



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
Second Session

Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, March 2, 2020

Day 4

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 30th Legislature

Second Session

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New Democrat: 24

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, March 2, 2020

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

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

Hon. members, please remain standing.

Statement by the Speaker

Mr. Jack William Ady

September 22, 1932, to November 26, 2019

The Speaker: Last November I read a brief tribute to a former member who passed away. Mr. Ady's family has joined us this afternoon, and we'll pay tribute to his service.

Jack William Ady served three terms as a Progressive Conservative member for Cardston from 1986 to 1993 and for Cardston-Chief Mountain from 1993 to 1997. He was also the father-in-law of Cindy Ady, the Member for Calgary-Shaw from 2001 to 2012. Mr. Ady served as minister of advanced education and career development from 1992 to 1997.

Prior to being elected to the Legislative Assembly, Mr. Ady was councillor for the municipal district of Cardston. After leaving office, Mr. Ady served on a number of boards, including the Mount Royal college Board of Governors, Chinook regional health authority, and Alberta Health Services. In 2010 the Lethbridge cancer centre was renamed Jack Ady cancer centre in his honour. Mr. Ady passed away on November 26, 2019, at the age of 87.

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

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

Hon. Members:

O Canada, our home and native land!
True patriot love in all of us command.
With glowing hearts we see thee rise,
The True North strong and free!
From far and wide, O Canada,
We stand on guard for thee.
God keep our land glorious and free!
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

The Speaker: Hon. members, please be seated.

Introduction of Visitors

The Speaker: Hon. members, with our admiration and respect there is a major level of gratitude to the members of the families who have shared the burdens of public service. Today I would like to welcome the members of the Ady family who are present in the Speaker's gallery. Please rise as I call your name: Jack's wife,

Darlene Ady; their son and daughter-in-law, Don and Cindy, the former Member for Calgary-Shaw; daughters, Lori Brooks and Yvonne Ady; granddaughter, Laura Gonzales; and grandsons: Spencer, Trevor, Logan, and Steven Ady. Welcome. Members, please welcome them to the Assembly.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Hon. members, one School at the Legislature group this afternoon is joining us from the constituency of Edmonton-McClung. Please welcome Our Lady of the Prairies school.

Members, joining us from the constituency of Edmonton-South West are Kinsey and Phillip Peters, who led the Assembly in the singing of our national anthem today. Kinsey is an honours student in grade 9 at St. Rose junior high school, and she is also in a chamber choir. Her father, Phillip, is currently an ethics officer with the office of the Auditor General of Alberta but previously worked at Alberta Justice for a number of years. He is very proud of Kinsey. They both have extensive singing experience, but Kinsey has been part of a choir since she was three. Please join me in welcoming them to the Assembly.

Also, visiting the Member for Edmonton-Riverview from the Alberta College of Social Workers: the acting executive director, Ms Jody-Lee Farrah; council vice-president, Maxine Salopree; and council member Margaret Brown. Welcome to the Assembly.

Last but not least, it's my absolute pleasure to welcome five very special guests of the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry. These brave men and women are five of the 34 firefighters that went to Australia last year to help defend our cousins. We want to thank them personally for all of their hard work in keeping Albertans safe and, most recently, supporting Australia in their time of need. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly. [standing ovation]

Members' Statements

The Speaker: Hon. members, the Member for Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche has a statement to make.

La Francophonie Albertaine

Ms Goodridge: Merci, M. le Président. Je prends parole en tant que secrétaire parlementaire de la Francophonie.

Mars est officiellement reconnu le Mois de la Francophonie dans notre province, et le Mois de la Francophonie vise à reconnaître et à honorer les contributions passées, présentes, et futures des Albertains francophones, issus de l'une des deux communautés de la langue officielle du Canada.

En tant que gouvernement nous reconnaissons la valeur de la Francophonie pour notre économie car elle permet de diversifier les échanges commerciaux, de stimuler les importations et exportations, et de contribuer à la création d'emplois et à la croissance.

Les Canadiens-français ont vécu et ont travaillé sur cette terre bien avant que l'Alberta ne devienne une province. De nos jours, plus de 260,000 Albertains affirment parler français, et près de 400,000 résidents de notre province sont d'origine française. Des Albertains peuvent vivre, faire des achats, travailler, étudier, et se divertir en français en Alberta.

De Fort McMurray jusqu'à Lethbridge, de Bonnyville jusqu'à Miette, et dans toutes les petites et grandes villes qui s'étendent entre elles, des fières communautés francophones célèbrent leur joie de vivre.

Le français est la deuxième langue la plus parlée dans la province après l'anglais, et la population francophone de notre province

continue de se développer. Elle est d'ailleurs celle qui connaît la croissance la plus rapide au pays.

1:40

Demain nous célébrons le Mois de la Francophonie ici à la Législature avec une cérémonie du lever de drapeau de 11h45 à 12h45. Ce sera l'une des nombreuses levées du drapeau qui auront lieu à travers la province cette semaine. M. le Président, je remercie les membres de cette Chambre de leur appui continu, et j'encourage toute la population albertaine à découvrir une autre facette de notre province dynamique.

Merci.

[Translation] Thank you, Mr. Speaker. March is formally known as le Mois de la Francophonie in the province. Francophonie Month is meant to recognize and honour the past, present, and future contributions of French-speaking Albertans, one of Canada's two official languages communities. As a government we recognize the value to our economy of speaking French as it provides for diversification of trade, boosts exports and imports, and helps create jobs and growth.

French-Canadians lived and worked on this land long before Alberta became a province. Today over 260,000 Albertans declare themselves as French speakers. Almost 400,000 Albertans are of French origin. Albertans can and do live, shop, work, study, and play en français in Alberta. From Fort McMurray to Lethbridge, from Bonnyville to Miette and every town and city in between, there are proud francophone communities that will be celebrating the joie de vivre, the appreciation of life's pleasures. French is the most spoken language in the province after English. Alberta's Francophonie is thriving, with its population growing the fastest in Canada.

Tomorrow we will celebrate le Mois de la Francophonie albertaine with a flag-raising ceremony here at the Legislature from 11:45 a.m. to 12:45 p.m. This will be one of many flag raisings occurring around the province this week.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the members of this House for their continued support, and I encourage Albertans to discover another facet of our vibrant province. [As submitted]

The Speaker: Happy Francophonie Month to you as well.

If I might just take a very brief piece of Speaker's liberty here, on the 19th of March we will have a rotunda ceremony to celebrate Francophonie Month. I invite all of you to come. I also understand that there will be a special delegation from the Speaker's office in Quebec also joining us on that day.

Social Workers

Ms Sigurdson: Albertans celebrate the tremendous contributions of social workers to our province the first week of March each year. The theme this year is United by Diversity, Strengthened by Inclusion. I'm pleased to have leaders of the Alberta College of Social Workers join us in the gallery. I would also like to acknowledge five of my colleagues on this side of the House as well as another on the government side who have social work backgrounds. I'm grateful to say that I have been a social worker for over 30 years.

Social workers have a unique vantage point. They're often on the front lines, serving Albertans experiencing various challenges in living. Social workers understand the importance of government decisions regarding funding as they directly impact their work and the lives of the people they serve. Thus, social workers are keenly aware of public policy and whether it creates or inhibits social justice.

The pursuit of social justice is one of the core values of our profession. Our Code of Ethics states:

Social workers believe in the obligation of people, individually and collectively, to provide resources, services and opportunities for the overall benefit of humanity and to afford them protection from harm. Social workers promote social fairness and the equitable distribution of resources, and act to reduce barriers and expand choice for all persons, with special regard for those who are marginalized, disadvantaged, vulnerable, and/or have exceptional needs. Social workers oppose prejudice and discrimination against any person or group of persons, on any grounds, and specifically challenge views and actions that stereotype particular persons or groups.

As is clear by this well-articulated value, our theme of diversity and inclusion is synonymous with our profession.

I invite each one of you here in this Chamber and Albertans all across this great province to take a moment in the week ahead to give thanks. Give thanks to social workers on the front lines serving Albertans in difficult times. Give thanks to social workers creating connections in communities so that all Albertans may benefit. Give thanks to social workers developing policy that supports diversity and inclusion.

Firefighters

Mr. Long: Mr. Speaker, this week marks the beginning of wildfire season here in Alberta, about a month sooner than in most other jurisdictions. Our province makes it a point to start training and prepositioning our wildfire staff sooner so that they are always ready for that first call. Thousands of these wildfire staff are trained in West Yellowhead at the Hinton Training Centre each year.

As we have seen in previous years, wildfires can be devastating. We witnessed the costliest natural disaster in Canadian history in 2016 as the wildfire known as the Beast burned thousands of homes in Fort McMurray. Just this last year we had nearly 1,000 fires in our province, which burned over 883,000 hectares and resulted in the evacuation of thousands of Albertans. If it wasn't for the courage of our first responders, things could have been a lot worse. That is why today we recognize the contributions of these amazing men and women, all of their sacrifices, selfless commitment, and dedication to protecting lives and our communities.

I would also like to acknowledge the 34 men and women that went above and beyond when they left the comfort of their homes to fight fires in Australia this year. Due to the efforts of the minister, in the gallery with us today are five Alberta fire management specialists that deployed to Australia this last December to aid them in their time of need. These brave firefighters left a lasting impression on Australia as local authorities complimented them for their positive attitude of being helpful and flexible while adapting to the systems that were already in place. It is clear that Alberta trains some of the best and most resilient firefighters in the world. I'm proud to have a minister and a government dedicated to maintaining this high standard of care and public safety for Albertans.

