social media made outside of this Chamber.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. member, apology accepted. I consider this matter dealt with and concluded.

1:50

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

Budget 2019 and Alberta's Current Fiscal Position

Ms Notley: This Premier's \$4.7 billion corporate handout is a bust. In 2018 we were coming back: a 2.4 per cent GDP growth, 80,000 jobs recovered. Now every indicator is down. Business activity: down. Energy sector: down. Household spending: down. Labour markets: down. This Premier can now lay claim to Alberta's worst monthly economic performance since mid-2016. To the Premier: why not cancel your corporate handout and reverse your cuts before you trigger a second recession?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, it's true, as Albertans know, that this government inherited from the NDP a period of four years of economic decline and stagnation, a jobs crisis without precedent. In fact, it's pretty clear that in the first two quarters of this year under NDP mismanagement we were probably in a technical recession. We are doing everything we possibly can to turn that around with real action to demonstrate that Alberta is open for business, for investment to create jobs. Part of that plan, of course, is to get our

finances back under control, and we will do exactly what we were hired to do by Albertans.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, this Premier is a master at blaming everyone else. Five-year-olds could take lessons. But this is happening on his watch. He was elected to take responsibility, so he should get to it. Oil drilling: down. Natural gas: down. Grain, manufacturing, wholesale trade, housing starts: down, down, down, down. Their budget is not an antidote; it is a poison pill. Why won't the Premier cancel his corporate handout and stop his heartless attacks on Albertans before he makes things even worse?

Mr. Kenney: Let's be clear about what the NDP would have us do, Mr. Speaker. They took Alberta's debt from \$13 billion to \$62 billion. They wanted it to go over a hundred billion. Why? Because they prefer sending billions of tax dollars to rich bankers and bondholders for interest payments. We instead prefer spending that on critical public services. But if you let debt run out of control, which is always the NDP plan – guess what? – you end up taking money from health and education to pay bankers and bondholders. We won't do that.

Ms Notley: A \$95 billion debt under our watch, \$93 billion under theirs, Mr. Speaker. Move on.

This Premier threw away every plan to diversify our economy. Energy value-add programs? Cut. Investment in tech incentives? Cut. Infrastructure projects? Cut. Now, last month the Finance minister justified this approach, telling the Calgary Chamber that economic diversification is merely, quote, a long-term luxury. To the Premier: do you agree with the Finance minister, and if you do, why does the economic development minister have a job, and if you don't, shouldn't the Finance minister lose his?

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, the Finance minister did lose his job last April after having driven this province into a debt crisis, into a jobs crisis, after having presided over six credit downgrades, after having quadrupled the size of the provincial debt. You know, Albertans understand that we cannot run the province on a credit card forever, that if we do, we just end up enriching the bankers with interest payments. That's why with a 2.8 per cent saving, three pennies on the dollar, we are prudently bringing our finances back in order to guarantee programs for the future.

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

Support for Youth Transitioning out of Care

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, yesterday I asked this government why, when there's money for \$4.7 billion for corporations, they're cutting financial support for 480 kids who grew up in government care. What we heard was shameful. No compassion. The stories are heartbreaking: caseworkers forced into breaking the news to these young adults by reading from a script, young adults hearing these words and breaking down. This government is hiding what they're saving, but for these young people the cost is their lives. To the Premier: why is he doing this?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, every reputable economist on Alberta's finances has completely discredited this absurd \$4.7 billion figure, which is nonexistent. In fact, this year the estimated revenue forgone from the job-creation tax cut is \$100 million, not \$4.7 billion. Adults will continue to have access to the entire suite of Alberta's social services, which are actually being enhanced in this budget as the budgets of Community and Social Services . . .

Mr. Bilous: Not if they're older than 22, they won't.

Mr. Kenney: . . . and Children's Services and supports for persons with disabilities are all being increased.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Point of order.

The Speaker: A point of order has been noted at 1:55.

Ms Notley: I see the compassion continues.

Quote: I was really upset and shaking. Quote: my first thought was that I'm going to be homeless because I can't pay my rent. Quote: I used to joke about how I considered the MLAs to be my parents; when I found out this, it felt like I was being abandoned again. Mr. Speaker, many of us are parents. How can this Premier hear from these youth who have been through the most traumatizing childhoods we could possibly imagine and still do this? Through the Speaker to the whole front bench: if your own children were suffering, would you cut them off?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, under this government and even with our balanced plan Alberta will continue to have by far the most generous social supports of any province in Canada, which is why even while trying to deal with the NDP fiscal crisis we're actually increasing the budgets for Community and Social Services, for Children's Services, for persons with disabilities. Those who are adults, those who are 24 years of age: they will have full access to the supports that they need. If they're aboriginal youth, they will have the ability to have postsecondary funded by the federal government and access to all of the social supports of the government of Alberta.

Ms Notley: I beg the Premier to learn this file, Mr. Speaker. The folks over there have betrayed their own conscience. Before the last election they heard from the Child and Youth Advocate, they heard from caseworkers, they heard from former kids in care, and they all agreed on the age of 24, except that at one point the Member for Calgary-West thought it should be 26. You used to care. Now you don't. This isn't about finances. This isn't about savings. You found \$4.7 billion for corporations. Do you really expect Albertans to believe that you cannot afford to help these kids?

