



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
First Session

Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, November 19, 2019

Day 43

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta
The 30th Legislature

First Session

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Gray, Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)
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Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

Party standings:

United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, November 19, 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.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Visitors

The Speaker: Hon. members, it was my absolute pleasure this morning to welcome the consul general of France in Vancouver. Bienvenue. Welcome. Thank you for coming. Consul General Mr. Philippe Sutter, please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Also in the Speaker's gallery this afternoon is a very familiar face, a friendly and lovely face at that, the former Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake, Ms Genia Leskiw. Welcome back.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Hon. members, we have two school groups in the galleries today. First, from Drayton Valley-Devon welcome grade 6 students from Calmar elementary, and, second, from the constituency of Edmonton-Manning welcome some more grade 6 students from Edmonton Christian northeast school. Thank you for joining us.

Hon. members, in the gallery this afternoon a guest of the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood from Skipping Stone in Calgary, Anna Murphy.

Also in the galleries are guests of the Minister of Service Alberta. Welcome those from the AREA's government relations committee, Chair Jennifer Gilbert, Brad Mitchell, Bill MacDougall, and over 40 realtors from across Alberta today.

Last but certainly not least, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora has five Edmonton-Glenora constituents that are joining us here in the gallery.

All please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Members' Statements

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

Holodomor Memorial Day

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today we mark 86 years since the Ukrainian genocide known as Holodomor, a word made up of two brutal realities: "holod," meaning hunger, and "moryty," meaning a slow, cruel death. In just two years millions of Ukrainians died of starvation.

Two years ago I travelled to Kiev to pay my respects at the Holodomor memorial in the country of our ancestors. We carried a bowl of wheat as we walked by the angels of sorrow, statues that guard the souls of the starved. We passed 24 millstones that reminded

us of the 24,000 human lives ground to death every day during the famine. We laid our eyes on a statue of a girl with tears on her face, captured in time, along with her frail, malnourished frame.

Mr. Speaker, Stalin's plan was deliberate, and beginning in 1932 brigades of men came to steal any and all food. Many came specially equipped with long metal rods topped by hooks, used to prod any surface in search of grain to feed Stalin's armies.

Natalia Talanchuk remembers her mother forbidding her to look outside the windows in the mornings because out in the streets were bodies of the people who had died of starvation overnight.

Outside of Ukraine little was known, and inside to even speak of this event was a crime subject to imprisonment, exile, or execution.

Remembering the Holodomor isn't just for those of us with Ukrainian blood; it is for all of us. As Albertans we do more than remember. We act to ensure that their tragedy is never repeated. We are here as proof that hope somehow surfaced from the depths of despair of the Holodomor, and the spirit of the Ukrainian people was not broken. Generations later this spirit is alive and thriving in over 365,000 people of Ukrainian descent in Alberta and millions across the world.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [Remarks in Ukrainian]

Holodomor Memorial Day

Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk: Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to rise today as one of more than 350,000 Albertans of Ukrainian ancestry. It was of utmost importance to me to attend today's commemoration ceremony marking the 11th anniversary of the Ukrainian Famine and Genocide (Holodomor) Memorial Day Act. The fourth Saturday of every November is now a day where Canadians make a point of remembering the Ukrainian famine and genocide of 1932 and 1933.

The Soviet regime, under the leadership of Joseph Stalin, imposed impossibly high quotas for the amount of grain Ukrainian villages were required to contribute to the Soviet state. When they were not able to meet these quotas, the Ukrainian people would have their homes searched and any food confiscated. Soldiers would be posted in watchtowers to prevent them from taking any of the harvest. People were forbidden from leaving the country in search of food, apprehended, and sent back to their deaths.

Holodomor, translated as "killing by hunger," was a horrific government-imposed famine which saw millions of children, women, and men starve to death. Thankfully, my gido had come to Canada at the age of 17 for a better life. Sadly, many of his family members ended up starving back in Ukraine. I remember as a little girl, my baba would be carrying around potatoes in her apron. I would ask her why, and she told me that they were there just in case.

This period was one of the darkest periods in human history, Mr. Speaker, and the Soviet Union took significant steps to keep it a secret. For decades these horrible acts went largely unrecognized outside Ukraine.

While nothing will erase the past, I am grateful that we can at least recognize that these heinous crimes took place. As Albertans we must always cherish democracy, defend human rights, and value diversity and the multicultural nature of our society.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Chops and Crops Agricultural Event

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta farmers have faced many challenges this growing season, but I'm proud to say that Alberta farmers have once again done a magnificent job, doing

their part to help feed the world. In the midst of enduring weather uncertainty and devastating harvest conditions, they also continue to face trade uncertainty.

Mr. Speaker, all MLAs are invited to attend the annual Chops and Crops event happening in the Wales Room on the 10th floor of the Federal Building next Monday, November 25. This event is a wonderful opportunity to observe and appreciate the outstanding products our agricultural community produces. The event is hosted by the Alberta Beekeepers, Alberta Canola, Alberta Wheat, Alberta Barley, the Alberta Pulse Growers, Alberta Sugar Beet Growers, Potato Growers, Oat Growers, and Alberta Pork.

In addition to learning about these vital industries, a variety of fantastic food will be provided to really showcase the quality of products these groups produce. Last year the event theme was Industry of Champions, focusing on the fact that Edmonton was soon to host the Grey Cup. As such the event featured football-related decorations as well as trading cards for each of the commodities present. This year the theme is Food for Thought. I am sure they will leave us with a lot to think about.

We as legislators need to recognize the role we play in maintaining a globally competitive agricultural sector. Any extra cost that public policy adds will need to be paid for by the products that they produce. We have a huge responsibility to get it right.

I hope all MLAs take the time to attend Chops and Crops to demonstrate our commitment to agriculture in this province and its contribution to both the economy and the health and wellness of Albertans. MLAs have all been preregistered, so I would encourage members: check your calendars and attend if possible for an outstanding evening honouring Alberta agriculture.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora has a statement to make.

1:40 **Midwife Barbara Scriver**

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise in this House today to recognize Barbara Scriver, a midwifery pioneer in the province of Alberta whose career spanned 39 years. Barb caught her last baby in August, and I was thrilled to attend her retirement party. In hearing families share their experiences in Barb's care, it was evident that she carried out her work with passion, dedication, confidence, and joy.

One spoke of living in Fort McMurray and not having access to care there at the time of their pregnancies, so they drove for both to Edmonton to have Barb's support. The parents talked about the difficult labour that resulted in an emergency C-section and how Barb was calm, loving, and strong when they needed it the most. They said: she helped us make the right choices when we were scared and lost. They were grateful that she was also there for their second pregnancy that ended in a successful vaginal birth after Caesarean.

Another family talked about how much Barb involved the father in both of their pregnancies, which was especially helpful when the second came so fast that dad had to catch the butterfly baby. When they heard Barb's cheery arrival and the baby cried out to her, they knew all was well.

While we are celebrating Barb's legacy, it goes deeper than the babies and the families that she personally supported. Her legacy includes advocacy for the profession and public access for all. While we aren't quite there yet, I am proud of the progress we were able to make under the NDP government in partnership with the Alberta Association of Midwives. I want all midwives, women, and allies to know that our party will keep pushing for more midwifery

care. While Barb may have caught her last baby, there are women and families throughout our province who need us to fight for them, and we will.

Thank you.

Interprovincial Trade Barriers

Ms Issik: Mr. Speaker, in April Albertans chose to chart a new path. They supported our vision of intense focus on jobs, the economy, and pipelines. We promised to pursue government policies that unleash the power of Albertans to create jobs and drive our economy forward. This is a significant shift from policies which took away the rightful earnings of Albertans through high taxes and burdened efforts of Albertans with bureaucratic red tape.