I again would like to thank all of the brave men and women that put themselves in harm's way to protect our province. Thank you.

Cost of Living and Budget 2020

Mr. Dach: Mr. Speaker, I've been hearing from Albertans across the province who are struggling to pay their rent and pay for food, Albertans who don't have enough money left over at the end of the month to pay for their rising utility bills or their rising insurance costs, Albertans who are worried about rising school fees, bus fees, and dwindling school supports, Albertans who can't afford child care, Albertans who are waiting for rent subsidies and specialized

housing units, Albertans who are worried they won't have enough time with their family doctor and that the medical procedures they rely on are being deindexed, Albertans who are worried about paying for their prescriptions now that they are losing their drug coverage.

I stand up today because last week I was disheartened to see the pictures of the fridges of Albertans who rely on assured income for the severely handicapped empty. Their fridges were empty because their AISH payments were not deposited into their accounts. The payment dates had been changed on them. The limited money they received was supposed to stretch even further that month. Sadly, it didn't stretch far enough, and there was no money left over for food.

When I saw this government's budget, Mr. Speaker, I was indeed saddened again, sad because this government is continuing its attack on Albertans who can least afford it. They're making life more expensive for those most vulnerable in our province. Life has gotten more expensive for Albertans, and they're worried, worried that this new budget will not create jobs but will actually put people out of work, worried about the attack on front-line services they rely on. Albertans are worried they will pay more and get less, worried that this government is leaving them behind.

To all of the people who have reached out to me, I want to say: I have heard you, I will continue to speak up for you, and I'll speak loudly enough to be heard even through earplugs. No one in this province should face an empty fridge.

The Speaker: I see the hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont is rising.

Energy Policies

Mr. Rutherford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was pleased to hear in the throne speech that our government is committing to ensure the completion of several key pieces of infrastructure in our energy sector, including the Trans Mountain pipeline and the Keystone XL pipeline. By reaffirming this commitment, we are signifying that we are dedicated to growing our world-class industry, which leads all other oil-producing nations in environmental and social standards.

In 2018-19 we received \$5.4 billion in nonrenewable resource revenues, which help support social programs. We are lowering the corporate tax rate and are estimating an increase in corporate tax revenue this year. We are investing in carbon capture technologies and clean tech that will help us reduce our emissions. We are taking the necessary steps to improve our industry and foster economic growth in our province, and we are also committing to protecting the critical infrastructure that permits our oil and gas industry to get back to work.

In 2020 Alberta saw 4,200 jobs in the resource sectors, including oil and gas and mining. This recent increase is a welcome sign for workers in my constituency of Leduc-Beaumont and across the province. This government has the resolve to stand up to groups like Extinction Rebellion and their allies in the NDP, and we are seeing success in pipeline construction, increased investment in our oil and gas sector, investment in renewable energy without subsidies, and better projected economic growth.

Our success is not without future challenges. With the introduction of Bill 1, the Critical Infrastructure Defence Act, we are creating certainties and protections for the industry and increasing investor confidence. Considering the recent withdrawal from the Teck Frontier mine project stemming from public safety concerns, we cannot hide the fact that illegal blockades have negatively impacted our most important industry.

We will continue to fight the double standards thrown at us and promote the industry that puts food on the tables of Alberta families.

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

Provincial Fiscal Policies

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Politics has become a land of myth in many ways. I spend most of my days trying to counteract myth with fact, but by far the most annoying myth, in my view, is the myth of the UCP budget and fiscal responsibility. Let's start in the obvious place. Before they even so much as considered the fiscal realities of the province, before they did the analysis on royalty rates or economic projections, they rushed to give \$4.7 billion away to already profitable corporations. That policy has yet to create even one single job. Not a very responsible start.

Let's turn next to education. Teach someone to read; their ability to contribute to society increases immeasurably. Save \$10,000 on a partial EA salary, and you permanently impair a child's ability to provide for herself when she is grown.

How about affordable housing? Every analysis that has ever been done will tell you that it more than pays for itself. Most will tell you: more than double in justice system costs alone.

1:50

Then there's health. I don't think the UCP can even find an analysis that disputes the fact that good primary care, catching and monitoring chronic conditions and diseases before they lead to hospitalization save the system money. So what do they do? They target primary care physicians, specifically the ones spending time with patients to make sure they catch issues early, to say nothing of the activity generated by universal, affordable, high-quality child care. It more than pays for itself, so they throw it away.

The UCP walk around calling us too naive and myopic to see the hard fiscal realities, and all I can think of is the myth where those people pretended to see the emperor's new clothes because, after all, all smart people can see them, can't they? So let me be the first one to say it, Mr. Speaker: when it comes to the garb of fiscal responsibility, the Premier and his UCP colleagues have no clothes.

Oral Question Period

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

Budget 2020 Revenue Forecasts

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, the numbers in this Premier's budget are more than off; they're pure fantasy. The Premier has left Alberta, landed in Oz, and now he's stumbling down the yellow brick road, forecasting GDP with the Tin Man. Not a single bank listed in his budget is even close to supporting his budget's economic growth forecast. Premier, the banks listed in your own budget don't back up your numbers, so just what banks are you talking to: Narnia National, Fantasyland Financial, or maybe Middle-earth Manual?

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, perhaps the opposition leader should hire a new intern to write her questions for her. I can say that the projections for economic growth in Alberta are outlined in the budget documents. I'd recommend that the member familiarize herself with them. Last Thursday the Conference Board of Canada, one of the most highly regarded and independent economic think tanks in the country, confirmed that this province, they project, will have the second-highest growth in 2020 of the Canadian provinces, at 2.2 per cent and 2.3 per cent the following year. But when it comes to projections, I will remind the NDP leader that a year ago she projected revenues \$6 billion higher than we are.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, economist Trevor Tombe says that the Premier's plan is "off the rails." His oil forecasts are just plain wrong. The Premier says that \$58 oil prices are coming down the pipe and will be here in less than a month, but WTI is at \$47 today. Premier, Albertans can do the math. Compared to any other private-sector forecast, your budget is off by almost \$3 billion. Premier, why are you gaming the numbers?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, precisely a year ago the discredited NDP government released their last fiscal projection of their tenure, which projected revenues that are \$6 billion higher by 2022 than those embedded in the budget released last week. In the platform that we developed, we automatically cut \$2 billion out of their revenue projection because it was so absurdly pie in the sky. The projections we have now were developed by the independent public service at the Department of Finance with input from private-sector economists.

Ms Notley: Well, in fact, Mr. Speaker, our projections didn't involve a \$4.7 billion gift to big corporations.

I'll quote: if any discussion about deficit reduction is to be taken seriously, then governments have to be honest with their constituents, and the constituents, the people, have to be honest with their governments. That is former Premier Ralph Klein. In the last four days more than 10,000 people have shown up in person to be honest with this Premier, and they're not happy. In return, the Premier gives them a fake budget that's off by billions. Why won't this Premier take Ralph's advice and at least be honest with Albertans?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, a whole lot of nonsense there. Let me pick out one in particular: \$4.7 billion. Now, you know, I know that when somebody repeats a lie, sometimes they forget what the truth is. That \$4.7 billion figure is based on no stimulative impact, which all economists project there will be as a result of the job-creation tax cut, and it rolls four years into one year to mislead people. That would be like this government saying that we're spending over \$200 billion this year. It's completely misleading, and Albertans deserve better than that from the Leader of the Opposition.

The Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

Ms Notley: Well, I agree with the Premier on one thing: Albertans definitely deserve better.

Budget 2020 and Job Creation

Ms Notley: The blueprint released today doesn't have a single new program for creating jobs. The Premier is out of ideas. All he has left is to double down on the same failed corporate handout that has already cost us 50,000 full-time jobs. Let's be clear. It's not a blueprint. It's not an outline. It's barely a sketch. To the Premier. Your plan has let down 50,000 Albertans so far. How many more will have to suffer before you reverse your failed \$4.7 billion corporate handout?

Mr. Kenney: Let's be clear, Mr. Speaker. It's now evident, as the Conference Board confirmed last week, that this government inherited a recession from the NDP, the NDP that drove Alberta into a jobs crisis with nearly 200,000 unemployed people. You know what they did? It's true that there was a downturn in commodity prices in 2015 and there will be a decline in commodity prices this year because of the coronavirus and the global economic impacts. The difference is this. The NDP chose to make a bad situation much worse, raising taxes on everything: their carbon tax, the 20 per cent increase in taxes on job creators, higher income taxes, higher property taxes. We're doing the opposite.

Ms Notley: Well, we'll get to cost, Mr. Speaker.

Right now the Premier can't keep up with the jobs he's lost, let alone the ones he's not creating. His new budget forecasts 19,000 fewer jobs than the last one, four months ago, and he's actually down 50,000, so it seems he can't reprint his forecasts fast enough to keep up with the people he's putting out of work. Meanwhile he's subsidizing his corporate handout to the tune of \$600 million in staff cuts, firing thousands of teachers, nurses, and more. Will the Premier admit his so-called blueprint for jobs is actually costing Albertans tens of thousands of jobs?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, we all know that the NDP basically operates off fear and smear, division and deception. They like scaring people. It's what they do. They're scaring people in the public service. The budget actually projects a reduction of, I believe, 2,100 positions. In a public service of over 200,000 people that's less than the average annual turnover. But what is their alternative? Is it to run massive deficits till we hit over \$100 billion and spend billions on interest payments rather than delivering education and health care? Albertans said no to NDP fiscal recklessness.