Mr. Kenney: You know, Mr. Speaker, the language of the NDP around this budget is grossly irresponsible, trying to instill fear in vulnerable people for a budget that reduces expenditures by less than three pennies on the dollar over four years, which will still end up with Alberta having the biggest spending government in Canada. We have to make some prudent choices to avoid jeopardizing the future of all of our social programs by sinking in a sea of debt. We won't do that.

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

Education Budget 2019-2020

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In June the Calgary board of education expected to receive about \$1.3 billion for the current school year. They based that assumption on assurances that this UCP Education minister gave them. They could use every dollar that they're getting as they have a growing student population, large numbers of English-language learners, and students with special needs. Now documents have been made public showing that they have actually received \$164 million less than they expected. To the Premier: why did your government mislead Albertans about the cuts that you were making to education?

The Speaker: The Minister of Education.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too am surprised that a school board with a \$1.2 billion operating budget, servicing 130,000 students is unable to find efficiencies in their overhead. This board has previously made a \$9.1 million accounting error, signed into a 20-year lease in which they are paying \$6 million more in rent than the total valuation of the building itself, and often projects deficits but ends the year with significant surpluses.

Ms Hoffman: Yesterday the minister said that she respected board autonomy. Today the minister comes in here and blames the board for the cuts that she's imposing on them and on Alberta's children. Edmonton public got \$76 million less. Calgary Catholic got \$97 million. Edmonton Catholic, \$52 million less. Lethbridge public, \$23 million less. St. Albert public, \$3.6 million less. Fort McMurray Catholic, \$3.3 million less. The list keeps growing. This Premier insists that the government funded education. Why do the numbers from school boards themselves make it clear that his government misled Albertans and continues to do so?

2:00

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Education.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. Every single student that walks through our doors is going to be funded at the exact same rate as last year. Albertans overwhelmingly elected our government to start living within our means. It's the same for every school division, and our government expects all school divisions to live within their means. I expect CBE and other school divisions to do the same.

Ms Hoffman: During the campaign, when we raised concerns about his plans to cut education funding, the Premier brushed it off as fear and smear. He insisted that he would maintain funding, but now we literally see hundreds of millions of dollars being taken from our classrooms. It's our students who are suffering, Mr. Speaker. To the Premier: if I'm wrong, why are we seeing school boards laying off staff and speaking out publicly about how the UCP misrepresented the true impacts of their budget? Why is the minister continuing to say that school boards are lying?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last year, the 2018-2019 year, the overall Education budget was \$8.223 billion. In 2019-20 the overall Education budget is \$8.223 billion. Over the last 15 years operational funding has grown by 80 per cent when inflation grew by 33 per cent and enrolment grew by 25 per cent. This is not sustainable. We cannot continue to grow way above enrolment and inflation. We are funding every single student. Every single student in our schools will be funded this year.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview has the call.

Budget 2019 and Homelessness Reduction Strategies

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Minister of Community and Social Services spoke to the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness. She spoke about how thousands of people are without homes in Edmonton and how she will help end homelessness in Alberta. What she forgot to mention is how this UCP budget slashes \$44 million from rental assistance and another \$17 million from housing management bodies. To the Premier: doesn't he think

that this minister should have been up front about how this budget will actually increase homelessness?

Mrs. Sawhney: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to say that this government is absolutely committed to serving all Albertans, including those who are experiencing homelessness. I can tell you that we have maintained our budget for homeless shelters and for homeless outreach support services. I'm working very, very closely with the seven cities and the community-based organizations to find out how we can work together to find innovative solutions.

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

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Community and Social Services is going around telling people that she will help end homelessness. What she forgot to say is that this government is kicking 480 young adults off financial assistance, reducing seniors' benefits, and cutting AISH. To the Premier: if you're so convinced that your \$4.7 billion corporate handout is necessary, can you and your minister at least stop pretending to care about Albertans at risk of homelessness?

Mrs. Sawhney: Mr. Speaker, my exact words were: I don't think it's aspirational to assume that one day we can end homelessness. Our government stands by that statement. In terms of the other comments made by the member opposite, we are working very closely with Children's Services, and we are taking a crossministerial approach to make sure that those who need supports will get those supports.

Ms Sigurdson: Mr. Speaker, homelessness can be ended. It just takes political will. In the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo alone there are 400 households who depend on rental assistance and housing management bodies; 190 more people are on a wait-list. These Albertans are living on very little. Tragically, this UCP government is making a 24 per cent cut to this program in order to pay for their \$4.7 billion corporate handout. To the Premier: given all the issues I've raised here today, how can you actually claim to Albertans that your government is ending homelessness?

Mrs. Sawhney: Mr. Speaker, I would just like to reiterate that I'm working very closely with the seven cities and the community-based organizations to make sure that we're working together to find innovative solutions, leveraging the work that's been done, leveraging all our data, and, again, working with the municipalities to ensure that we do our level best to tackle the issues of homelessness.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Banff-Kananaskis is rising with a question.

Film and Television Tax Credit

Ms Rosin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The film industry is so important to Banff-Kananaskis. Films such as *The Revenant*, *Superman*, and series like *Game of Thrones* were all filmed in or around Kananaskis Country. These projects contribute to our economy and freely advertise our beautiful province on the big screen. But I've heard many concerns from film producers who operate in and around my riding about the future of the industry here in Alberta. I'm wondering if the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism can please explain the transition our government has made to a film tax credit and the rationale for doing so.