We have a lot of work left to do on all fronts, but we have made some great progress. One area where we have made fantastic progress is establishing Alberta's leadership on the elimination of interprovincial trade barriers. For too long it has been easier to do business across the southern border than across provincial borders. As many undoubtedly know, these barriers are extremely costly for our economy, other provinces, and our country as a whole. These interprovincial trade barriers are estimated to cost our economy between \$50 billion and \$130 billion every single year. That's almost \$9,300 per Canadian household.

That gap represents a massive opportunity for economic development and a potential increase in the base level of prosperity for many Albertans and Canadians, even if we can only capture a small portion of the total potential gains. These gains will lead to a real increase in the quality of life for Albertans and in the ability of our government to provide health care, education, and other services for Albertans.

Our government has shown real leadership by removing an incredible 21 exceptions under the Canadian free trade agreement. Alberta has become the national leader in eliminating internal barriers to trade. I am proud of the leadership shown by our government in eliminating these trade barriers, and I look forward to other provinces following our lead to create a more prosperous Canada.

Support for Agriculture

Mr. Dach: Mr. Speaker, Alberta farmers are facing yet another dismal harvest season caused by poor harvest conditions, ongoing international trade disputes, and business risk management programs that are not equipped to handle the issues. Team Alberta, representing producer organizations comprised of the Alberta wheat and barley commissions, Alberta Pulse Growers, and Alberta Canola, have publicly called on the Alberta and federal governments to act immediately to provide financial assistance to Alberta farmers who face huge economic losses and very burdensome personal stress and mental health challenges as a result of conditions beyond their control. So far Alberta's agriculture minister has paid lip service to this but has failed to bring forward any real, concrete action plan to help farmers right now.

Three out of four past growing seasons, Mr. Speaker, have seen bad harvests. The latest crop report shows that 11 per cent of crops province-wide are still in the field. For specific crops the numbers are even more catastrophic: 17.3 per cent of the canola crop, nearly 15 per cent of the potato crop, and 45 per cent of the sugar beet crop are as yet unharvested. That's about \$778 million worth of unharvested crop in Alberta. According to John Guelly, the Alberta Canola chair, quote: farmers are experiencing a very disappointing crop year once again, and many won't be able to get their crops off

the field until the spring. This means delays in insurance and access to funds necessary for next year and to feed their families.

Mr. Speaker, it is the family farm that is most vulnerable to these challenges. When added to the heavy burden of having to compete with corporate agriculture producers who operate increasingly larger landholdings, we see an alarming rise in the incidence of mental health issues, including serious depression, anxiety, and suicidal tendencies, erupting in Alberta amongst family farms. Family farmers who leave agriculture depopulate rural Alberta, and they need our support right now.

Thank you.

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

Crime in Mid-size Cities

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know that rural crime is a concern to many in our province. We have heard the stories of survivors of these crimes in this House. Our government has taken concrete steps to combat rural crime across our province, and I am thankful for that.

But there are concerns in urban areas outside of Edmonton and Calgary as well. Our mid-size cities across this province are facing increased instances of thefts, break-ins, vandalism, assaults, and other crimes. I've heard from my constituents about these incidents first-hand. Each incident is one too many, and further than that, each crime perpetuates negative assumptions about our mid-sized cities. There should be no hesitations about visiting downtown Lethbridge and supporting the local businesses that keep our city vibrant. We need an answer for our urban crime in Lethbridge to reassure those that have experienced it and to properly penalize those who offend.

I recently went on a ride-along with emergency medical services in Lethbridge. As incredible as it was to understand the life-saving work they do, I could not ignore how they're struggling under the increased workload due to these crimes. These front-line workers deserve our full support.

Beyond that, cities outside of Edmonton and Calgary deserve the same commitment and attention to safety that larger centres receive. No one's safety should be based on where they live. This applies to the folks who make rural Alberta their home, but this also must apply to everyone who makes Lethbridge their home.

Mr. Speaker, while we consider the impact of rural crime, we also have to consider how urban crime is harming our communities. These crimes feed assumptions about downtown cores, painting them as unsafe and inaccessible, which is discouraging investment and turning families away from these centres. We can no longer afford to let these acts go without justice. Steps have been made to serve this justice such as expanding the drug treatment court program throughout Alberta, but we need solutions to dispel the notion that our downtown cores are a lost cause.

Our communities deserve an answer and a solution to these crimes and a plan for downtown revitalization, one that will support these downtown centres while making sure those that commit these crimes get the help they need to prevent them from offending again.

Federal Equalization Payments

Mr. Schow: Fat Surplus Means More Money for Quebec Families: that was the headline of Philip Authier's article in the *Montreal Gazette* on Thursday, November 7. The recent budget tabled by the Quebec Finance minister, Eric Girard, shows that the province enjoyed an \$8.2 billion surplus in 2018-19 and a \$4 billion surplus in 2019-2020. Girard said that the province is swimming in cash and will use the money to pay down the debt and address the issue

of astronomical parking fees. In Alberta we know that if you've eaten today, you thank a farmer, but I guess if you're in Quebec and you parked today, thank an Albertan.

These kinds of headlines stoke the ire of Albertans who already feel that Quebec is getting the lion's share of our money, and they're not wrong. Since equalization was introduced, in 1961, Alberta has given over \$600 billion, \$240 billion in the last 11 years. In that same time span Quebec has gotten \$107 billion. This begs the question: what gives?

My grandparents used to keep a poster of the milch cow in their house, you know, the one where Alberta feeds it and it gets milked in Ontario. As a kid I didn't understand what it meant. I even recall laughing at it, but there's nothing funny about tens of thousands of unemployed Albertans or the way we're treated by a country that depends so heavily on our generous financial aid. So it's high time Alberta gets a fair deal in Canada. It's time to get a pipeline built to the coast. It's about time Alberta gets a little respect from the east; otherwise, we'll just take it.

Our Premier said to the Bloc Québécois leader, Mr. Blanchet, that you can't have your cake and eat it, too. His smug response was telling. He said: you know what; I like my cake, and I will do what I think about it. As far as I'm concerned, I think he can have his own oil and do with it whatever he likes. Well, Mr. Blanchet can have all the cake he likes. Just don't expect us to pay for the ingredients, make it, bake it, and serve it to him on a silver platter. Those days are over.

1:50

Oral Question Period

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

Bill 22

Ms Notley: As the longest serving member of this House, Mr. Speaker, I've always respected its profound importance to democracy. You will all remember that I grew up watching my father debate here. I watched him and Premier Lougheed engage in a robust but fair exchange of ideas and ideals. That is why I am heartbroken by the attack on this House, its members, and its institutions through this Premier's Bill 22. To the Premier: before you establish yourself as the most undemocratic Premier in Alberta's history, will you please do the right thing and withdraw this bill?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, the fake outrage from the NDP is ridiculous. This bill does a simple thing. It consolidates the election authority system within our province to be in line with every other province inside the country and the federal government. Let me be very, very clear. All investigations remain under the purview of an independent officer of this Legislature in the Chief Electoral Officer, who has served this Chamber for a very, very long time in a nonpartisan way. In fact, the last time they were appointed was when that member was the Premier of the province. The Election Commissioner position will remain and, in fact, will now be further away from political interference because they'll be reporting directly to the Chief Electoral Officer.

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, winning the election does not give the Premier unfettered power to do whatever he wants. Our democracy demands oversight through this House, its institutions and officers, and the judiciary, and all must be independent, yet this Premier's decision to fire the Election Commissioner, someone who's actively investigating the UCP fraud, is an attack on democracy, a cover-up of the truth, and could even constitute an obstruction of

justice. To anyone on the front bench: how can you let this level of corruption into this people's Legislature?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, also a ridiculous statement. Let me quote somebody. "It is important to ensure that the varied activities of an [election management body] are directed by the organization and not controlled by some other level of government or the Assembly bureaucracy." Who said that? The current Election Commissioner of Alberta, Mr. Lorne Gibson, in a white paper on independence and accountability of election administrations that he wrote for the Northwest Territories in December 2016. This simply does exactly what Lorne Gibson suggested, brings the entire election system under one body. It remains with an Election Commissioner position and the Chief Electoral Officer being independent officers of this Legislature.