Ms Notley: I'm just curious, Mr. Speaker. Is the Premier actually saying that 2,100 people losing their jobs is, quote, not onerous? This Premier's \$4.7 billion corporate handout hasn't created jobs and hasn't attracted investment, and now his new idea is to throw together another Crown corporation allegedly focused on investment attraction because apparently his minister of economic development is not up to the task. Premier, I know there are still quite a few of your failed candidates who need a job, but why don't you stop creating more fake agencies, stop your failed corporate handout, stop throwing Albertans out of work, and actually introduce an actual jobs plan?

Mr. Kenney: Well, for the record, Mr. Speaker, I think there are a whole lot more failed NDP candidates who need jobs.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP hired 15,000 additional people into the Alberta public service while tens of thousands of people in the private sector were losing their jobs and seeing massive declines in their incomes. Here is the stark reality. The NDP left us with the worst fiscal situation in our history and in our country. Without action, we would be headed over a fiscal cliff, and billions and billions more would be wasted on interest payments rather than public services. We won't let that happen.

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

Provincial Fiscal Policies

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, this Premier has introduced two consecutive deficits that are bigger than they were before under our government. You know, not only that; he can't create jobs, but he's really good at making Albertans pay. His plan hits Albertans with an additional \$436 million in premiums, fees, and licences. The education property tax will cost Albertans \$100 million this year alone, and that's on top of a \$600 million increase in income tax, skyrocketing electricity and insurance costs. For the people of Alberta this is one expensive Premier. He promised Albertans affordability, but will he admit – Mr. Premier, they can't afford you.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, as the very first act of this new government we kept trust with Albertans by repealing the NDP carbon tax in the single largest tax cut in Alberta history, saving the average family upwards of \$1,200 a year, saving Alberta taxpayers \$1.4 billion. [interjections] And they're heckling me. You know

why? Because they love that carbon tax. They want to bring that carbon tax back even though the Alberta Court of Appeal backed us up in saying that the federal government is wrong to try to impose their carbon tax on Albertans.

2:00

Ms Notley: Well, the second thing this Premier did after he got elected was he broke his promise to Albertans and raised every single one of their income taxes. But, Mr. Speaker, the Premier's cost hits just keep coming: \$150 million in higher tuition costs, a \$10 million photoradar cash grab, \$70 million in seniors' prescription drug costs, and a 40 per cent increase in camping fees. To the Premier: why did he not come clean with Albertans this time last year and tell them that his actual plan was to make them pay much, much more while big, profitable corporations get away with paying much, much less?

Mr. Kenney: Well, first of all, Mr. Speaker, you know what happened with the "big, profitable corporations" under the NDP? They paid way less. Here's the paradox that five years later the socialists still haven't figured out. They raised taxes on job creators by 20 per cent, and revenues went down from corporations year after year after year because they left Alberta, they moved operations outside of Alberta, they laid people off in Alberta. We are undoing the damage of four years of disastrous social economic policies.

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, when it comes to costs, just wait: there's more. Parents and kids in schools will have to find \$121 million more this year than they did last. What's this government's big solution? More vending machines and space rentals, asking kids to hold a fundraiser just to keep their teacher. Chocolate almonds are not going to fix the \$121 million hole that this Premier has just left. What does the Premier actually expect students to do: start renting out their classrooms on Airbnb? Oh no, wait. There's a tax on that, too.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, once again, Albertans elected a government that would actually be responsible in managing the province's finances. The NDP took a \$13 billion debt, drove it up to a \$60 billion debt, had a plan to drive it to over \$100 billion because they love taking tax dollars and giving it to bankers in the form of interest payments. That is the path to poverty. We're making challenging but necessary decisions to gradually reduce spending by 2.8 per cent while growing our economy to stop the dive into debt, to guarantee our future.

Education Program Unit Funding

Ms Notley: Two consecutive UCP budgets where the deficit has grown, but, Mr. Speaker, it gets worse. This Premier is cutting support for kindergarten kids with special needs. Program unit funding, or PUF, has been a major component of early childhood learning since as long as I can remember. Now this Premier is playing a shell game, and thousands of five-year-old kids will pay the price. He's at the point where he won't even spare five-year-old kids with disabilities from his bad decisions. To the Premier: why is he being so heartless? Answer the question, Premier.

The Speaker: The Minister of Education is rising.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. Really, I just categorically disagree with that. PUF is integral to our new funding model. It will continue. All of our students will be funded, especially those that require special-needs funding.

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier, and Albertans deserve an answer from him. Quote: it is such a crucial intervention to make sure he can communicate before he goes to school. That's Emily MacKenzie, an Edmonton parent whose son has autism. Stephen Kiers, whose son has a speech delay, says, quote: the PUF program has given him access to amazing speech therapists; without it he will be severely behind the other kids. Shantel Sherwood says her son, quote, has the words but he has no way to communicate them, and without that aid he has no way of functioning through the day. Premier, why are you attacking these families?

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

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. That is a ludicrous statement. We will continue – absolutely continue – to have funding for our most vulnerable. We recognize the importance of early intervention, and Alberta continues to have the earliest intervention program for children in Canada, starting at two years, eight months. Under the old model students saw a decline in their supports as their education progressed to the higher grade levels. Our changes close that gap and ensure that no child will fall through the cracks as they transition from kindergarten throughout the rest of the grades.

Ms Notley: Not a word that minister says should be believed, Mr. Speaker.

The Premier has no idea what it's like to be the parent of a child with special needs: the sleep lost, the daily challenges and victories, the pervasive worry about their future. It's not a surprise they're among the most passionate and vigorous of advocates. They were fearless and uncompromising when I was Premier, and they are that way now. They deserve to be heard, not bullied online by the Premier's staff. Will the Premier apologize to Stacey Speta and direct his staff to meet with these courageous parents?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Education.

Member LaGrange: Thank you for the question. No one knows how integral early intervention is for our most vulnerable. I am trained as a rehabilitative practitioner. I worked with the developmentally disabled all my life. I had a younger brother who was born with Down syndrome, but we couldn't keep him down. We know that early intervention absolutely works to provide those students with success. We will continue to have the PUF program. It has not changed, and the funding cap remains at the \$25,000 level. Every student whether . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler has the call.

Rural Physicians

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My riding of Drumheller-Stettler is as rural as they come. It is sparsely populated, and the towns are small and far apart. Access to quality, timely health care is always a top concern for my constituents, and with the government implementing a new physician framework, some doctors have suggested to myself, AHS, and the media that they are planning to no longer work in the ER and will rescind certain hospital privileges. To the Minister of Health: is AHS prepared for this, and can you assure this House that Alberta's rural emergency rooms, like mine, will be staffed?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health has the call.

Mr. Shandro: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. AHS closely monitors the availability of physicians to provide patient care in our ERs across the province. If a physician chooses to rescind their privileges, AHS is prepared to bring in physicians to ensure continued coverage. When a physician rescinds, they must provide formal notice to AHS pursuant to the medical bylaws. This can take up to 60 days. I have full confidence that physicians will follow the AHS medical staff bylaws, which have the full support and backing of the College of Physicians & Surgeons.

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

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that the role of a rural physician is far different from that of an urban doctor – they spend long periods of time on call and often have high patient loads and greater responsibilities in the local hospital – will there be a compensation model offered to our great rural physicians that acknowledges these differences and compensates accordingly?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Right now here in Alberta fewer than 5 per cent of family physicians are paid on a model where it's per-patient funding, what we call an alternative relationship plan. The Canadian average, on the other hand, is up to 34 per cent. I believe that these compensation models can work for a large number of physicians. I also have directed the ministry to develop a new ARP model to launch this summer. The new ARP, or alternative relationship plan, will be able to have built-in transition benefits, and I've also asked the department to consider different models to address rural Alberta.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that doctor recruitment and retention has been a daunting task in rural Alberta for many years and given that many municipalities have already had to incentivize the recruitment of physicians for decades using already scarce resources, will this alternative compensation model be attractive enough to ensure the retention of physicians and the recruitment of new ones?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The recruitment and retention of physicians in rural and remote areas in Alberta has been a long-standing issue, which many governments have had to grapple with. It will take a comprehensive approach. It will have to include continued support for rural medical education programs, incentives for physicians to practise in underserved communities, as well as use of prac IDs, which will allow government to match new physicians with those underserved areas. Addressing all these issues will be difficult, but, yes, within a comprehensive approach I believe that we will be able to improve the recruitment and retention of those rural physicians.

2:10 Postsecondary Institution Layoffs

Mr. Eggen: Mr. Speaker, three days after this government claimed in its throne speech to support the trades, SAIT in Calgary announced that it was laying off 230 employees from that facility as a result of cuts from this provincial government. Now, this morning, 240 positions are being cut at NAIT here in Edmonton for the same reason. Shameful. Shameful, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Advanced Education: will you admit now that your contribution to the throne speech wasn't even worth the paper that it was printed on?