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

Ms Fir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. The film industry is an important sector. It's important to our provincial economy, and we are happy to continue government support. As was committed to in our platform, our government is transitioning the screen-based production grant to the film and television tax credit. This change has long been requested by the industry and will allow our province to secure large film and series productions.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Banff-Kananaskis.

Ms Rosin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister.

Well, given that one film company recently left Banff-Kananaskis and moved to British Columbia because the previous NDP government mismanaged, overcommitted the screen production film grant budget by \$92 million and committed \$21 million of that just five days before the writ dropped and further given that Alberta is already in tough competition with other jurisdictions for film production despite having some of the most desired filming locations in the world, to the same minister: what is our government doing to clean up the mess the NDP left behind in our film industry and incentivize production in Alberta?

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

Ms Fir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. The Member for Banff-Kananaskis is correct. The NDP mismanaged the screen-based production grant and massively overcommitted the budget for the program. This reckless lack of fiscal restraint has limited access to funds for upcoming projects. As we are transitioning to a film and television tax credit, we are honouring commitments under the previous grant program and are providing funds to the film and television tax credit.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Rosin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and again thank you, Minister.

Well, given that international and Albertan filmmakers are paying keen attention to the steps that our government takes to support this industry and further given that our tax credit, which we are implementing, will be very different from the previous screen-based production grant, to the same minister: how does our government plan to grow this new program into a much more scalable model to ensure the film industry is sustainable here in Alberta?

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

Ms Fir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. As we transition from the previous screen-based production grant to the film and television tax credit, we are maintaining the previous budget of \$45 million between the two programs until we fully transition to the credit in 2022-23. In fact, not only are we maintaining funding for film; we're actually increasing it. We have the budget of \$45 million plus an additional \$1 million for the small production grant. The film and television tax credit will provide a 22 per cent refundable tax credit on eligible . . .

Ms Hoffman: Why are they so mad, then?

Ms Fir: . . . production expenses incurred in Alberta.

Speaker's Ruling Parliamentary Language

The Speaker: Hon. members, I would just provide some caution. When heckling, if you're using unparliamentary language, you would hate for *Hansard* to be able to catch that and that to go on the record. So I would just use some caution while doing so in statements outside of those who have been recognized to make them.

At this point in time, though, the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West has the call.

Budget 2019 and Alberta's Current Fiscal Position (continued)

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A debt that's \$93 billion, within 3 per cent of the NDP's debt; income taxes going up by \$600 million – surprise; every single person is going to pay more income tax – tuition, electricity bills, insurance costs, all up. But surely all of this is being done to lower the deficit, right? Wrong. The deficit is \$2 billion higher than it was under the NDP. To the Premier: will he admit that all of this pain for ordinary people is so he can dump \$4.7 billion of our cash on the front lawn of his rich corporate friends' mansions?

Mr. Toews: Mr. Speaker, we did inherit that kind of a mess from the previous government, quite frankly. We are bringing Alberta's finances to fiscal responsibility. We've put forward a plan, a fiscal plan that will bring this province to balance within four years. We have inherited a \$1.5 billion cost from the previous government's irresponsible crude-by-rail endeavour, that we will have to pay for this year. That's a minimum \$300 million lower cost than had we continued with crude by rail under the previous government's plan.

2:10

Ms Phillips: Given that nurses, teachers, and municipal workers are all being fired as we speak, right before Christmas and the deficit is up, the debt is the same, the economy is stalled and given that economists are now saying that we're looking at negative economic growth and given that this is the UCP recession, with 27,000 jobs lost and counting, will the Premier admit that he is presiding over a recession so he can hand over \$4.7 billion to his rich friends, that are maybe going to use that money to create jobs in Wisconsin, while all he is creating in Alberta is pink slips?

Mr. Toews: Mr. Speaker, I will tell you what we're not going to do. We're not going to follow the previous government's plan, where the economy was in trouble. They increased taxes on everything. They introduced a \$1.4 billion carbon tax that they didn't tell Albertans about. They jacked up corporate taxes by 20 per cent and collected \$5.8 billion less. That's a \$5.8 billion hole in the budget for the next three years. We will not reperform that fiscal irresponsibility.

Ms Phillips: Given that it's been seven months since this Premier's been on the job but he hasn't created a single job and given that this Premier also has a six-figure pension coming to him – it's not the retirement security for teachers, nurses, firefighters, that he's going to raid, but his gold-plated entitlements for himself are safe – to the Premier. Given that our debt is the same, our deficit is up, our taxes are up, our jobs are down but our no-growth, recession-creating corporate handouts are up, perhaps he wants to change his jobs, economy, pipelines slogan to unemployment, recession, and debt.

Mr. Toews: Mr. Speaker, we are confident that our four-year fiscal plan will return this province to fiscal responsibility. We've had

many, many commentaries that will prove just that. TD Economics says, “The government’s budget plan strikes a good balance between addressing the deficit in a reasonably timely fashion but not at such a hurried pace that it could knock Alberta’s still-fragile near-term growth . . . off track.” We’ve had several banks and financial institutions endorse this government’s plan for fiscal responsibility. We will not repeat the previous government’s error.