Ms Notley: Absolutely missing the point.

Let's all remember that in his bid to lead the UCP, the Premier's campaign set up a stalking horse, the kamikaze candidate Jeff Callaway. Then his staff ran this man's fake campaign from the shadows, a campaign funded by illegal donations, just to attack Brian Jean – Brian Jean – who served this province with integrity. The Premier has always shown disrespect for democracy in his own party, but now he's showing disrespect for the law. Why is this government covering up for him by firing the Election Commissioner in the middle of an investigation?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, the Premier has already been clear. Those allegations are ridiculous by the Official Opposition leader. In addition to that, no one is firing anybody. We are consolidating the system, bringing the Election Commissioner position back to a system that is closer to where it was in 2018, before the NDP government changed it. The Election Commissioner position will remain. It will be underneath an independent officer of this Legislature in the form of the Chief Electoral Officer, a position that has served this Chamber for over a century very, very well. The current occupant of it I trust completely to operate in a nonpartisan way.

The Speaker: The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

Ms Notley: The issue is not who that member trusts or doesn't trust, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Canada's Criminal Code prevents wilful actions to obstruct justice. The demotion or firing of an independent officer of this Legislature in the middle of an investigation into UCP operatives, into fraud and illegal donations tied to the Premier's own leadership race sounds pretty obstructive to me. This Premier is using the power of his office to politically prevent investigation into fraud and corruption surrounding his friends and his party. Why is this Justice minister protecting this Premier and his corrupt friends? What are they hiding?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, again another ridiculous assertion by the Leader of the Opposition. First of all, the Premier's office is not making any decisions associated with Bill 22. This Chamber will make that decision by voting with the 87 members of this Chamber. Again to this, the Chief Electoral Officer will remain as an independent officer of this Legislature, and the Election Commissioner position will remain. All investigations will fall underneath their purview, completely arm's length from any political decisions, as they should be. This legislation ensures that that will continue and goes back to simply operating like every other province in the country.

Ms Notley: Absolute rubbish.

This Justice minister said nothing when it was revealed that the Premier's leadership campaign staff colluded with the candidate found to be funded by illegal donors. Now he's standing by as the Premier fires the Election Commissioner who was investigating those donors. This bill, which is obstructing justice, goes against the very spirit of the Attorney General's own profession and his sworn duty, as the Alberta Attorney General, to prevent the Executive Council from breaking the law. I ask the Attorney General: why is he giving away his integrity and for what?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, this fake outrage and this fear and smear that we've seen from the opposition for very much too long, seen when they were in government: that's why they were the only one-term government in the history of this province. That's why they were fired by Albertans. This approach will not work. Albertans will not buy it. We will continue to ensure that the Chief Electoral Officer remains an independent officer of this Legislature, that the Election Commissioner is able to continue to operate within that capacity to continue with any investigations, completely arm's length from any political interference. That's what this legislation does. It brings us in line with every other province and the federal government.

Ms Notley: The House leader is misleading the House.* The Premier is saying that Albertans are subject to one set of rules, but when it comes to himself, it's a whole new world, and he can rewrite them as any cover-up demands. He's firing the Election Commissioner, asking his cabinet to play along in this abuse of power, and then displaying a cowardly refusal to answer for his own actions. Why won't the Premier explain to Albertans what exactly it is he is trying so hard to hide?

Speaker's Ruling Parliamentary Language

The Speaker: The Leader of the Opposition knows full well that she can't make a statement like: the Government House Leader is misleading the House. She can apologize and withdraw.

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, there are many, many conventions in this House which I believe are in jeopardy at this time. You just identified one of them. Unfortunately, the greatest jeopardy in this House is posed by Bill 22. At this point, we must have a full and honest conversation that doesn't involve misleading statements by any member over there, so I will not apologize until we have fully canvassed the destructive nature of this bill, in a historic way, to the people of this province and to the members of this House past, current, and future.

The Speaker: The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition is the longest serving member of the Assembly. She knows the rules. The rules are that you may not make an accusation against another member that would indicate that they are misleading or lying to the House. This is a very serious matter, as is Bill 22. The hon. member will know that the Speaker takes no position on Bill 22. Whether it is a good bill or a bad bill, there will be plenty of time for debate. What the Speaker's requirement is is that the rules of debate are followed. If she chooses not to follow them, she won't be allowed to be in the House. Those are the rules that the House has set out, which she is a member of. The Leader of the Official Opposition can apologize for making the statement and withdraw, or she knows what the step after that is.

*See page 2479, right column, paragraph 1

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, you are right. I am the longest serving member of this House. Before that I was a political staffer, and before that I was a political activist, and before that I watched my father in this House. I know how important the traditions of this House are. I know how important the officers of this House are. I know how important the conduct of this House is and the fact that we all got here fairly by rules which we all agree to follow. Bill 22 goes directly at the heart of that, and it is a far bigger threat to this House than whether or not I said that people over there misled or the House leader misled, specifically something that is in writing in front of this House already, in the Legislature, which is what he did.

But more to the point, Mr. Speaker, we see a corrupt act to interfere with an investigation in this House. We must be able to call it what it is because I have never seen a threat to this House like Bill 22, not in the province's history. I cannot apologize until we have fully canvassed every effort to stop the . . .

2:00

The Speaker: I appreciate your comments. [interjection] The Speaker has risen. Let me reiterate. The Speaker takes no position on the steps the government may or may not take. I have no feeling about the bill at all and the importance that it has to the Assembly. The only position that the Speaker takes is that the rules of the Assembly are followed.

I want to be very clear. The Leader of the Opposition is refusing a ruling of the Speaker, that the Speaker has made, that she is out of order. She acknowledges that a refusal to apologize will result in the removal of her presence from the House for the rest of the day. Is that the case, hon. Leader of the Opposition?

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, as I have said before, there are many, many elements of this House that the Speaker has to defend. The integrity and the independence of officers and executive members of this Legislative Assembly, including the Election Commissioner, who is in the middle of an active investigation, is another thing the Speaker must defend. Regardless, I cannot apologize for having an open conversation about . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member. I never asked you to apologize for having an open conversation because, obviously, that would be outside the purview of the Speaker's role.

What I have asked you to do is to follow the rules of the Assembly, which you've chosen not to. So then according to Standing Order 24(2) the Speaker may name a member and require them to be removed from the Assembly, at which time, Rachel Notley, you are no longer permitted to be in the Assembly for the rest of the day.

[Ms Notley was escorted out of the Chamber by the Acting Sergeant-at-Arms]

Bill 22 (continued)

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, there are even more serious consequences to Bill 22. This bill creates a real danger for any person who might stand up and call for this UCP Premier and his friends to be accountable to the law. It is appalling that this is happening against an independent officer of our Assembly when that officer has already uncovered widespread illegal activity. Will anyone in the UCP stand up for our democracy?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, it doesn't matter how much the NDP want to continue with their fear-and-smear tactics, which are not working. The reality of this process is a simple consolidation, a

process that brings us in line with every province in this country and with the federal government. The Election Commissioner position remains. It goes further away from any potential for political interference by going under the Chief Electoral Officer, an office that has been in this province for over a century and has successfully served Albertans in that role. All investigations remain arm's length from any political body and from this Chamber and remain under the purview of the Chief Electoral Officer.

Ms Hoffman: The Premier has claimed that he has a mandate from the people of Alberta to do whatever he wants, but that mandate has limits. Nobody gets a mandate to break the law, fire law enforcement agencies, or undermine the very democracy that creates his mandate. This is Alberta. Does the Premier understand that there are limits to his democratic mandate?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, this is a prime example of the Official Opposition overplaying their hand yet again. Nobody has fired a law enforcement agency. That is completely and utterly ridiculous. The Election Commissioner office and position remains. It is now consolidated within the recommendation of the current Election Commissioner in the province of Alberta, similar to other provinces. It consolidates the process, it saves taxpayers upwards of a million dollars, it protects all current investigations and future investigations, and it continues to make sure that this is run by an independent officer of the Legislature.