Mr. Nicolaides: Well, Mr. Speaker, I know that NAIT is in the process of looking at some of their staffing. I know that they haven't made any final decisions and that it'll still be coming to their board of directors so they can make a final decision. At the end of the day, though, of course, in a situation in which there are staff reductions, I know it's never an easy time, and I know that senior administration doesn't come to these decisions lightly. But I know that any individuals who are affected by staff reductions will have the strongest possible supports available to them as they transition out of their . . .

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

Mr. Eggen: Given, Mr. Speaker, that these cuts and many more to come lie directly on the back of this UCP government and given that SAIT, as it happens, was a place where the Premier launched his international embarrassment, which is the \$30 million war room, and given that he packed the room full of SAIT employees to launch this war room, many of whom now are facing pink slips in the next few weeks, to the Premier: maybe you can explain why your ridiculous war room remains standing while NAIT and SAIT and its hard-working employees have been dealt a body blow?

Mr. Nicolaides: Mr. Speaker, I'd be happy to get up and explain. As the member knows, the MacKinnon panel made it very clear that spending in our postsecondary system is a lot higher than other jurisdictions. In Alberta we spend approximately \$36,000 per student. In B.C. they're doing it at \$31,000 and \$21,000 in Ontario. I firmly believe, as does our government, that we can deliver a stronger and more sustainable postsecondary system to ensure its viability for the future. If we'd continued on their path, we'd be jumping over the fiscal . . .

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

Mr. Eggen: Mr. Speaker, we know that NAIT and SAIT are some of the best technical institutions in the entire country. It's a shame that the Advanced Education minister is denigrating those same institutions and cutting their funding. We know very well that just five days ago this minister rose to boast about his commitment to the trades even though he knew very well in advance that they were planning to make the cuts to NAIT and SAIT while he was saying those same words. Now, the University of Calgary has also confirmed that they're losing more on top of their 250 layoffs. Can you explain, Minister, to the students at NAIT and SAIT and the University of Calgary why they are left . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. I know that we're all new back to session. If anyone is curious what an example of a preamble would be, that would probably be a very good example of what we can't do.

The hon. Minister of Advanced Education now has the call.

Mr. Nicolaides: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I've reiterated in this place, and I'll reiterate it again, that, of course, our government firmly believes that a trade certificate has the same value, merit, and worth as a university degree, unlike the members opposite and specifically the Member for Edmonton-South, who took the opportunity to denigrate the trades and denigrate Cecile, a strong tradesperson who's contributed . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order. It's very, very, very difficult for me to hear the hon. minister. You might not like his answer, but he does have the opportunity to give it.

The hon. Minister of Advanced Education has some time remaining.

Mr. Nicolaides: That's their view, Mr. Speaker. We know where they stand, and the comments from the Member for Edmonton-South are very clear in terms of how they believe trades fit into postsecondary. We value apprenticeship learning and have a robust agenda . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall now has the call.

Energy Development and Environmental Policies

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before, Teck Resources abandoned its \$20 billion Frontier project. Now MEG Energy quietly asked for a three-year pause on its \$10-billion May River SAGD project. Once again this government's \$4.7 billion corporate handout has failed to create jobs or attract investment. The minister said in August, and I quote, that she was a little disappointed but not concerned by the failure of her corporate handout. Now it's March. After Frontier, after May River, is the minister concerned now?

Mrs. Savage: Mr. Speaker, the cancellation of the Teck Frontier project falls squarely at the hands of the federal government, squarely at their hands. They created an uncertain regulatory environment, and there's no question that if projects in the oil sands are to move forward, they need pipelines. Over a number of years we saw pipeline project after pipeline project either fail or delay to the point where we have more production in the oil sands and across our oil and gas sector than we have the ability to move it. Until we can reconcile the production and the capacity, we're going to have continued problems in this province.

Mr. Sabir: Given that serious investment players have made it clear that they are basing their capital decision on the credibility of the climate plan at the corporate level and at the jurisdictional level – that's in their letters – and given that we have heard these warnings from BlackRock, J.P. Morgan, AIMCo, Teck, and now MEG Energy, has the minister got the message yet that capital markets have decided that this government's response to climate change is not credible?

Mrs. Savage: Mr. Speaker, what the Teck letter said is that it required and it asked that the federal government have a climate plan that has a place for oil and gas development. We have seen the last four years in Ottawa where they have a climate plan that has given no articulation for jobs in Alberta, no articulation for the development of natural resources to be reconciled in their climate plan. That's what we need to do. We need a clear vision for oil and gas development in Canada.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you. Given that the *Globe and Mail* reports that there are nearly two dozen energy projects with approval but no investors and given that this minister seemed to be relying on the Keystone Kops at the war room to make the case for Alberta to investors, will she commit to reporting to this House every project that is cancelled or delayed because of her government driving investment away from Alberta?

Mrs. Savage: Mr. Speaker, what I can report is that over the last four years we had Northern Gateway vetoed, we had Energy East cancelled, we had line 3 delayed, we had Trans Mountain delayed, and we had KXL delayed. The problem with all of this is that we do not have pipeline capacity to move oil and gas, and the failure on pipelines falls squarely in their hands. I would ask again: what

was the former Premier doing in Justin Trudeau's office on the day he vetoed Northern Gateway? She was standing there smiling, congratulating him. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

Oil and Gas Infrastructure Policies

Mr. Reid: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is no secret that the Alberta economy is experiencing hardship, especially in the energy industry with low commodity prices, projects stuck in regulatory red tape, and energy companies laying off employees or, worse yet, closing their doors altogether. This has been especially felt in Livingstone-Macleod, where my constituents have been hit hard by the economic downturn. Although there are signs of improvement, they are looking for concrete steps being taken to get Albertans back to work. To the Minister of Energy: given that the government announced a blueprint for jobs in last week's budget, how are we planning on getting Albertans back to work?

Mrs. Savage: Well, thank you for that question. There are a number of initiatives that the Premier has highlighted in his blueprint for jobs announcement. In fact, this morning I had the privilege of standing with the Premier announcing the first suite of policies under the blueprint for jobs, and that is that the government of Alberta is advancing a \$100 million loan to the Orphan Well Association. Mr. Speaker, this is anticipated to create 500 jobs while also addressing the serious problem we have with orphaned and abandoned wells in this province. That'll create jobs for the service sector. It'll create jobs . . .

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

Mr. Reid: Mr. Speaker, in Livingstone-Macleod we also face the serious issue regarding abandoned and orphaned wells. There are concerns that have not been addressed for a number of years. Given that myself and other MLAs throughout the province have also brought up similar concerns, to the minister: can she share further details on this morning's announcement, specifically on how these funds will help landowners facing issues with orphaned and abandoned wells?

2:20

Mrs. Savage: Well, thank you for that question. Liability management and ensuring that we clean up orphan and abandoned wells are important not only for this government but for me personally, having grown up on a farm where there is oil and gas infrastructure. Over four years the opposition, when they were in government, did not do enough to address this problem. With this morning's announcement we will see another 1,000 wells cleaned up and reclaimed. We heard from the Orphan Well Association that they anticipate cleaning up 2,000 wells this year. That will create tons of jobs and clean up a long inactive inventory.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Reid: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that there are a large number of orphaned and abandoned wells in this province and given that the minister has informed my fellow members and myself that she is working on a comprehensive proposal to address this issue, once again to the minister: can she provide an update to the larger proposal being prepared by the government to address the issue of orphaned and abandoned wells in Alberta?

The Speaker: The minister.

Mrs. Savage: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today's announcement was an important first step in what we will be rolling out as a full suite of policies to address the entire life cycle of wells in Alberta, including from licensing to operations to production to abandonment to reclamation and to post-legacy. We will be addressing this issue. It's been a problem that's been growing in this province for decades. It's a problem that was not addressed over the four years that the NDP government was in power, but it's a problem that we are going to be addressing, and I'm looking forward to rolling out a suite of policies in the weeks ahead.

The Speaker: I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud rising.

Early Childhood Education Accreditation

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm almost overwhelmed by sadness and helplessness: that was the chair of the Alberta Association for Accreditation of Early Learning and Care Services speaking about this government's decision to abandon its early childhood education accreditation process with zero consultation. This Minister of Children's Services has already established an unfortunate track record of acting abruptly without consultation. Can she please tell this House why she once again talked to no one before making this abrupt change?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Children's Services.

Ms Schulz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Quote: this is time now that we can dedicate to working with our children versus working in the backroom getting ready for an audit. That quote? Sue Tomney, the CEO of YWCA. Quote: the priority of our members has always been the quality of care that they provide to families; not having to do the paperwork associated with accreditation frees up educators and allows them to focus on the children in their care and will help eliminate educator burnout. That's the Alberta Association of Child Care Operators. We're reducing red tape and enabling child care workers to spend more time with kids and families.

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

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that there are clear differences between the accredited and licensed child care standards and given that 90 per cent of child care operators are accredited and operate at the highest standard of care in early childhood education and given that many fear that this government views child care as nothing more than glorified babysitting rather than as an essential part of early childhood development, will the minister commit today that she will ensure that all of the high-quality standards of accreditation will be incorporated in legislation as requirements for licensed child care?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Children's Services.

Ms Schulz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When we asked child care workers and child care centres what the most important part of accreditation was, it was the wage top-up to attract high-quality, educated staff to provide for kids and families across this province. Given that 95 per cent of licensed child care centres were also accredited, it was no longer the best way to measure quality, safe child care centres, so we have streamlined the process. We are going to increase the licensing standards and reduce red tape so child care workers can spend more time with children.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's unfortunate that Alberta families did not hear a commitment there to legislating the high standards of accreditation.