Drinking Water Quality

Mr. Schmidt: On Monday Global News released the results of a year-long investigation into drinking water safety in Edmonton and Calgary. The results were shocking. In Edmonton 3 out of every 10 test results exceeded the federal guideline for lead in drinking water, and some results were as high as 120 times the limit. In Calgary some tests reported levels of lead that were nearly four times the federally accepted limit. Even more shocking is that Alberta Environment and Parks has never requested the data from EPCOR, and EPCOR has never provided it to them. To the minister: will you commit right here and now to launching a provincial review into this issue?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, we’re happy to have adopted the federal standards, starting in January. Our government will continue to work with municipalities, homeowners, schools, and other areas that have water that we’re concerned about to be able to move forward in a productive way as set out in the federal guidelines. We have a plan to do that. That’s the direction that our government will be headed in.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, given that the minister has committed to implementing a plan and given that the cost of replacing lead service lines in Edmonton is only \$14 million, the cost of replacing the lines in Calgary is \$11 million, a fraction of their \$4.7 billion handout to the corporations, can the minister provide us with more details about what exactly his plan entails?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, we have adopted, starting in January, the federal guidelines around this important issue. We will work in partnership with our municipal partners, homeowners, and other infrastructure areas of this province to be able to adopt those federal guidelines going forward. We think we have a plan going forward that makes sense, and we’ll involve all the partners that matter in this important issue.

Mr. Schmidt: Given that adopting the guidelines isn’t the issue, given that water is exceeding the already-in-place guidelines, and given that some Global News reports say that lead plumbing fixtures are still on sale in Edmonton, meaning that new-home buyers are potentially exposed to toxic lead, will the minister commit today to banning plumbing fixtures containing lead?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, as I’ve already said twice today, we are committed to adopting the federal guidelines and making sure those are implemented across our province. That’s the plan that we have going forward. We will work with municipalities. We will work with homeowners as well as school boards and other facilities within this province to make sure that we can adopt those federal regulations this coming January.

Alberta in Canada

Mrs. Pitt: Mr. Speaker, recent events have turned neighbour against neighbour and shaken the perception of many who have made this province and country their home. Many Albertans are

feeling frustrated with the results of the recent federal election and Prime Minister Trudeau’s, the NDP’s, and the Green Party’s consistent lack of respect for our province, its resources, and the economic engine that is Alberta to the rest of the country. Albertans don’t feel heard. What does this government say to those that are struggling to wave a Canadian flag in this beautiful province?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Transportation.

Mr. McIver: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the hon. member. Our government was sent here to stand up for Albertans. We will fight for fairness within Canada on equalization, on access to Canada’s coastlines, and on a number of other issues. I would say to the hon. member that Alberta now has a government that hears them, that will fight for them, and that will take action.

Mrs. Pitt: Mr. Speaker, given that the people in this province need to be able to know that the rest of Canada respects us and given that Prime Minister Trudeau can no longer turn a deaf ear to the needs of our province while demanding that Alberta continues to foot the bill for the needs of Ottawa, Montreal, and the rest of the east, as this province is Canada’s economic backbone, how will this government ensure that Alberta gets a fair deal that we certainly deserve?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Transportation is rising.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government, through our Premier, has served notice to Ottawa that Alberta will proudly take our full place in Canada, that we will no longer be a doormat for Ottawa, as the previous NDP government was, and that we will stand up for the interests of Alberta. We have a lot of work to do, but I would say that Ottawa has promised to listen. They said that they’d build Trans Mountain, and we will hold their feet to the fire. We will hold them accountable because that’s what Albertans expect us to do, and we’ve actually put pressure on Ottawa to make that promise already.

Mrs. Pitt: Mr. Speaker, given that Alberta has already dealt with the consequences of four years of western alienation and given that we must stand up for our province while not giving in to excessive concessions to the east and other provinces who do not have Alberta’s best interest at heart, what does this government say about our relationships with our neighbours and with Prime Minister Trudeau?

The Speaker: I’m sure you’re referring to the government policy that that would apply to.

The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our policy, unlike the NDP’s policy and their leader, is to no longer be a doormat and sell out to Justin Trudeau but to stand up for Alberta, stand up for Alberta’s interests going forward, to fight for pipelines, to fight for fairness in the federation. The dark years are over. Albertans know now that they have a government that actually hears them, that is actually listening to them and will fight to make sure that Alberta’s place in the federation is respected, and I believe that the rest of Canada is already starting to listen.

The Speaker: The hon. the Member for Edmonton-Meadows has a question.

Human Rights and Multiculturalism Grant Program

Mr. Deol: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A letter has surfaced online stating that this government has cut the Alberta Human Rights

Commission's human rights and multiculturalism grant program. This program provided support to community projects that foster equality and reduce discrimination. Now the grant is gone. To the Minister of Justice: how do you feel about cutting funding to combat racism to pay for a \$4.7 billion corporate giveaway that isn't creating jobs?

The Speaker: The Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. Our goal here in Alberta is to make sure that all people feel valued and respected. There is a broader agenda to make sure that any grants and anything that comes forward has the ability to actually grow the amazing, amazing multicultural pieces that we have in this province. This is actually about bringing people together and not dividing like those folks would like us to do.

2:20

Mr. Deol: Given that the acting manager with the Alberta Human Rights Commission makes it clear in the letter I referenced that the human rights and multiculturalism grant program was established in 1988 and had worked to, quote, advance human rights and principles of equality, multiculturalism, and inclusion in Alberta, to the minister. This program has been helping community groups for 30 years. How do you feel about being the one to end it, and what message do you think that sends to Albertans?