Ms Hoffman: I read the bill, and the bill says terminate. The Government House Leader can say what he wants, but the bill is in black and white, and it says terminate.

Yesterday the Premier didn't answer when asked about what would happen if the Prime Minister fired the Ethics Commissioner during the SNC-Lavalin case. If Paul Martin had sacked Justice Gomery, that would have been corrupt, too. The Premier knows this, and I'm sure his entire caucus does, too. At their emergency caucus meeting tomorrow who among them will speak up for our democracy?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, to be clear yet again, all of our election system remains under the Chief Electoral Officer, who is an independent officer of this Legislature. The position of Election Commissioner has not been removed. If this House decides to support Bill 22, the Election Commissioner will move into a consolidated role with the Chief Electoral Officer, exactly the same as it is all across this country and with the federal government. This consolidates the process, brings it closer to where it was before 2018, when the NDP changed the system. We have utmost confidence in the Chief Electoral Officer.

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

2017 UCP Leadership Contest Investigation

Ms Ganley: Thank you. On the night of October 26, 2017, two candidates of the final UCP leadership contest filed complaints of voting irregularities. Since then we've heard credible claims and seen documents that support these allegations. The Election Commissioner launched a probe to get to the bottom of it, but now he's been shut down by this government. One of those UCP candidates is now the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General. He's charged with upholding the rule of law. Why is he allowing the government to undermine it?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, nobody has shut down any investigation. Let me be very, very clear. This was completely

confirmed by the Chief Electoral Officer's office yesterday. Any investigations will continue going forward under the purview of the Chief Electoral Officer and the Election Commissioner, which have now been consolidated into one office. Any investigation that may or may not be taking place will continue under their control. We trust the independent officer of this Legislature to make the determination of what is best going forward. He has been appointed by all members of this Chamber.

Ms Ganley: I see why the member might shut down the Minister of Justice on this issue. The Minister of Justice himself was one of the first witnesses to the illegal activity. He asked for an investigation, and now he sits in the government who's shutting down an investigation into bribery, forgery, and fraud. To the Minister of Justice: what is the public supposed to think when the chief law enforcement officer in the province sits silently while the government removes an officer in the middle of an active investigation?

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, that is completely false. The allegations and words she's trying to put into my mouth did not happen. That is not what I asked to be investigated. I raised questions about a voting process. My concerns were addressed by the party. I accepted the result of that election where our Premier received a resounding mandate. I accepted that result clearly. The allegations that they have – we are going over old treaded ground. The good work of the Election Commissioner's office under Bill 22 will simply continue under the Chief Electoral Officer. That is what it's going to do.

Ms Ganley: It's in black and white, Mr. Speaker, in the bill. Employment contracts are terminated.

Last spring we pushed the Minister of Justice into appointing a special prosecutor to look into UCP voter fraud. Since then he has refused repeatedly to name a special prosecutor. To the minister: did you refuse to name a special prosecutor because it was always the intention of this government to shut down any investigation into themselves?

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, this is absolutely ridiculous. The appointment of a special prosecutor is done independently of my office. The people are informed of the matter, they review it, and the ADM, independent of my office – I have no input into this whatsoever – made the decision to seek a counsel from Ontario to act in the role of special prosecutor. Those are the facts. Right now we've got people here torqued up to 11. Those are the facts.

2:10 CN Rail Strike and Commodity Transportation

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker, Albertans know that one of the most critical issues facing our province is market access for our energy resources. For years we have faced obstruction to building pipelines to move our products, and industry has had to ship more and more oil by rail. Now we are facing yet another obstacle. The CN Railway union has initiated a strike action, which will disrupt our rail network and our ability to get our oil to market. Today alone the benchmark price for western Canadian oil has dropped by more than \$4. To the Minister of Energy: can you tell the House what impact this will have on our energy producers and Alberta taxpayers?

Mrs. Savage: Well, thank you to the member for this question, Mr. Speaker. Today's labour action by the railway union has a significant impact on Alberta's economy, and this morning Minister Dreeshen and I called upon Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to

immediately take action to recall Parliament early and introduce emergency back-to-work legislation. The federal government has already failed Alberta oil and gas workers: blocking pipelines, restricting market access, introducing bills C-48 and 69. We need immediate action from the federal government before . . .

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy would know that naming any member inside the House or using their last name would be wildly inappropriate.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Minister. Mr. Speaker, given that in addition to the impact on our energy industry, this will also have a significant impact on our farmers, who rely on rail companies to ship our agricultural products to global consumers and given that many farmers in my constituency will be worried about how this union strike action will impact their families, to the minister of agriculture: how will this impact our farmers, and how are we going to support them?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry has the call.

Mr. Dreeshen: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for that very important question. Rail strikes do have very damning effects on farmers. It's something that we've unfortunately seen here in Alberta and Canada many, many times. I was very proud to stand with our Minister of Energy to ask the federal government to get back to work so they can legislate the CN Rail line back to work. Ultimately, rail disruptions like this, the cascading effects that they have on our supply chain when it comes to our grain – 145 different countries get exports from the province of Alberta, and they need to go by train.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Minister. Mr. Speaker, given that any long or protracted union strike would cause severe harm to our energy workers, our farmers, and our province and given that the federal government has the power to end this disruption of our economy through legislation, to the minister of agriculture: can you tell us what the government of Alberta is asking the federal government to do in order to immediately end this union strike and stop any further harm to our economy?

The Speaker: The Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Dreeshen: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker and to the member for that very important question. Over \$12 billion in exports from our agriculture sector, over \$4 billion in exports from our forestry sector: these are very big numbers. It is a very impactful issue when it comes to our sector and our province. With the difficult harvest that farmers were again faced with this year, this is an added stress. It's an added frustration that our farmers shouldn't have to face. That's why we're calling on the federal government to take this seriously, to come back early and get to work and actually have back-to-work legislation.

Public Inquiry Commissioner Appointment

Ms Sweet: Mr. Speaker, questions surrounding the appointment of Steve Allan to run this government's public inquiry continue to build. Today it surfaced that Mr. Allan held a fundraiser at the Calgary Golf and Country Club in 2018 for the now Justice minister. He also endorsed the minister in a written e-mail during the spring election campaign. To the minister: is he now convinced there's a perceived conflict of interest with Mr. Allan's appointment, or does he just not care?

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, the smear job against Commissioner Allan needs to stop. This is an individual who received the Alberta Order of Excellence. He was named Calgary's citizen of the year. He was chair of Calgary Economic Development, chair of the Calgary Stampede board. He was named by Treaty 7 the honorary title of Chief Rides Many Horses.

The role of the commissioner, Mr. Speaker, is akin to a judge. They're treated with independence. All decisions made by Commissioner Allan regarding whom to retain, how to conduct his inquiry are his decisions alone, and that's reflected in how he's been engaged.

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

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the minister has refused to identify what steps were taken to ensure that Mr. Allan's appointment was above board – he has refused in the media; he has refused during three hours of estimates questioning that I did this morning – and given that this minister seems to believe that being accountable to the public isn't something that is included in his job title, how can the minister ask Albertans to trust him when he won't even come clean on what is clearly a patronage appointment? Why won't he produce a paper trail?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Mr. Schweitzer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With respect to the appointment of Commissioner Allan that was a decision of cabinet. At no point in time has my office been involved with the inquiry after his appointment. When it comes to who has been retained, how he's being supported, that is not being run through my office. Commissioner Allan is somebody who has given back immensely to his community on homelessness, dealing with the Rotary Club. This is an individual who does not deserve this. We have the NDP on the opposite side aligning themselves in the same attacks Ecojustice is going after Mr. Allan with.