Given that under the previous model child care workers received a wage top-up based on the high standards of accreditation and given that this minister abruptly abandoned that process with zero consultation, leaving many educators worried about the elimination of existing wage top-ups and potential wage rollbacks, and given that this government has cut the wages of everyone, ranging from youth workers to physicians, will the minister commit today that over this government's term not a single, solitary cent will be taken from the wages of child care workers as a result of this change? Yes or no, Minister?

Ms Schulz: Mr. Speaker, with the changes that we made to accreditation, we in fact maintained the top-ups for child care workers, and now more child care workers can potentially access those top-ups. Alberta was the only jurisdiction in Canada that had both licensing and accreditation. That was redundant, and it was unnecessary, and I'm glad to have freed up staff time and resources in child care centres across this province. I'm also looking forward to reviewing the child care regulations this coming spring to come into force this fall. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

Physician Compensation Framework

Mr. Shepherd: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. One hundred and twenty emergency room physicians from the Calgary area have written to this Minister of Health urging him to stop and rethink his attack on primary care. This is a quote: these changes will have significant, negative long- and short-term effects for Albertans; these changes will impact the ability of family doctors to deliver comprehensive primary care, leaving patients with complex medical conditions or mental health illnesses to suffer the most. These doctors are clearly telling this minister that he's creating chaos and suffering in health care. Why is he not listening?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the hon. member knows, we are keeping physician compensation at \$5.4 billion. It's the highest in the history of this province. Our physicians are the highest paid right now in the country. They're going to continue to be among the highest paid. We look forward to, with the new physician compensation framework, working with the AMA as we roll out parts of the compensation framework, and we look forward to continuing to have those conversations with the AMA. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre is the only one with the call.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that physicians don't feel nearly as warm towards the minister as he seems to claim to feel towards them and given that this letter also says, and I quote, these changes will not result in cost savings but will greatly increase costs by shifting care from lower cost primary care to expensive hospital-based care, and given that these are hospital-based doctors, experts, making this point and given that this minister has focused 85 per cent of his cuts on primary care, why is this minister so oblivious to the data and the importance of prevention in primary care?

Mr. Shandro: Well, Mr. Speaker, why is the hon. member so oblivious to the fact that we are keeping compensation for physicians at \$5.4 billion? We're going to continue to ensure that physicians in Alberta are among the highest paid in this country. There are no cuts. We are going to actually try, through alternative compensation models on a per-patient basis, to make sure that we're actually going to spend more on primary care. It's unfortunate that there is misinformation and that any of those primary care physicians or their brethren in the emergency rooms think otherwise, and that is being perpetuated by the hon. member.

Mr. Shepherd: Given, Mr. Speaker, that there are a wide range of physicians that this minister could be cutting from but he is focusing 85 per cent of the cuts on family doctors, it doesn't matter how much he spends if the question is where he spends it. Now, given that doctors of all specialties are in fact sounding the alarm at all of Calgary's major hospitals and given that this minister seems to be motivated only by paying for the Premier's \$4.7 billion corporate handout, why won't he listen to the actual front-line professionals when they tell him about the chaos that he is creating in Calgary health care? Or is he simply just going to rise and say: false, false, false?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The fact is that the per-patient funding model in an alternative relationship plan that we are proposing to pay our primary care physicians would actually be able to provide more funding to the primary care physicians. We are proposing to give them more money through those per-patient funding models. We want to support those primary care physicians. [interjections] We actually campaigned, unlike our friends opposite who are heckling me, on supporting the patient medical home model, and we're going to continue to do it through ARPs, those alternative per-patient compensation models.

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

Mr. Ellis: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Some physicians in my riding are concerned about possible changes to physician compensation. Now, according to the MacKinnon report Alberta's per capita spending on health care is higher than B.C., Ontario, and Quebec, and physician costs make up about 25 per cent of the total health care budget. Now, however, the report found that spending more doesn't actually produce better outcomes for Albertans. Can the Minister of Health please confirm if physician funding is being maintained and how we will compare to other provinces when the changes are made?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're spending over \$20 billion on health care, the highest level in the history of this province and the highest per capita in the country. A doctor in Alberta earns approximately \$90,000 more than a physician in Ontario. Alberta's \$5.4 billion physician budget was also facing forecasted cost overruns of over \$2 billion over the next three years. That's why the new physician funding framework, introduced two weeks ago, maintains physician funding while preventing those cost overruns. Even after these changes are made, these doctors are going to be amongst the highest paid in the country.

2:30

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-West has the call.

Mr. Ellis: Well, thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Now, given that Alberta is the only province that uses complex modifiers and given that the fee was introduced about 10 years ago to compensate physicians for the extra time they spend with complex patients, can the minister tell this House if complex modifiers are being used as intended, or what changes we will make if they are not?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Government is not stopping paying for extra time, and we're not limiting the time that physicians spend with their patients. Any claim to the contrary is patently false. Changes that will be implemented on March 31 will still pay physicians \$9 at minute 15, eventually removing the extra top-up fee at the 15-minute mark in 2021-22. The modifier of \$18 will still be paid at minute 25, though, and every 10 minutes thereafter. Alberta remains the only province, as the member noted, that pays the top-up for complex visits.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Ellis: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Now, given that some physicians believe that changing complex modifiers will lead to shorter patient visits and more specialist referrals and given that a fee-for-service model is not the only way to compensate physicians, can the minister update this House on our plans to protect patient care while ensuring that physicians receive fair compensation?

The Speaker: The minister.

Mr. Shandro: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Right now Alberta has the lowest number of physicians who are paid through what I was speaking about earlier, the alternative relationship plan, plans that provide compensation on a per-patient basis. The average for Canada is approximately 34 per cent. Alberta, on the other hand, is just 5 per cent. These ARPs, in contrast to a fee-for-service basis, are less onerous for physicians, allowing them to work within a team to be able to support the medical home model basis and provide them with budget predictability. That's why we're going to continue to work with those physicians to develop those models. [interjections]

The Speaker: I just might caution members of the Official Opposition, particularly those from Edmonton-Rutherford, on the use of unparliamentary language when they may or may not be heckling.

Seniors' Benefit Program Funding

Ms Sigurdson: Mr. Speaker, this government slashed seniors' drug benefits by \$72 million. That's a huge amount of money taken directly out of the pockets of Albertans who built this province and are now struggling with chronic, sometimes terminal illness. It's morally reprehensible that the UCP is pillaging the seniors' drug plan to pay for their war room and their \$4.7 billion corporate handout. Can the minister of seniors explain why the balance sheets of big corporations and Tom Olsen's Twitter account are funded, but seniors' medication is not?

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

Mr. Shandro: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the hon. member knows, we have about 22 government-sponsored drug plans in this province, 22 that we pay for. The seniors' drug plan is one of those plans. We call it the coverage for seniors plan. We spend \$517

million on that plan to cover the seniors of this province. We are going to make sure that that money is actually spent on our seniors in this province, and we're going to continue to provide other plans like the nongroup plan to be able to provide coverage for other Albertans.

Ms Sigurdson: Given that this is "Troubling news for Alberta Seniors – significant cuts to Seniors Drug Benefits and Special Needs Assistance programs. I am very concerned about threats to sustainable funding for rural health and seniors programs" and given that those comments are those of retired UCP MLA Pat Stier, it would seem that there are still some Conservatives willing to stand up for seniors in our province. Why isn't the seniors minister one of them?

Mr. Shandro: Mr. Speaker, we're making changes to the coverage for seniors plan to make sure that we actually, specifically are spending money on our seniors in this province, to make sure that the coverage for seniors plan, which provides coverage for the seniors of this province – it was increasing at an unsustainable rate – is sustainable and that it's there for future generations of seniors in this province.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Maybe this time the seniors minister will stand up.

Given that the UCP threw 60,000 Albertans in seniors' households off their drug plan yesterday and given that we have seen countless seniors across the province express concern that they will now struggle to make ends meet and given that the Health minister resorted Thursday in this House to yelling rather than providing actual answers, to the minister of seniors: what are you saying to these seniors? Are they not allowed to be concerned, and just how poor do you want them to be before you will let them keep ...

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: It is completely shameless, the extent to which the NDP are interested in being untruthful with Albertans. As everybody in this room knows, I can't use the L-word to be able to describe what another member in this room is saying. But it is fabulism, Mr. Speaker. It is an inversion of the truth. It is false. It is untrue. We are making sure that the plan for seniors, that is going to cover the seniors of this province in a sustainable way, is going to be there for future generations of seniors. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Firefighter Training

Mr. Dach: Once again, Mr. Speaker, we see this UCP government prioritizing their failed corporate handout over the needs of Albertans. Two days before the start of the wildfire season the Minister of Municipal Affairs slashed a \$500,000 grant intended for firefighting training. The executive director of the Alberta Fire Chiefs Association says that this move, taken without consulting firefighters, will heavily impact rural fire departments. So will the minister please explain why he doesn't think spending money to train firefighters is a worthy investment?

The Speaker: The Minister of Municipal Affairs is rising.

Mr. Madu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This member knows too well that this is clearly a municipal responsibility and that this small

grant did not impact services in any notable way. [interjections] I can understand why they're heckling because they nearly destroyed our province. But if this member doesn't believe me, let him hear from the Canmore fire chief, who says, and I quote, Canmore supports and funds its training within its operational budget. Adjustment from this provincial budget won't affect our process in any meaningful way.