Mrs. Aheer: Well, actually, Mr. Speaker, what I'm absolutely incredibly proud of is that this is the first time in 25 years that we have a ministry dedicated to multiculturalism, that is working along with platforms that have been brought forward. Did you know that we are bringing forward policy to provide security, especially in places of faith – mosques, synagogues, churches – to make sure that when you are down on your knees praying or on the ground, you do not have to look over your shoulder? We build capacity in this province to come together, not to divide like those folks.

Mr. Deol: Given that cutting this program is wrong and given that it comes at a time when we see concerns that discrimination is on the rise and given that my understanding is that the program accounts for less than \$1 million in the provincial budget every year, to the minister: will you do the right thing here and now and reinstate the human rights and multiculturalism grant program?

Mrs. Aheer: We have actually consolidated the grants. This is going to give us an opportunity to use that lens to be able to make sure that grants are appropriately put into communities, especially, if you can imagine, because this government is actually listening to folks on the ground and what they need to do to build capacity in their communities. In fact, we're continuing to invest. We're extremely excited to be able to talk to folks in their communities to find out where those dollars are best used. We're not making the decisions, Mr. Speaker; it's actually folks in their communities.

Thank you.

Affordable Housing

Member Irwin: Housing is a human right, yet this UCP government seems to think that it's a luxury. Recently I told the Seniors and Housing minister about the lack of affordable housing in my riding. Tent cities have sprung up across our neighbourhoods, the problem is only worsening, and we now see that these tent cities are being torn down. Folks are being criminalized and pushed further into the margins. I pleaded with the minister to stop talking about

debt and efficiency, yet she repeated those same tired lines. These are real humans who are suffering right now, Minister. So to that minister: I ask you again to acknowledge the desperate need for housing. What are your plans to address it?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Seniors and Housing.

Ms Pon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, definitely, housing is important to seniors and vulnerable Albertans. Our government supports seniors to age in their communities and also all the vulnerable Albertans, so we make sure that those are all aging in their communities through the funding for building, operating, and maintaining housing for low- to moderate-income seniors and vulnerable Albertans.

Member Irwin: Mr. Speaker, given that one constituent who called my office is on AISH and after spending almost all of his AISH money on rent, he has only \$300 left every month for food and medication and given that he's been looking for more affordable housing but has had no luck and given that his story is a story of many – I fear it will become even more common due to this government's cruel and heartless cuts to AISH and housing – to the Minister of Community and Social Services: what do I say to this constituent and to all of the others who are struggling right now? And please, be specific.

Mr. Kenney: You know, we hear so much bizarre disinformation from the other side. I think that every now and then we have to stand up and bring this back to the facts. The fact is this. The budget for AISH, presented by the Finance minister two weeks ago, is actually increasing by \$143 million. It is going to go from being by far the most generous income support for persons with disabilities in the country to by far the most generous income support for persons with disabilities in the country, one-third more generous than any other province, with a full suite of other social supports available to those folks.

Member Irwin: Mr. Speaker, given that I suppose the message that I'm supposed to give that constituent is that they're already getting too much and given that I'm so proud of the vibrant indigenous communities in my riding – in fact, we have one of the largest urban indigenous populations in Alberta – and given that now we see the indigenous housing capital program has been killed, not only leaving a number of important projects in the lurch but also putting more indigenous folks in my neighbourhood and across the province at risk of homelessness, to the Minister of Indigenous Relations. Your cabinet colleagues, the Premier, they're not willing to stand up for folks in desperate need of housing. So my question is simple: will you?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Mr. Wilson: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I care deeply for the indigenous people, as you know, and our government is working hard to help them with various options. I attended the Homeless Connect here earlier. I believe I was the only member to attend that. It was very important. There were a lot of great initiatives going on there. I attended Ambrose Place. It's a shelter that provides culturally sensitive housing for the indigenous population. The sad reality right now is that the homeless population is drastically over-represented, and our government is dedicated to improving the lives of the indigenous community. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. Member for Calgary-South East has the call.

School Construction

Mr. Jones: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that our government was elected with a clear mandate to continue to build schools and given that on Friday the Minister of Education announced 25 new capital projects, including a new K to 4 elementary school and a grades 5 to 9 middle school for Auburn Bay in my constituency of Calgary-South East, can the Minister of Education please provide this House with a breakdown of the 25 projects she and the Minister of Infrastructure announced last week in north Calgary? [interjections]

The Speaker: Hon. members, it's important for the Speaker to be able to hear both the question and the answer.

I'd like to hear from the hon. Minister of Education.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd first like to thank my colleague for his tireless work and advocacy for his constituents. Budget 2019 honours our commitment to continue to build new schools across this province. Promise made, promise kept. This year's capital plan includes funding for 15 new schools, six replacement schools, and four modernizations and additions. These projects will touch all areas of the province and demonstrate our continued commitment to building schools across Alberta.

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

Mr. Jones: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that tweets don't build schools and given that this announcement of 25 projects is 25 per cent more than were announced in 2018 and given that communities across Alberta have been waiting years for some of these projects, including the Calgary north high school, and given that the minister stated on Friday that she views these projects as important investments in our future, can the minister please tell this House about how our government prioritizes projects and chooses which schools will be built?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Education is rising.