Ms Sweet: Given that Steve Allan has now contracted with the Dentons law firm to carry out some of the inquiry work, a contract that's worth almost \$900,000, and given that Mr. Allan's son is a partner of Dentons and given that the Justice minister himself worked at Dentons right up until the election, to the minister: are you really trying to tell Albertans that this appointment of Steve Allan doesn't reek of Toryland entitlement?

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, this was reviewed by Deputy Minister Grant Sprague with respect to Steve Allan's retaining. He sent a letter to that hon. member. I am satisfied that Mr. Allan is not in violation of the code of conduct and ethics and there is no conflict between his private interests and his role as commissioner.

Previous to coming here, I worked for the three largest law firms in the province of Alberta. They employed about 500 lawyers at any given time. All of them have done work for the government. I resigned all of my positions before taking office.

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

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With respect to Steve Allan's patronage appointment we first asked the Ethics Commissioner to investigate. She informed us that the way in which this appointment occurred prevented her from doing so. She pointed us to the Deputy Minister of Energy. We then asked him to investigate, and he has since refused. To the Minister of Energy: who exactly will investigate this very concerning appointment, or have you set it up so that no one can?

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, again, the hon. members on the other side sent a request to the Deputy Minister of Energy, Grant Sprague, to review how this was done. Again, he sent a very detailed note back regarding all of the points that they asked, saying that Commissioner Allan is in no conflict. With respect to who he's retained, remember: this is the sole decision of somebody who's akin to a judge, their decision alone. We have to treat them with independence so that when they come forward with a report, we know it's done with integrity. Mr. Allan is somebody of the highest regard. This has been reviewed by department officials, and they found no conflict.

Mr. Sabir: Given that it would appear that Steve Allan's appointment came in exchange for political favours and given that he now stands to profit from this inquiry, as does the law firm where his son is a partner, and given that this is all very shady and Albertans are raising questions, that are going unanswered by this government, to the Minister of Energy: can we really trust the results of this inquiry if you won't first address the perceived conflict of interest with setting it up?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Energy has risen.

Mrs. Savage: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The public inquiry is independent of the government. As such, the commissioner is responsible on his own for selecting contractors. The government doesn't interfere with that. As per the engagement agreement between the government of Alberta and Commissioner Allan the commissioner is entitled to select the resources at his sole discretion.

Thank you.

Mr. Sabir: Given that golf course fundraisers, patronage appointments, and shady backroom deals are now plaguing this government and given that some are comparing this to scandals that plagued former Premier Redford – some are saying that the scandals are even worse, and I agree – to the Minister of Energy: will you actually show some leadership and launch an investigation into this appointment and make the details on the results public?

2:20

Mrs. Savage: Mr. Speaker, large law firms like Dentons, who Commissioner Allan hired, are regularly required to construct ethical walls between clients in order to ensure no conflicts of interest. Commissioner Allan operates independently of government. He's free to choose contractors of his own choosing, and we trust that is in order.

The Speaker: The hon. the Member for Grande Prairie has a question.

Teachers' Retirement Fund Management

Mrs. Allard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week was constituency week, and I spent the entire week at home in Grande Prairie meeting with various groups, stakeholders, and constituents. One group that I heard from was teachers, who continue to express their concerns about their pension fund in light of this government's decision to group public pensions under the Alberta Investment Management Corporation, or AIMCo for short. There seems to be some confusion around this decision, why it was made, and how it will impact the teachers' benefit. To the Minister of Finance: will you set the record straight about the decision to move the ATRF under the AIMCo umbrella?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

Mr. Toews: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the opportunity to make some clarifying comments on moving the Alberta teachers' retirement fund asset management function over to AIMCo. The broader use of AIMCo is a reflection of our commitment to drive efficiencies, see that we deliver services . . .

Mr. Eggen: Stealing money.

Mr. Hunter: Point of order.

Mr. Toews: . . . in a more cost-effective manner, and will result in cost savings, which will improve performance for the pension fund, Mr. Speaker. ATRF will continue to own the pension, they'll continue to administer the pension, and they'll continue to provide strategic direction.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

Mrs. Allard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and through you thank you to the minister for the answer. Given that there seems to be a persistence of conflicting information, including the historical performance or track record of the ATRF versus that of AIMCo, and given that Alberta is a relatively small jurisdiction to attract personnel with the skills and experience to manage this level of investing, to the same minister: can you explain the benefits of having these pensions managed together, including the benefit to the Alberta heritage savings trust fund?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

Mr. Toews: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. AIMCo has a long history of achieving excellent returns for their clients. The real gain for pension plans here is the sustainability of larger investment pools, which, ultimately, provide economies of scale and drive down costs in managing those investments. Alberta taxpayers, this government, and teachers all have the same priority and goals, and that is ensuring maximum returns and ensuring the most risk-mitigated environment for Alberta teachers' pensions.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Allard: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the minister. Given the answers already provided by this minister with respect to the benefits of this change and given the conflicting information that people have been hearing about their pension, to the same minister: can you provide some insight into the rationale for this move and whether there is a resource online through your ministry that concerned Albertans can access to get clear information about this change and how it will benefit them? Are you able to clarify the historical performance of AIMCo relative to other funds and how the ATRF will work jointly with AIMCo going forward?

The Speaker: The minister.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned before, the ATRF board will remain in place. They will continue to manage the pension and provide strategic investment decision-making over AIMCo in terms of how the assets are managed. It's estimated that the ATRF's administrative fees will decrease by .25 per cent as AIMCo can apply economies of scale, which will drive costs down

in the management of these investment assets. That will result in substantial savings for the pension plan, which will result in improved performance for Alberta teachers' pensions and Alberta taxpayers.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods has a question.

Public Service Pension Board Appointments

Ms Gray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Along with the concerns that teachers have around this government's move to change pensions that we just heard about, inside of Bill 22 there is also an attack on workers' rights to have input into the decisions affecting their own pensions. The Minister of Finance has taken a board seat away from the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees and handed it to management. This clearly weakens the voice of AUPE workers with respect to oversight of their own pension funds. Who, if anyone, did the Minister of Finance consult with before he made this decision?

Mr. Toews: Mr. Speaker, this change just simply reflects the representation to ensure that there is adequate and impartial representation on the pension board. Nonbargaining staff represent a full 25 per cent of the participants in the pension plan. This move is simply to ensure that there's adequate representation for all employees on the pension board.

Ms Gray: Mr. Speaker, given that there is absolutely no mechanism for representation or accountability for this seat and given that this bill also gives the government power to veto the appointment of an individual selected by labour to sit in their seat on the board and given that this is yet another naked attempt by this government to intimidate and control working people, why is the Minister of Finance overriding the right of workers to name their own representative to their pension board?

Mr. Toews: Mr. Speaker, the construct of unions nominating representatives to the board will continue. The changes will ensure that appointments are based on competency, and in the event there is a name that comes forward for which adequate competency doesn't exist, the unions will simply put forward an additional name. This is not going to dilute representation in terms of pension boards.

Ms Gray: Given that this minister just described vetoing choices made by workers around their pensions and given that this is simply the most recent attack on working people in Alberta and given that this government has already bargained in bad faith, illegally torn up contracts, openly plans to veto settlements and impose wage rollbacks, isn't it true that this hijacking of pension governance is purely to give the minister leverage in the labour disputes he plans to provoke?

Mr. Toews: Mr. Speaker, our changes to public pension plans in Bill 22 will strengthen the public pension plans in this province. They will ensure that pension boards have adequate competency to make the very significant decisions they make on behalf of the Alberta public-sector employees. This government is concerned about having adequate competency around the table, unlike the previous government, who simply wasn't concerned about competency at all.