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

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans heard loud and clear last night on the news from the executive director of the Alberta Fire Chiefs Association, who represents all fire members in the province.

Now, given, also, that one reported impact of this senseless cut will be that some fire departments might not be able to get their water rescue certification renewed or even get the training and also that firefighters might not be able to get their annual retraining certificate and given that the only reason the minister gave for eliminating this necessary grant was that it was designed, quote, in better economic times, is this minister really suggesting that at a time when he's given away \$4.7 billion for a no-jobs corporate handout, training firefighters ...

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

Mr. Madu: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. I understand that on that side of the aisle truth doesn't mean anything, but let me say this. This is coming from members opposite who nearly destroyed our province, destroyed our economy, you know, took us on a path to more than \$64 billion – but let me say this. Municipal Affairs is working with our municipalities across the province to monitor and expand their services. We are keeping up the good work that Albertans sent us here to do.

Mr. Dach: Mr. Speaker, given that we've also learned that this minister has eliminated funding for a ceremony where firefighters would be honoured for their service and given that these brave women and men put their lives on the line to keep our communities safe and given that this minister won't honour their courage and provide proper training to the next class of heroic firefighters, to the minister: will the minister admit right now that you don't actually respect firefighters? You bring them in for photo ops then cut their budgets. I can't think of another reason for you to make these awful decisions.

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

Mr. Madu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While this member continues to spread fear and misinformation, we are going to keep doing the good work Albertans expect us to do. My department is working with the Alberta Fire Training Officers Association to help municipalities build capacity and develop strong training programs. We are working to improve accessibility and decrease costs of international certifications. We are going to keep doing the hard work necessary to ensure Alberta firefighters are the best they can be.

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

2:40

Unharvested 2019 Crops

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For many Alberta farmers the 2019 harvest season ended with unharvested crops still in their fields. With crops still in the fields farmers are caught not

being able to pay their 2019 bills at a time when the 2020 bills are starting to come in. Due to this, many farmers are struggling financially until they can get their crops off the fields this spring. To the minister of agriculture: how is our government helping these farmers through this challenging time?

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

Mr. Dreeshen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Back in January I wrote to the federal agriculture minister to remove the federal carbon tax on natural gas and propane, something that we've heard loud and clear from our farmers and that we've ultimately estimated as a \$7 million hit, just for drying grain for farmers here in the province of Alberta. That's why in February we announced the efficient grain dryer program. That's \$2 million that farmers are able to access and be able to make improvements to their grain drying, especially in difficult years like this one.

Mr. van Dijken: Mr. Speaker, given that in the midst of all this, the financial stress soars and given that AFSC, the Agriculture Financial Services Corporation, is responsible to try to help farmers through these difficult times and given that many of our farmers have significant amounts of debt left behind from seeding last year's crop, to the same minister: what is AFSC doing to help these farmers survive this cash-flow crunch?

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

Mr. Dreeshen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite is quite right. Almost a million acres have been left out in the fields right now. Whether it's 50,000 acres of peas and lentils that have already been written off, over 500,000 acres of canola, 250,000 acres of wheat, 100,000 acres of barley, 50,000 acres of oats, it is a very difficult year. But it is something that AFSC has worked with farmers on, whether it's through cash advances, to make sure that they're available, as well as loan payment deferrals, as well as a really great plan that AFSC has for 118 crop adjusters to be able to reallocate them and make sure that they're where they're supposed to be.

Mr. van Dijken: Mr. Speaker, given that the crops left in the field during the winter are vulnerable and easily damaged and given that I am hearing complaints from my constituency about snowmobiles driving over these fields, damaging the crop, even when signs are posted, to the Minister of Environment and Parks: what is our government doing to inform people that this reckless use of these vehicles is causing damage to our farmers?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Environment and Parks, and the Government House Leader.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have a comprehensive program advertising the concerns when it comes to snowmobiles and off-highway vehicles on private land. In partnership with the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General, who oversees our fish and wildlife division on the enforcement side, they are working hard to be able to spread the word and enforce the law when it comes to snowmobiles on private land. Of course, through the Report a Poacher program is the availability for landowners to be able to call in complaints of that nature to make sure that they're enforced.

The Speaker: Hon. members, in 35 seconds or less we will return to Members' Statements.

Members' Statements

(continued)

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

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

Holi

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Hindu festival Holi marks the beginning of spring and the end of winter and the blossoming of love. It is a day to meet others, laugh, play, forget, and forgive. The festival originated in India, but has since spread through the diaspora of the Indian subcontinent as well as the western world.

The colourful festival is celebrated in grand style in the cities of Mathura and Vrindavan. These are two important cities which are deeply associated with Lord Krishna. To mark this special occasion, friends and family will come together and participate and share in traditional practices, shows, music, and food. Colourful waters are sprinkled on people, and everyone is found playing with water balloons, colourful powder. Traditional sweets are exchanged among neighbours, friends, and family, and the beat of Holi songs and popular folk music are danced to in the celebration of Holi.

Holi is a beautiful event that fills the entire atmosphere with vibrant colour in a colourful environment where everyone is drenched in colour but more so in the spirit of Holi. Holi events are organized with an endless flow of colour, joy, and happiness. The festival of colours teaches humankind to transcend to a time of forgetting all resentment and meeting others with great warmth and high spirit.

Seeing the practices and traditions of other Albertans helps ensure a strong social cohesion and fosters acceptance in our society. We are very fortunate to be living in a country that promotes diversity and multiculturalism and that allows us the freedom of religion to publicly celebrate it.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

Budget 2020

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Last week the President of Treasury Board tabled Budget 2020. It was a budget built on a failed economic plan and 50,000 jobs lost, but there was also a lot of magical thinking: a budget predicated on fantasy projections for economic growth, an unemployment rate worthy of Disney, and apparently someone will have to cast a number of spells to make the UCP energy price projections come to life.

Madam Speaker, this budget doesn't reflect reality as we know it. It's way out of line with the private-sector consensus estimates. Economic growth for this year is projected at 2.5 per cent in Budget 2020, but not one Canadian private-sector bank has Alberta growing above 2 per cent. Employment growth for this year is projected at 1.4 by the UCP, but most Canadian private-sector banks are projecting employment growth below 1 per cent.

Madam Speaker, it's like Alice has gone through the looking glass and nothing is as it seems. Up is down, left is right, and the minister seems to be living in his own dream world, where spin is the new currency. And, boy, did this minister spin hard in this budget. The deficit is down, he claims, at \$7.5 billion for this year, but Albertans know well that the previous government ended the last fiscal year with a deficit of \$6.7 billion, a full \$800 million lower. Now, to be fair, there is one grain of truth in this budget. It came when the minister said that this budget is more of the same,

and he's right. Not once, but twice has this minister tabled a budget with a higher projected deficit than the previous NDP government.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Mr. Speaker, we will see the coming weeks characterized by a right-wing reality distortion field. The UCP won't want to talk about their failed economic plan and the 50,000 jobs lost and counting, but over in the real world Albertans are seeing that cuts, unemployment, and arrogance have replaced the UCP slogan Jobs, Economy, Pipeline, and they're not happy. There is no funhouse mirror that can distort that fact.

Aurora Academic Charter School

Ms Issik: Mr. Speaker, on January 28 I toured Aurora Academic Charter School, and it was amazing. The sense of community, the collaborative efforts, and the inclusiveness and diversity, all leading to excellent results for students, were inspiring. When I was there, I listened as I was told about the sense of community that the school works to foster, a sense of community which begins by engaging parents in their children's education. It doesn't stop with just engaging parents. Aurora brings parents into the school community and recognizes that education is a partnership and that parents are a partner.

I heard about great collaborative efforts. Aurora works with the University of Alberta on research, partners with other public schools nearby, and collaborates with the Sherbrooke Community League. These collaborative efforts have led to outstanding improvements for everyone involved. It has led to rigorous research, a caring community, and an excellent education. I saw a diverse and inclusive school which facilitates all students to achieve their very best.

One example is English language learners, who make up about 25 per cent of the student body. These students thrive at Aurora, where they can access individual literacy support such that many of them end up reading at grade level and some will even read above grade level. That is the power of equality of opportunity combined with Aurora's ethos that hard work yields results, and I saw the results. The result is 78.1 per cent of grade 9 students achieving excellence on their PATs. The result is a wonderful education for all who attend.

As a school within our public education system, Aurora Academic Charter School is an excellent example of the success of school choice, and I hope every member of this Assembly can see that in a society as diverse as ours, school choice is a necessary element to a strong education system.

2:50 Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: I see the hon. Member for St. Albert is about to rise.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two articles, one entitled Support Payment Changes in Alberta Could Hurt Some Recipients More than Others, referring to AISH and income support.

The second is Criticism Arises Concerning Lack of Consultation about AISH and [Income Support] Altered Payment Date.

Finally, I have five copies of an old article, actually, based on consultation in Australia. I feel like the members don't really know what Extinction Rebellion is, so here's a bit of a description of what their members look like from Australia.

The Speaker: Are there others? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table the requisite number of copies of the social media post from the chair of the Alberta Association for Accreditation of Early Learning and Care Services, which I quoted today in my question, citing her "sadness and helplessness" over this government's decision to cancel accreditation without notice or consultation.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table the requisite number of copies of letters from constituents of the Member for Red Deer-North, the Minister of Education as well as of the Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland and constituents of the Member for Calgary-West. All these constituents of these government members have written to myself and to the Minister of Children's Services expressing their significant concerns over the cuts to the benefit contribution grant and the impact that that will have on their families and their child care fees.