Member LaGrange: Absolutely. Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker and hon. member. For capital projects to be considered for funding, school divisions must first submit a proposal to the government outlining their request. Once received, my department analyzes the request and prioritizes applications as a result of a series of metrics. We focus on a few key areas, including health and safety concerns, constitutional obligations, and high need for enrolment growth. Albertans can be assured that our government is funding projects that have demonstrated high need for their communities.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Jones: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you again, Minister. Given that the previous government tied playground funding to a separate pool of funding and given that playgrounds are essential for the development of our youth, especially those in grades K to 4, and given that parents across this province have been forced to fund raise hundreds of thousands of dollars for playgrounds beyond the taxes they already pay, can the minister please explain how playground funding will work moving forward?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was very pleased to share on Friday that moving forward, any project that is approved by our government which includes a K to 6 component will include a playground. Our government views playgrounds as essential for

the development of the K-to-6-aged youth, and we do not believe the burden should be on parents and communities to raise funds for these projects. Moving forward, parents and communities can be assured that they will no longer need to fund raise hundreds of thousands of dollars for these essential projects.

The Speaker: The hon. the Member for Edmonton-City Centre has a question.

Physicians' On-call Pay and Rural Health Services

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, pay for on-call doctors has been cut by nearly 40 per cent, and that's fuelling concerns that there will be a serious shortage of doctors able to perform surgeries in rural Alberta. Dr. Noel DaCunha, a Westlock-area physician and board member of the Alberta College of Family Physicians, said that it could take three times as long to perform an emergency Caesarean section. He said that, quote, almost certainly there could be a life put at risk. To the minister: are you really ready to risk lives in rural Alberta by demanding a nearly 50 per cent reduction in on-call pay to fund your \$4.7 billion corporate giveaway?

2:30

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Physicians were notified of these changes on September 30, and the changes came into force on October 1. The physician on-call program funding was reduced by \$10 million as a result of an agreement that was reached between the Alberta Medical Association, the Ministry of Health, and Alberta Health Services. The revised on-call program reduces the number of billing categories from five to three and reduces the hourly stipend pay for each category. Officials advise that these changes will not reduce the availability of on-call doctors or impact local care.

Mr. Shepherd: Now, given that Dr. Gavin Parker, a physician in Pincher Creek, said that the \$18 paid out per hour to doctors is barely enough to cover the time and travel commitments that come with providing on-call rural health care and given that that pay has now been cut to \$11.50 per hour and given that there is no obligation for doctors to take these on-call shifts, to the minister: how can you stand in this House and declare that this somehow won't cause issues with offering quality care in rural Alberta? Is it that you don't actually understand the issue here?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said in my previous response, officials advise that these changes will not reduce the availability of on-call doctors or impact the level of care delivered to patients and families. I encourage that any physician with questions or concerns regarding these changes and how they will be impacted should be directed to contact their respective zone clinical department head or zone medical affairs office. I would also like to stress that this was a result of an agreement that was formalized through the decision-making body, that includes the Alberta Medical Association.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, given that this reduction in pay for on-call doctors will reportedly save Alberta Health Services about \$10 million but given that that is a small price to pay for the peace of mind amongst Albertans who may need

emergency care in rural Alberta and given that providing health care in rural Alberta has been a decades-long challenge even before this government implemented its short-sighted cuts, to this minister: have you talked with the members of your caucus who represent rural ridings about how they feel about these reductions that could put their constituents at risk?

Mr. Shandro: Mr. Speaker, you know, I'll mention as well Dr. Ted Braun, the vice-president and medical director of central and southern Alberta for AHS, in a CBC story, where he's quoted. It was posted today, and he made it very clear that he does not believe that the quality of care provided in rural hospitals will change in any way as a result of this. As well, I'd point out that in Alberta the average physician earns \$116,000 more than the neighbouring physician in British Columbia. As I said, next year we'll be conducting a review of the physician on-call program.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning is rising.

Child Mental Health Services

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's been nearly two weeks since the Minister of Health made the inaccurate, hurtful claims that there wasn't a crisis in children's mental health, and it's been just over a week and counting with the minister refusing to apologize for this horribly hurtful and blatantly false claim. Now that the Minister of Health has had some time to think on the hurt and confusion his words have caused families and children dealing with mental health issues, will he finally and sincerely stand up and apologize?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have been asked this question by our hon. colleagues on the other side a couple of times. I think I made it very clear in my supplemental answers that I was talking about hospital beds in public hospitals. Obviously, this government is spending a significant amount of more money in our budget on mental health and addiction. Obviously, mental health for our children and our adolescents is of great concern to us. I look forward to the members opposite, if they agree with us and this being a concern, voting with us on our budget.

Ms Sweet: Well, given that it doesn't cost anything to say sorry and given, Mr. Speaker, that our government took the idea of addressing mental health concerns seriously and invested \$200 million for the child and adolescent mental health centre, to be completed by 2024, and given that the centre would have included 101 in-patient beds, outpatient clinics, mental health programs, and family resources but given that this government has given a \$4.7 billion gift to profitable corporations while claiming there's no crisis in children's mental health, can the minister explain why this project doesn't appear in the capital plan, or have you just cancelled it?

Mr. Shandro: I'd like to correct the hon. member, Mr. Speaker, and point out that this project was actually only going to have five net new beds for this \$200 million. What we are doing is making sure that we're going to use the new council that was appointed by the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions to be able to make sure that the capital spending that we spend is going to be in line with our government's priorities, and that's going to include making sure that we're going to continue to have community resources for our children and adolescents for their mental health and addictions.