University of Calgary Layoffs

Mr. Eggen: Mr. Speaker, this Advanced Education minister stood in this House yesterday and claimed that the brutal cuts he is

inflicting on our postsecondary institutions to pay for a \$4.7 billion corporate giveaway were in the name of sustainability and quality. Hours later we learned that the University of Calgary is cutting 250 positions on their campus. Can the Advanced Education minister please tell us how losing 250 positions at the University of Calgary will improve the quality and sustainability of postsecondary education?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Nicolaides: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, the MacKinnon panel was very clear in a lot of its conclusions and findings. [interjections] In comparison to other provinces the province of Alberta spends \$36,500 per student whereas B.C. is able to educate their population at \$31,000 and Ontario at \$21,000. At the rate that we're going, that is clearly not sustainable, so we have to make some changes. We have to make some fundamental transformation to improve the situation for the future. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Eggen: Well, given that it's public knowledge that this minister has given his personal assurance to stakeholders in meetings that drastic cuts imposed on postsecondaries would not translate to job losses and a decrease in instructional quality yet here we are with 250 jobs lost at just one institution alone, now is your chance to come clean. Please, why did you tell these workers that their jobs were safe, and then they were fired?

Mr. Nicolaides: Mr. Speaker, I've been working with our post-secondary institutions and have asked that they submit a budget impact assessment plan to my department by December 2 so that we can get a better understanding of how they plan to work through the next few years and how they plan to work through the budget. [interjections] I was quite clear that if one of our institutions has a clear plan that is not addressing administrative overhead and other administrative costs, I would have some serious concerns with that. Again, the MacKinnon panel showed that we spend double on administration per student than other jurisdictions. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order. It's becoming more and more difficult to hear the answers.

2:30

Mr. Eggen: Given, Mr. Speaker, that students are furious, rallies and protests are being planned across this province to force this government to listen to students, and given that this minister didn't see fit to talk to students at the rally right here at the Legislature yesterday, to the minister: whose fault is it for the job losses at the University of Calgary? Is it the institution? Is it the students on campus? It feels an awful lot like it's your fault.

Mr. Nicolaides: Actually, Mr. Speaker, it's their fault for creating the situation that we now have to clean up. They created a situation that is completely unsustainable. Not just that, they drove us to the... [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Unfortunately, hon. members, I'm having a very difficult time hearing the answer at this point in time.

The hon. Minister of Advanced Education has 20 seconds remaining.

Mr. Nicolaides: They drove us to the edge of the fiscal cliff and then on top of that bashed our main industry, did not support it,

resulting in hundreds of thousands of job losses in our primary industry and putting us in a situation where we've had to make some very difficult decisions in order to get our province back to balance.

When it comes to students, I don't know what the member opposite is talking about. That morning I had the opportunity to meet with students and listen to their concerns. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. I heard the question. I'm going to have to hear the answer.

Municipal Funding and Performance Measures

Mr. Amery: Mr. Speaker, municipalities across the province were promised millions of dollars in order to contribute to and meet the needs of their cities. All municipalities need support from this government to provide the services that their residents rely on and need. These needs affect the smallest of towns to the biggest of our cities. Can the Minister of Municipal Affairs please speak to whether these municipalities will receive the appropriate amount of funding, funding which was promised to them in order to meet the local needs of their communities?

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

Mr. Madu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. I am proud that we are delivering all dollars promised to our municipalities for the 2019-2020 budget year. We have also delivered a new funding framework that will see a modest 9 per cent reduction in subsequent years, which will increase with provincial revenues and which still provides the highest level of per capita funding in the entire country. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Cross still has the call.

Mr. Amery: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the previous government promised billions of dollars to large municipalities such as Calgary and Edmonton for the expansion of their LRT systems and given that some of these large-scale projects are currently under way or in planning and given that many municipalities are projecting costs to be much greater than anticipated, can the minister please explain how this government plans to support these municipalities with these projects while ensuring that the higher costs will not result in provincial funding being frivolously spent?

The Speaker: The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Madu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We must always remember that there is only one taxpayer. I've been clear that I expect municipalities to reduce wasteful spending, cut red tape, and streamline operations and keep taxes low. I am proud to know that most Alberta municipalities are doing great work to align themselves with the goals of our provincial government and to make life better for all Albertans. I look forward to continuing to work with our municipal leaders.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Amery: Thank you once again, Mr. Speaker. Given the difficulty of measuring local government performance on such a small scale and given that many constituents look to attain proper resources to allow them to understand this further and compare their municipality with other municipalities throughout the province, can the minister explain how this government will improve Alberta's knowledge and understanding on how local governments are

performing in regard to property taxes, municipal revenues, spending, and debt as compared to governments throughout this province. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order.

Mr. Madu: Mr. Speaker, I can understand why the members opposite will continue to heckle all day. After all, they taxed all movable and nonmovable objects in this province. What happened? Our revenue took a dive. But soon we will be introducing a municipal measurement index, which will track things like tax rates and spending for all local governments. This will improve transparency and accountability for all municipalities and taxpayers with a one-stop, easy-to-use platform. I look forward to all that in this House.

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

Traffic Safety and Transportation Funding

Member Loyola: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This UCP Transportation minister compromised highway safety to pay for the UCP \$4.7 billion no-jobs corporate handout. He cut \$137 million from highway maintenance. He cut \$27 million from a fund to upgrade dangerous intersections. The minister's own business plan predicts these cuts will lead to 61 additional fatal or serious injury collisions. That's his own data. What is wrong with this minister that he signs a plan knowing it will make Alberta's roads more dangerous?

Mrs. Sawhney: Mr. Speaker, I just want to make it very clear that safety is a number one priority for the Ministry of Transportation, for the Department of Transportation, and for this government. Certainly, our budget does not make any kind of changes or reductions that are going to compromise this safety.

Member Loyola: Mr. Speaker, talking points aren't going to save any lives.

Given that the rate of fatal or serious injury dropped every single year of the NDP government and given that every year our Transportation minister challenged the department to make the roads safer still with a lower target, is this minister really going to say with a straight face that this rise in projected collisions, the first in five years, has nothing to do with his brutal cuts to highway maintenance?

Mrs. Sawhney: Mr. Speaker, again, I'm going to reiterate that this government and the Ministry of Transportation are committed to safety first. That is our priority. Certainly, the information that has been presented by the member opposite is not accurate.

Member Loyola: Given that the Humboldt Broncos bus tragedy occurred at an intersection the Saskatchewan government knew to be dangerous and given this minister cut 85 per cent of the fund to fix dangerous intersections in Alberta, will the minister commit today to releasing a list of the dangerous intersections that won't be fixed because he preferred a \$4.7 billion no-jobs corporate handout?

Mrs. Sawhney: Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to the safety of Albertans. It's unfortunate that we're using the tragic Humboldt incident as a partisan attack to perpetuate... [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Hon. members, I cannot hear the answer. Part of this question period opportunity is the opposition has the opportunity to ask a question, and the government has the opportunity to answer it. We might not like the answer, but they do have the opportunity.

The hon. Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mrs. Sawhney: I would just like to say that it's unfortunate that we are using a tragic incident and episode to perpetuate a narrative that is inaccurate and untrue. Our government is committed to safety for Albertans.

Alberta Innovates Corporation Layoffs

Mr. Bilous: Today we have to deal with the fiscal reality of a significantly reduced budget and resulting significant changes in staffing levels and programs: that, Mr. Speaker, was the CEO of Alberta Innovates in a letter to her staff announcing that layoff notices would be beginning Monday and continuing into December. Up to 125 people are expected to lose their jobs leading up to Christmas. To the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism: can she please explain why she's sacrificing 125 jobs as part of her plan to pay for a \$4.7 billion no-job corporate handout?

Mr. Toews: Mr. Speaker, firstly, I want to acknowledge that job losses are difficult, especially for those families affected. I certainly want to acknowledge that. Alberta Innovates is in the effort, as is every government department, of restructuring, finding efficiencies, making changes to deliver more efficiently and more effectively on behalf of Albertans. We believe in the good work that Alberta Innovates does on behalf of Albertans, and we encourage them to continue to drive efficiencies in the way they deliver those services.