The Speaker: Are there other members wishing to table a document? I see the hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table an article from CTV News, Alberta Looks to Attract Investment. It goes on to say that the plan "is centred on cutting red tape and lowering corporate taxes" and that "that will attract an estimated four billion . . . in investment each year by 2023 and also create 55,000 jobs annually by 2022."

I have another article here, from the *Hanna Herald*, UCP Budget Focused on Job Creation. It says:

A robust economy and real wealth creation is built on the effort, investment, and ambition of citizens and businesses. Government's role is to provide a business environment that is nimble [and] predictable.

I have one more article here, from the CBC, Alberta Expands Coverage for Cystic Fibrosis Drug. "As of Sunday, more Albertans with cystic fibrosis will have access to what's described as a life-changing drug."

Thank you very much.

Tablings to the Clerk

The Clerk: I wish to advise the Assembly that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of the hon. Mr. Shandro, Minister of Health, pursuant to the Health Professions Act the College of Registered Psychiatric Nurses of Alberta annual report 2019; the Alberta College and Association of Chiropractors annual report 2018-19.

The Speaker: Hon. members, a gold star for everyone as there are no points of order today.

As such, we are at Ordres du jour.

Orders of the Day

Motions Other than Government Motions

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

Transportation and Utility Infrastructure

501. Mr. Getson moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to establish corridors for transportation and utility infrastructure, including railways, roads, pipelines, and transmission lines, in order to improve access to global markets for Alberta products and resources via deep sea ports

in locations including but not limited to Hudson Bay, Kitimat, and the state of Alaska.

Mr. Getson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So what does this mean? I'm talking about transportation/utility corridors. We've talked about energy corridors. We've lobbied in the past for the federal government to go out and help establish corridors as per Minister Panda's former Motion 512 and Motion 505, which, I believe, was unanimously passed. But this time I'm asking the government of Alberta to take it upon ourselves, to take the bull by the horns, if you would, to look at a swath of land or a tract of land where we could establish corridors for trade and transport. These would give us access to the deep sea ports which we greatly need. It would give us the egress that we greatly need to get our products to market.

Now, rather than just restricting it to one commodity, we could have railroads, for example. Railroads are multicommodity-type items that can move products both in and out. If I was to look at the Alaska corridor, which was conceptually designed and batted around for a number of years, which Alberta taxpayers have actually thrown dollars into the pot for, it would give us access right now to three deep sea ports. With these deep sea ports we could move oil, we could move grain, we could move foodstuffs, and we could also be getting our products to market. In the context of a deep sea port, with 2-million-barrel tankers, Mr. Speaker, not the 10,000- or 80,000-barrel tankers that skim up and down the coast to the Tsawwassen terminal or to Seattle and head down to the great state of Texas, we could actually get our oil, our products to market two to four days quicker.

The cartage coming back, on the other end of that, Mr. Speaker, would then give us access to Sea-Cans, bringing that back in. If we were to run a million barrels a day of the heaviest of the heavy bitumen and we put it in that context, in a compressed or a puck context similar to the CanaPux, that were developed by an engineer at CN, we would be able to bring products back to market.

Now, Tsawwassen and Seattle: they get backed up. We can see the protest from some of the friends of the extreme hard left, as we've talked about. We can get our products incoming, back to market, about 10 days quicker to the eastern seaboard for manufacturing, et cetera. If we were to enhance that – and we looked at going over to Churchill and that side of the equation – we would get access to eastern Canada. We would also get access over to Europe. If we were able to bring this product back into our market, we could utilize our free trade or tariff-free zone that we have around the greater Edmonton area. We could put in an inland terminal. That would give us multiple penetration to multiple markets.

If we're looking at a value-add chain, again, coming to those commodities, we know that the town of Oyen has already participated in some of this ground truthing, if you would. There is an appetite for our product to get it to market, not just the raw commodities. Folks from China came over and looked at a 49-51 per cent type ownership model. They wanted to get the ag products going into a manufacturing facility. They wanted to have it packaged and put there with the lettering of their native tongue on it with a maple leaf in the corner. They want our commodities. They want to get these items to market. They want to get it from the farm, from that manufacturing facility, if you would, over to their plates in Asia, in that market, within 14 days. Currently it's a difficult challenge to do that.

Dow Chemical, Dow petroleum, for example: they want to put a nice petrochemical facility up there. They're trying to decide between us and Texas to get their product to market. Again, that's the problem. We have cheap gas, we've got great labour, we've got a good place to build, but we can't get it to market. We've been doing these things to ourselves.

What I'm looking at isn't just for us to say that this is a great idea. This is a bit of a game changer. If you look at what's taking place in the U.S. right now – and I'll give you an example here. I received, literally, from one of the chairmen of the A2A project – this is going two days earlier, to the speech in this address, and I'm going to read a quote here: the Secretary of State has signed off on the potential border-crossing permit, and it has now gone to the White House to be signed off by the President; it won't be much longer; I'll have some further updates coming.

The difference in what they're doing down south of the border is that the President is looking at the concept of the project and signing off on it and then saying: "Great. Go fill in the blanks. Go get it." What I'm proposing that our government do is take the folks that do the great regulatory work, get them on this side of the equation, and help us. Instead of saying no or saying yes and industry having to put this in with the uncertainty and the risk that goes with it, have them tell industry exactly what is needed so that we do the heavy lifting on our side of the fence. We're paying for the resources anyway. There are lots of concerns on how we make people productive and everything. This is it.

This is the game changer, so let's be proactive about this. Let's take that ball in our court and let's run with it. Let's do the First Nations consultation. Let's really leverage the AIOC. Let's get full-on participation along our corridor, and if we were to say conceptually two kilometres wide – two kilometres wide – I could put a couple of train tracks in there. We could put a couple of 36-inch pipes. We could put a big 48-inch line up there. If I was using that corridor that goes up to Alaska, as an example, well, then I could unlock Grande Prairie. We could have LNG facilities heading north. We could be pushing that material there. The Mackenzie valley delta has been a project that's been on the books forever. That would be 1,700 kilometres of pipe built to get it down to Zama. It's not productive. It's not cost-effective. But if we put a corridor in that route and that acted as the mainline trunk, well, then it's only 700 kilometres. That makes it viable and accessible.

We're looking at a roads-to-resources project. I believe the federal government has \$3 billion on the table: a billion from industry, a billion from them – arguably, it's our own transfer payments that are paying for that – and a billion from the territory itself and industry. So you've got a milking stool of \$3 billion. All that is just to build simple infrastructure, to get through the roads to get to the actual cheddar, that part where they have to mine out.

3:00

Now, if we swung our little corridor through that area, Mr. Speaker, we could unlock that whole Yukon. We could get products going back and forth. Whitehorse right now, trucks in there, natural gas from British Columbia. If we did that lateral correctly, they would only have maybe 80 clicks off a mainline trunk. You want to talk about resource independence and self-sufficiency? This could uncouple a ton of things here for them.

In a prior life the only thing that we had to worry about was doing the right thing to get our jobs approved. We've proven time and time again lately that we had so many projects that have been yanked out from underneath us as far as industry, Mr. Speaker. And it's not for people investing. It's not for the goodwill. It's for the uncertainty, and I've spoken at length about that before.

But the great work that the Premier has been doing and the rest of the ministers: apparently, we have Premiers that have signed off on that notional concept, 13 of them. Now, if we're talking a corridor, we should be able to talk about the trade and the commerce that go between our great provinces. We should be able to do it at our level, not begging someone from Ottawa to give us a bone or to be genuine about what we're asking for. All I've seen in this

province is hard-working people forever, strong and free. I'm so proud of this province and the people here, and it's no different than the other provinces that I've visited. We all have this will. We came to this country, up north. We've done these types of things. We've faced adversity, and let's face it together. Rather than stumbling and fighting amongst ourselves, let's come up with what would be reasonable and accessible, and you eliminate the risk.

Private industry is looking at the same thing now. I ran into a land agent I used to work with over at Enbridge at a bull sale this weekend. They've got money to invest, Mr. Speaker, and they can't. They're all worried about what might happen with the next blockade. You see Teck Resources pulling out. Whichever way you slice it, it's not because they didn't put in the effort. It's not because they didn't have the great technology. It's not because they didn't have money in the bank. The problem is that we get tripped up at the goal line. I know that the Calgary Stampeders have felt that lots in their careers, not as much as the Eskies have. But it's a terrible thing.

So part of it here – you know, I heard some stories, too. Never waste a good crisis. I spoke in my maiden speech about some things that I reflected on, having the strength and the wisdom to know outcomes you could change and to accept those that you couldn't. I don't accept that our province is dying, on its last legs. I don't accept that we're the only jurisdiction in the world, other than Venezuela, that's facing an economic crisis that has this much in resources at our disposal. I believe we can actually pull together as a province. I think we can pull together as a country. We can start getting the ship going in the right direction again.

I want to get into Kitimat. There's the crux of the issue. We have a wonderful project up there, and we got crossthreaded again at the goal line. Now, if we established a corridor, you'd take care of all that in advance, and that's the certainty. Trillions of dollars of capital would pour back into our country if we take the initiative.