Ms Sweet: Well, given that this morning the minister said 101 beds and given that the child and adolescent mental health centre appears nowhere, again, in this government's capital plan and given that, written on page 144 of their fiscal plan, this government's corporate giveaway is exactly \$4.7 billion and given that the mental health needs of Alberta children should come ahead of corporate profits, can the minister confirm that this oversight will be addressed and that the CAMH centre will be funded, built, and staffed, or does the zero-jobs corporate giveaway take precedence over the mental health of Alberta's youth?

Mr. Shandro: Mr. Speaker, this morning, when I spoke in estimates and answered that question by the hon. member, before I was cut off, the point was that, yes, it was 101 beds, but it's five net new beds, because it was going to be taking beds from the community and placing them all centralized here. That was our concern, and we want to make sure that what happens in our capital spending on mental health, especially mental health for our children and our adolescents, is going to be in line with our priorities and making sure that it's not \$200 million for just five net new beds.

Ms Sweet: It's 101. You already said that this morning.

Mr. Shandro: Five net new beds.

The Speaker: Hon. members, we will come to order.
The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler has the call.

Rural Municipality Funding

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Municipal officials in my riding of Drumheller-Stettler are relieved that finally they'll be getting the predictable, long-term capital funding they need, but they have some concerns with the built-in reduction in funding. With reductions on the horizon, they're wondering how they're going to provide the services that residents require while keeping taxes reasonable. Can the Minister of Municipal Affairs outline how this budget will impact rural municipalities in ridings like mine while at the same time ensuring that residents have the core services they deserve?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Madu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. We are keeping our promise to maintain funding to municipalities for the 2019-2020 year, and we are keeping our promise to deliver predictable, long-term funding for all municipalities by way of the local government fiscal framework act. It took the NDP four years to almost get the job done. We got the job done with the help of our rural partners like the RMA, who recently said that this budget "represents continued support and collaboration between the province and municipalities."

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

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that this reduction, while modest, will certainly pose challenges for officials in my riding and others as they seek to provide world-class services without raising taxes and given that many of our rural municipalities are not only already finding it difficult to balance the books but remain viable and survive, can the minister explain what the rationale for these modest reductions was?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Madu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The NDP miscalculated the state of Alberta's finances by more than \$6 billion. They tried to cling to office with these bogus numbers but were fired by Albertans. We are cleaning up their mess, and that's exactly what we are going to do.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that the NDP spent months fearmongering about 30 per cent reductions in infrastructure funding, library funding, disaster relief program funding, et cetera, and given that the budget is now finalized for all to see and given that I've been hearing constituent concerns that \$3.25 billion of the approximately \$6 billion provincial capital plan is to be spent in Edmonton alone, can the minister explain what areas of concern he's hearing from rural municipalities now that the budget is public?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Madu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member is correct that the NDP spent months spreading misinformation about our budget. The truth is, however, that we are maintaining funding for libraries, 911 centres, disaster recovery programs, and we are delivering on predictable, long-term funding, that all municipalities asked for.

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

Provincial Fiscal Position

Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans know how poorly the previous government managed the people's finances. We know they overprojected revenues by billions of dollars. They promised hundreds of millions in the dying days of an election. They always knew they were going to lose. They made promises that they knew full well they could not and would not be able to keep. They left the people holding the bag. To the Minister of Finance: just how bad were the books left to you by the previous, fiscally reckless government?

2:40

Mr. Toews: Mr. Speaker, when we formed government, we knew that things were tough, but when we actually got a look at the books, they were much worse than we anticipated. The previous government had overprojected revenues by as much as \$6 billion in their fiscal plan. We brought forward a budget that brings realistic, credible revenue numbers forward. We have turned down the irresponsible spending trajectory of the previous government to provide a budget that will balance in our first term.

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

Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Alberta was left with one of Canada's worst fiscal deficits. Given the size of the deficit, tens of billions of dollars in new government debt, six credit downgrades, a tax grab on everything, higher taxes that scared away investments, a job crisis, and the worst economic record since the Great Depression, can the minister explain how our province finds itself in this position?

Mr. Toews: Mr. Speaker, the members opposite, when they were governing, had this province with the largest per capita deficit within North America amongst all states and provinces. That was the trajectory that we inherited as a government. We will turn that spending trajectory down 2.8 per cent. It will not be drastic, but it will be enough to bring a credible fiscal plan that will balance in our first term.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta finds itself in its worst fiscal crisis since the Great Depression. [interjections] Given that the previous government broke its promise to balance the budget during its mandate and given that they continued to increase spending and continued deficits and added to the provincial debt, that generations of Albertans will be paying for, can the Minister of Finance explain the simple, measured, and realistic steps that he is taking to correct years of mismanagement by the previous fiscally reckless government? [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Hon. members, we will have order.

Mr. Toews: Mr. Speaker, Albertans elected this government, again, to bring our fiscal house in order. The previous government during a time of flat revenues increased spending by 4 per cent per year, leaving us on a trajectory for \$100 billion of accumulated debt. This is debt that would have ensured that the next generation of Albertans would not have had access to world-class front-line service delivery. We presented a four-year fiscal plan that turns down operating spending, that will continue to deliver high-quality services, but we'll do it in the most efficient and effective manner.

The Speaker: Hon. members, if we don't take a break, we will finish in approximately the same amount of time, so if you'll stick with me, we will move immediately to the rest of the Routine.

Correction. In 30 seconds or less we will proceed to Members' Statements.