2:40

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

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Put your money where your mouth is, sir.

Given that in the Alberta Innovates 2019 annual report Alberta Innovates supported the creation of 2,000 new jobs and that every dollar of funding generated over \$29 in follow-up investment – follow that – and that while job-creating organizations like Alberta Innovates get cut, this UCP government is handing over a \$4.7 billion giveaway, taking \$16,000 flights, and staying in luxury hotels, will the minister please explain why 125 hard-working Alberta Innovates staff need to lose their jobs?

Mr. Toews: Mr. Speaker, firstly, I want to correct the false assertions that the member opposite made, and that is that our job-creation tax cut results in as large a number as he suggested. Our job-creation tax cut will result in the net reduction of \$100 million of revenue this year.

Alberta Innovates continues to be a priority for this government. We are encouraged that Alberta Innovates is moving forward to find efficiencies to improve the effectiveness of the way they deliver programs on behalf of Albertans.

Mr. Bilous: Mr. Speaker, given that it's been reported that the government asked Alberta Innovates to deliver the layoff notices on December 23, two days before Christmas, and given that this decision has been rightly described as inhumane, will the minister of economic development apologize to the staff at Alberta Innovates for her government's cruel and heartless plan to fire

people literally on the eve of Christmas? Are you really that much of a Grinch?

Mr. Toews: Mr. Speaker, again, I want to acknowledge that job losses are difficult, particularly for the families involved, but this is all part of an effort to restructure in the way we deliver on behalf of Albertans, to deliver more efficiently and effectively, something the previous government knew nothing about. We inherited a fiscal mess from the previous government. We will deliver sound fiscal management on behalf of Albertans. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. Member for Banff-Kananaskis.

Animal Rights Activist Farm and Ranch Protests

Ms Rosin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the weekend 15 activists were arrested in Canmore after targeting and illegally occupying and filming two Canmore sled dog facilities, both of which not only comply with but exceed the regulatory requirements. This is the second demonstration this year where activists have trespassed and put animals and business owners at risk. To the minister of agriculture: what is being done to deter these illegal acts and protect Alberta farmers, ranchers, and business owners?

The Speaker: The Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Dreeshen: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for that question. We are committed to amending the Animal Health Act, which will actually see fines increase to \$15,000 for a first offence and \$30,000 and actually one year of imprisonment for a second offence. At the end of the day, whether it's tourists going to our beautiful mountains to go on dogsleds or just turkey farmers, there is a culture of enforcement that Albertans expect, and it's something that this government is doing everything that we can. The great work of our Justice minister with his amendments to the trespassing act and increasing jail time and fines for criminal . . .

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

Ms Rosin: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister, for addressing this incident. Given that illegal invasion of private property is dangerous to business owners and animals that live and work on these properties and it's harassing to property owners and given that we cannot allow facilities like Howling Dog Tours and Mad Dogs & Englishmen tours to become unfair targets of radical activists, to the same minister: when can we expect to see this new legislation passed?

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

Mr. Dreeshen: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Soon. I was pleased, actually, to see that the RCMP did charge these illegal activists that were involved in this situation.

Mr. Speaker, through you to these illegal activists when they go out and break the law: the RCMP will charge you, you will face jail time, and we will fine you.

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

Ms Rosin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that it seems that protesters are feeling emboldened lately when it comes to demonstrating on and illegally occupying private property all the while slandering and spreading false narratives about innocent business owners and given that we cannot allow this

trend among activists to continue into the new year and beyond, especially when these protesters target property owners that care for their animals and exceed excellence in industry standards, to the same minister: what is being done to put a final end to this brazen behaviour?

The Speaker: The hon. member and certainly the minister of agriculture will know that if there have been charges laid, there are certainly some rules around sub judice that you will want to be cautious with should you choose to respond.

The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Dreeshen: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. When it comes to the changes to the trespassing act, we will increase fines up to \$10,000 for a first offence and up to \$25,000 for subsequent offences and actually up to \$200,000 for organizations and imprisonment of up to six months. When we're dealing with amendments to the Provincial Offences Procedure Act, we will increase the maximum amount of compensation that can be awarded by the courts from \$25,000 to \$100,000.

The Speaker: Hon. members, in 30 seconds or less we will proceed to the last members' statement. I know there's lots going on this afternoon. I'd encourage you to leave the Chamber expeditiously if you're needing to do so to get to other appointments.

Members' Statements

(continued)

Medicine Hat

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, according to Colby Cosh, a journalist with the *National Post*, federal Conservatives need "an election strategy that will work in Skeena and Algoma, and perhaps gives . . . a little ground in Medicine Hat." I disagree.

The people of Medicine Hat are kind, charitable, and understand the importance of community. It is because of this generosity that Medicine Hat is the first city in Canada to eliminate homelessness. On top of this amazing accomplishment we are also leaders in energy, with a wind farm, 100 years of oil and gas exploration, while also serving as a training ground for hundreds of skilled energy workers. We also take pride in our fiscal responsibility and our respect for tax dollars. In fact, the Medicine Hat hospital is one of the very few hospitals in the province that manages to stay within budget year after year.

But if that wasn't enough, Medicine Hat could also be considered one of the friendliest cities in the world. It could have something to do with Medicine Hat being the sunniest city in Canada or perhaps be because of the beautiful scenery and landmarks like the world's tallest teepee. You could also look at the incredible talent, Mr. Speaker, that comes out of our city like Nobel prize winner Richard Edward Taylor or like Trevor Linden and Lanny McDonald, who played with the Medicine Hat Tigers. We also have incredibly talented performers like Terri Clark and MacKenzie Porter.

Again I would like to ask Mr. Cosh: what is it about Medicine Hat that wouldn't work somewhere else in Canada? We understand the importance of innovation and environmental leadership, we understand the importance of taking care of some of the more vulnerable in our communities, and we understand what it means to allow people to make decisions for themselves through low taxes.

Mr. Speaker, Medicine Hat is the best city in Canada, I would even say the world. Mr. Cosh, the Conservatives need to focus more on the leadership of such an amazing community, that truly represents the values of our great country.

Notices of Motions

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

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. At the appropriate time I'll table the requisite number of copies for Standing Order 42, urging the pressing matter of public interest in respect of the management and stewardship of records and correspondence regarding the Election Commissioner.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, just rising on Standing Order 7(8) to notify the Chamber that, if required, we will extend the Routine.

The Speaker: I appreciate the extension. Unfortunately, given the schedule, we're unable, but we may extend just a couple of moments to deal with some of the issues.

The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake and Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Dreeshen: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to provide notice that at an appropriate time I will be moving the following motion in accordance with Standing Order 42.

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government of Canada to take all steps necessary to convene the Parliament of Canada as soon as possible to introduce emergency legislation to compel Canadian National Railway employees to return to work in order to prevent the potentially devastating impact of a strike on Alberta's energy and agricultural sectors.

The Speaker: Thank you to the hon. minister of agriculture for that.

Also, Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, it is appropriate for you to distribute those now, but we will deal with them at the appropriate time.

I'd also like to offer an apology to the hon. Government House Leader. In fact, Routine can be extended past 3 o'clock. I was confused by the unique situation of estimates.

2:50

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General has the call.

Bill 27

Trespass Statutes (Protecting Law-abiding Property Owners) Amendment Act, 2019

Mr. Schweitzer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and given our time I'll make sure I'm very brief here today. I'm here to seek leave to introduce Bill 27, Trespass Statutes (Protecting Law-abiding Property Owners) Amendment Act, 2019.

This bill would amend the Limitations Act, Occupiers Liability Act, the Petty Trespass Act, the Trespass to Premises Act, and the Provincial Offences Procedure Act. If passed, the amendments will make sure that we protect property owners, Mr. Speaker, that property rights are respected in the province of Alberta. We heard this loud and clear on our rural crime tour, that we need to make sure that Albertans have the strongest possible property rights here in the province of Alberta. It's integral to make sure that property rights are respected, that landowners can feel safe in their homes knowing that law-abiding citizens are protected.