Members' Statements

(continued)

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland has a statement to make.

Skilled Trades

Mr. Getson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today regarding National Skilled Trades and Technology Week. I was recently asked how I felt about the trades and if they were important. Quite honestly, I was taken a little aback. I couldn't imagine what our province or our country would be like without skilled tradespeople. I was reminded of a quote that Doug Stanyer, a construction manager and mentor of mine, gave one time. What he had said was: before there was construction, there was nothing.

My first big job was on an industrial project, the Ekati diamond mine, which was in the middle of the tundra in the Northwest Territories, as a project co-ordinator with Ledcor Industrial. This was my first real exposure to the skilled trades, and I learned so much. With winter closing in up north above the tree line, getting that superstructure up was critical. The ironworkers scooped me up as one of their own, and we were troubleshooting and coming up with solutions on the fly to meet schedule.

I also once worked for a pipefitter by the name of Brian Kientz, who was a superintendent. He saw me one night staring at a set of piping drawings as I was trying to understand them. I had never been taught about piping drawings or mechanical drawings in college. He asked me what I was up to, and I explained that it looked like a pile of spaghetti that was thrown on the page. He just laughed and took time out of his day to show me how to read them. Wayne Huddleston, a boilermaker, taught me about conveyor sections and setting crushing equipment. Don Fedun, another boilermaker, taught me about tank construction. John Madsen took the time to teach me

about safety and rigging for heavy lifts and how to efficiently manage men to get the job done.

Skilled tradesmen have been my mentors my whole life. Now that I'm on the skilled trades task force and vice-chair of the skilled trades caucus I have a chance to take all that I've learned from these folks and help break down the barriers that have been built up on how the general public perceives tradesmen.

To all the skilled tradeswomen and -men in the province, those working in technology to make our lives better, a heartfelt thank you. After all, before there was construction, there was nothing, and nothing is built without skilled tradespeople.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar has a tabling.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have three tablings today. I rise to table the requisite copies of two letters from teachers around the province who are concerned and speaking out against the decision of the government to take control of the Alberta teachers' retirement fund by transferring the assets to AIMCo.

I have a letter from Jennifer Krauskopf, who is concerned about the minister's statements on child mental health. She says, "I see evidence on a regular basis that the high need of services for child psychiatry in Alberta is greater than current services provide."

I have a letter from Doug Sparks, who is opposed to wage rollbacks for the public sector. He wants me to convey his "most heartfelt disgust to this weasel corporate shill of a government."

The Speaker: Hon. member, you might do that in a member's statement or someplace other than tablings.

The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Madu: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. I have three reports to table before this House today. The first is the Safety Codes Council 2018 annual report.

The second is the Alberta Elevating Devices and Amusement Rides Safety Association 2018/2019 annual report.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, is the Petroleum Tank Management Association of Alberta 2018 report.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview has a tabling.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings. These are from teachers that are outraged and shocked that this UCP government is blindsiding them by moving their pensions out of their existing fund. They're worried about some nefariousness that might be going on here.

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

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table a document entitled Alberta Government Scraps P3 Funding Model for New Schools, where Conservative Minister Wayne Drysdale iterates how P3s cost the government extra money.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud has caught my eye.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Member for St. Albert I would like to table the requisite number of copies of

an article titled World Scientists' Warning of a Climate Emergency, signed by 11,263 signatories of scientists from 153 countries.

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

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have three sets of tablings. The first is the requisite number of copies of nine letters that I've received from teachers who are deeply concerned about the implications of this UCP budget on their classrooms.

Next, I have the requisite number of letters from 40 teachers also writing in about how concerned they are about the decision and political interference of this government with regard to the teachers' retirement fund and transferring the asset to AIMCo.

The last set of tablings I have are the supporting documents for the questions I asked earlier today, that being the budgets that were submitted to the provincial government by the Calgary board of education, Calgary Catholic school district, Edmonton public schools, Edmonton Catholic schools, St. Albert schools, Lethbridge, Fort McMurray, and also the five copies of the October targets that were sent out to those boards to show the difference in funding.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre, followed by the Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite copies of 21 letters from teachers across the province who have written to me with their concerns, speaking out against the decision and political interference of this government in taking control of the Alberta teachers' retirement fund and forcibly transferring the assets to AIMCo.

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

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also rise to table the requisite number of copies of a letter from a teacher concerned and speaking out against the decision and political interference of this government to take control of the Alberta teachers' retirement fund.

2:50

The Speaker: Are there other tablings? The Member for Edmonton-North West.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise this afternoon to give the requisite copies of 40 letters from teachers around the province concerned about the government's choice to take over the Alberta teachers' retirement fund and transfer it over to AIMCo.

The Speaker: Are there other tablings today?

Seeing none, hon. members, we are at points of order. The point of order by the hon. Government House Leader at 1:55 has been withdrawn.

As such, we are moving to Orders of the Day, Ordres du jour. As hon. members will know, the daily Routine has now concluded and – we might just wait for the Speaker to conclude before exiting – pursuant to Standing Order 59.01(5)(b) the House stands adjourned until this evening at 7:30.

The legislative policy committees will convene this afternoon for the consideration of the main estimates. This afternoon the Standing Committee on Families and Communities will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Health in the Rocky Mountain Room. The Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Infrastructure in the Parkland Room.

Hon. members, the House stands adjourned.

[The Assembly adjourned at 2:51 p.m.]

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