The Speaker: I thought you were going to be quick.

[Motion carried; Bill 27 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

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

Mr. Nielsen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the requisite number of copies of an open letter that was placed in the *Edmonton Journal* by 175 professional doctors in this province, titled *Bill Removes Checks on Doctors Who Put Conscience Over Patients' Well-being*. Maybe the committee should have extended the invite to a few more people.

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

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have seven copies of letters from teachers within my constituency and in the area expressing their concerns about this government's intentions for the Alberta teachers' retirement fund and stating that they are not in support of the changes under Bill 22.

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

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the requisite number of copies of two tablings. The first are 24 letters from teachers who are deeply concerned about the situation in their classrooms. One cites: "Overcrowding is a serious concern. There is no more room in my class for [more] desks." There are 35 students in that junior high class today.

The other tablings are with regard to the heavy-handed, ham-fisted attempt to claw back the Alberta teachers' retirement pension after it being established as joint governance in 1939.

Thank you.

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

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today. First, I would like to table a letter from the Election Commissioner in which he expresses his surprise and disappointment for the ending of his office, which he found out through the media yesterday at 3 p.m.

My second set of tablings, Mr. Speaker, is that I have the requisite number of copies of 34 separate letters from constituents of the fabulous constituency of Calgary-Mountain View who are concerned about the government taking over the ATRF and moving it into AIMCo.

The Speaker: Are there any other tablings? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I table the requisite copies of a letter from Craig Lukinuk, reeve of Smoky Lake county, in support of the interprovincial nomination of the North Saskatchewan River for the Canadian heritage rivers system. As he says, "We [must] safeguard the future of our North Saskatchewan River environment for the use, benefit, and enjoyment of future generations."

The Speaker: Are there others? The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have 53 letters from all over Alberta, actually – from Edson, Coronation, Medicine Hat, Calgary, Lethbridge, Red Deer, Edmonton, and St. Albert – regarding the cutting of AISH. The government likes to call it deindexing.

My second tabling. I spent some time in estimates this morning. It seems the minister isn't aware of what's on his government's

website about climate change, so I thought I would table five copies of that as well.

The Speaker: Are there other tablings? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore. Oh, sorry. I've already done that three times. That's how much I love Decore. The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite number of copies of seven letters sent to my office and other MLA offices on the opposition side from current and alumni members of the rapattack firefighting crews, who express devastation and their large concern that their positions have been cut, to the detriment of our ability to properly fight forest fires in this province. They're very, very concerned that we're going to have significant problems and losses as a result.

The Speaker: Are there others?

Seeing none, I have two tablings today. The first is the six requisite copies of the annual report for the office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner for the period April 1, 2018, to March 31, 2019.

Secondly, I have six copies of the annual report for the office of the Ethics Commissioner for the period April 1, 2018, to March 31, 2019.

Hon. members, we are at points of order. The hon. Member for Calgary-West made two points of order, that have subsequently been withdrawn. But at 2:22 the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction raised a point of order. It appears that it's going to be debated by the hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika.

Point of Order Parliamentary Language

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At the time of 2:22 the Member for Edmonton-North West said to the Minister of Finance while he was speaking: you're stealing money. I believe this is a point of order under 23(h), (i), (j), specifically (i). This would be "imputes false or unavowed motives to another Member." I ask him to apologize and withdraw.

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

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, I do withdraw the fact that I did say: "Stealing money." What I meant to say was: taking the pensions without the teachers' permission.

The Speaker: I consider that issue dealt with and concluded.

Motions under Standing Order 42

The Speaker: The issue has been raised by both the hon. the Official Opposition House Leader – and I'll go to him in mere moments – and then followed by the hon. minister of agriculture.

First, with respect to the Official Opposition House Leader's motion under Standing Order 42, I'd just provide a few comments. In the form that it's proposed, the motion resembles more of a request for emergency debate under Standing Order 30 as opposed to a substantive motion. I'd encourage all members, if they wish to move a motion, to please feel free to reach out to Parliamentary Counsel in advance. They are more than happy to ensure that it is in its proper form. But that doesn't prevent us from proceeding this afternoon. Despite this deficiency in the form, I'm happy to have the hon. Official Opposition House Leader move his arguments.

Just before that, though, I'd like to provide an outline with respect to the procedure. If unanimous consent is granted, because we are currently in estimates and the estimates vote is this evening, Standing Order 59.01(5)(b) requires that the Assembly stand adjourned this afternoon upon the completion of the daily Routine to allow for consideration of estimates in committee, and Standing Order 59.03(1) requires the vote for the Committee of Supply on main estimates later this evening. Should unanimous consent be granted to proceed with the motions by the Official Opposition House Leader or the hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, that debate will be postponed until this evening following the scheduled vote in Committee of Supply and the introduction of the appropriation bill. I trust this clarifies our procedure moving forward over the next few minutes.

I will caution both members. This is not an opportunity to debate substantively your request but merely to provide the notice and to let us know why consent should be granted.

The hon. the Official Opposition House Leader.

Election Commissioner's Office Records Management

Mr. Bilous:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly consider pursuant to Standing Order 42 the urgent and pressing matter of the preservation of the public interest with respect to the management and stewardship of records or correspondence pertaining to ongoing investigations currently being undertaken by the Election Commissioner.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can tell you that the government served notice of a large volume of comprehensive changes yesterday. I'm sure you can understand that it's taking our caucus some time to digest these sweeping implications.

Today I'd like to provide a brief rationale for the need for this House to focus on the immediate practical implications of government legislation and how it affects the ongoing operations and investigations of the office of the Election Commissioner. I know and understand that there will be a more appropriate time to raise the particulars of Bill 22. I'm not here to speak to the legislation itself but, rather, an urgent problem that the active introducing of the provisions of the bill into the public record creates for an office of this Legislature. Commissioner Gibson is a dedicated and distinguished public servant. I have every expectation that he'll conduct himself with integrity even in these challenging circumstances.

3:00

That said, the tabling of Bill 22 creates an immediate and pressing concern with respect to the management and stewardship of records in the keeping of the office of the commissioner. This House must defend the public interest, Mr. Speaker. We have a duty to ensure that those records are secured and not subject to inappropriate access or destruction while their fate is before this House. That work must occur immediately, and it is the responsibility of this Assembly to ensure that the records of the Election Commissioner are secured while the House debates this bill.

Thank you.

[Unanimous consent denied]

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry has the call.

CN Rail Strike

Mr. Dreeshen:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government

of Canada to take all steps necessary to convene the Parliament of Canada as soon as possible to introduce emergency legislation to compel Canadian National Railway employees to return to work in order to prevent the potentially devastating impact of a strike on Alberta's energy and agriculture sectors.

Mr. Dreeshen: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to ask this Chamber to give unanimous consent for another very important issue that came up in question period again today, something that affects our agriculture and forestry sectors, our energy sector, and pretty much anything that goes on rail. We do so much exporting here in the province of Alberta, in the billions of dollars – \$12 billion in exports in agriculture, \$4 billion in forestry – and it's frustrating to see that a potential rail strike by CN would have devastating impacts to our major economic drivers in the province of Alberta.

So I'm urging for the unanimous consent of my colleagues here in the Chamber to be able to send a strong message to the federal

government that we do need to stand together to make sure that our economic drivers in the province of Alberta are allowed to function. Thank you.

[Unanimous consent denied]

The Speaker: Hon. members, the daily Routine has now concluded. Pursuant to Standing Order 59.01(5)(b) the House stands adjourned until 7:30 p.m.

The legislative policy committees will convene this afternoon for consideration of the main estimates. This afternoon the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Energy in the Rocky Mountain Room, and the Standing Committee on Families and Communities will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Service Alberta in the Parkland Room.

Hon. members, the House stands adjourned.

[The Assembly adjourned at 3:03 p.m.]

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