Now, can you imagine the Prime Minister's face – I've never met him personally. I've seen his face a few times talking about conceptual things . . .

Mr. Smith: Nice hair.

Mr. Getson: Apparently, he has nice hair, as my colleague has stated.

But can you imagine if you actually came to the table with a proposal and said: "Here. We all agree. We as provinces agree. We as First Nations folks agree. Industry agrees"? And testing with industry: the litmus test on this is huge. They agree. If we could get our act together, this is a nation-building item that we can do. We just have to take the bull by the horns and make it happen.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: I see the hon. Member for St. Albert has risen.

Ms Renaud: Thank you. I appreciate that. It's my pleasure to speak to Motion 501, I believe it is. Just to let the House know and let you know, Mr. Speaker, I do plan on moving an amendment, and I just want to say a couple of things before I do so. I understand – and congratulations to the member for being the first drawn. It's not easy to win a lottery, certainly not easy to win a private member's motion lottery, so good on you. It's too bad, you know, that this is the focus, but that's okay. So let's talk about that. I think that . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member, just in the name of making the potential amendment as easy as possible, if you might just send a couple of copies through to the table so that we can take care of our end, and then we might have a further discussion around this amendment. You're welcome to continue with your remarks.

Ms Renaud: Thank you. I think I get the intent of the motion, absolutely, and I think the member himself probably summed it up best in his last few remarks, where he said, "Never waste a good crisis." I think that what is happening in our country is certainly very challenging and forcing us all to look inward, I guess, but also to look at the existing structures and laws in our country and in our province and to find a way to balance the things that are happening.

Now, it seems like the opposite members are – I don't know why – invoking the name of a certain group, Extinction Rebellion, again and again. I guess it makes them feel good. There are lots of other groups. I don't really know why they're not singling those other groups out, you know, but whatever. But this leads me to believe that this is being done to gaslight. It's unfortunate because I think that the intent of the motion is actually quite good except that it's missing an important piece, and that's where the amendment comes in. That's about indigenous consultation.

The amendment reads like this. I move that the Motion Other than Government Motion 501 be amended (a) by adding "in consultation with indigenous communities in Alberta," immediately after "urge the Government to establish" and (b) by striking out "in order to" and substituting "to address the economic and regulatory conditions applicable to these corridors including climate change, and to" and (c) by striking out "in locations including but not limited to" and substituting "in locations that may include."

Let's just be clear about a couple of things. We certainly support energy corridors, but this motion doesn't explain how that will be done. As I said earlier, this is an attempt to gaslight and divide, which is really unfortunate because I think that in reaction to what is happening all across the country, what is required is maturity and time, time to consult with each other and to actually hear from each other. What this motion does, I think, is it really doesn't look at what the underlying problem is. We'll get into that, certainly, as we debate a lot of the issues that are tied to this, but the reason that we're bringing forward this amendment is because we want to strengthen the motion.

We need to ensure that energy projects are done in consultation with indigenous communities and recognize that global climate change is a problem. I think, probably more than any single group of people, indigenous communities all around the world actually have been at the forefront of trying to say that there's a problem here. We have a problem. Our lands, our water, our air: we have a problem. We need to stop and pay attention. With that, I'm going to switch back.

I want to go back and talk a little bit about climate change. It's certainly not just me, and it's not groups, it's not organized groups, it's certainly not student groups, it's not 17-year-old teenagers that are the only ones that are concerned about this. I'm underlining this fact by sharing some information that I know you know. It was in the Teck letter. It has been in the news. It's probably in the news every day, but here we go. Major investment firms from Moody's to BlackRock have all pointed out that a serious plan to tackle climate change is critical to maintaining Alberta's competitive advantage. While I appreciate the intent of the motion of the member to try to, I guess, in his opinion, remove some roadblocks, not physical roadblocks but other roadblocks, what the real problem is is that, if you look at what is sort of the seed of the problem we're having, I think that that motion misses that.

3:10

I think that, to take this a little bit further, the UCP, the government, is failing to see how the economy and environment have to go hand in hand. While we focused on indigenous consultation – I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker. I'm not feeling very well, so I'm going to pass this off to somebody else.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member. I am sorry that you aren't feeling well.

You can all have a seat. We have some procedural things to take care of, including that there's no ability to pass on the time, so we'll move to the next speaker after the completion of my remarks.

Speaker's Ruling Admissibility of Amendments

The Speaker: Many of you will remember October 28, 2019, when the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford moved a private member's motion, at which time the hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley made an effort to amend that motion. At that time I had a fairly extensive ruling about the long-standing tradition of not amending private members' motions. I reminded everyone of April 18 in 2016, on my birthday, when the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays had a very memorable day with former Speaker Wanner. They had a very robust conversation around amending private members' motions. At that time I highlighted Speaker Kowalski's 2007 ruling, where he spoke on the chair's responsibility to defend private members' interests. As the hon. Member for St. Albert mentioned, having your name drawn for a private member's motion may only happen once in a career or, certainly, once in a term.

At that time Speaker Kowalski had provided some comments around that. I won't review all of those, but at the end of the day we were keeping with the tradition of the Assembly and upholding a private member's ability to move a motion, which they believed in the intent, which was the mover's intent, not the intent of another private member. It is not a decision of the chair to determine whether or not the intent is upheld, but it is the decision of the mover as to whether or not the amendment, as proposed in this case by the hon. Member for St. Albert, is in keeping with the intent of the mover's motion.

The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland in just a moment is going to be able to provide his comments to me, be it yes or no. If he'd like to provide more comment with respect to that, he'd be welcome to do so as to whether or not he is of the opinion that the amendment as proposed by the hon. Member for St. Albert is in keeping with his original intention. If it is, then I will determine the amendment to be in order, and we will debate the amendment. If it isn't, I will determine that the amendment is out of order, as is the long-standing parliamentary tradition of this Assembly, even though this amendment has been determined to be in procedural order by Parliamentary Counsel.

Having said all that, the hon. Member for Lac Ste Anne-Parkland: are you of the opinion or the belief that this amendment as proposed by the hon. Member for St. Albert is in keeping with your intention of the original motion that you proposed?

Mr. Getson: The short answer, Mr. Speaker, is absolutely not.

The Speaker: That's the only answer I require. As such, it is the Speaker's ability – I'm prepared to rule as to whether the amendment is in order or not. Members, it is imperative for your Speaker that we protect the intention of private members' business.

While I also appreciate and respect the position that the hon. member for St. Albert has taken as she, too, is a private member and has every opportunity to move amendments as they impact private members' business, I think it is imperative that we keep with the long-standing tradition of not allowing private members' motions to be significantly changed through amendment for us to be able to debate the intention of each member.

It is my hope that future Speakers will continue to defend this principle to allow motions that have been presented by private

members to be debated in the great tradition of our parliamentary democracy. As such, I rule that the amendment is out of order.

We are on the main motion as proposed by the hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland. The speakers will be the hon. Member for Sherwood Park, followed by Edmonton-South.

Debate Continued

Mr. Walker: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour to rise to Motion 501, which moves that the Legislative Assembly urge the government

to establish corridors for transportation and utility infrastructure, including railways, roads, pipelines, and transmission lines, in order to improve access to global markets for Alberta products and resources via deep sea ports in locations including but not limited to Hudson Bay, Kitimat, and the state of Alaska.

Adopting this motion will have a significant positive impact on my riding of Sherwood Park and my municipality of Strathcona county. As I identified in my maiden speech last year, my municipality of Strathcona county is home to three oil refineries, and together these three refineries produce 462,000 barrels of crude per day, or 62 per cent of all refining in western Canada. Furthermore, numerous other heavy industries and related manufacturing operations complement Strathcona county's peerless refining power.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

As well, through partnerships with other municipalities and industry the county has been able to attract investment domestically and internationally to grow its industrial base and expand its commercial operations. Perhaps the best example of such a co-operative partnership is Alberta's Industrial Heartland, which is the largest industrial area in western Canada and is a development initiative between five municipalities, including Strathcona county. Alberta's Industrial Heartland, established about 20 years ago, is Canada's energy engine, being our nation's largest hydrocarbon processing centre, producing 75 per cent of all petrochemical refining in Canada, a major driver of our provincial economy. Billions in investment and thousands of jobs directly and indirectly tie to Alberta's Industrial Heartland, which is a critical industrial base for my municipality of Strathcona county.

As I have outlined here, Madam Speaker, every other riding throughout our great province would benefit from this motion on the national utility corridor.

Madam Speaker, on December 2, 2019, the Premiers of Canada released a statement through the Council of the Federation on a number of items, including growing our economy. The Premiers of Canada are united in their position that our nation, including the federal government, must take immediate action to enhance Canada's economic competitiveness. This includes continuing responsible development of our natural resources, expanding international trade, and removing protectionist restrictions on our goods. The establishment of utility corridors that include energy projects, utilities, communication products, and other opportunity for a variety for other industries will aid in the vision laid out by the Premiers in their December 2 statement. By providing a reasonable, pre-approved regulatory system, these corridors may facilitate the development of important infrastructure in Canada and help generate sustained economic growth.

I am so proud to support Motion 501. Thank you to MLA Getson for putting it forward. I'm also honoured to have in the gallery today, Madam Speaker, the mayor of Strathcona county, His Worship Mayor Rod Frank, and his strategic adviser, Mr. Zach Herbers. Thank you for being here. Deeply appreciate your support. One of the reasons I'm so honoured is that when the federal

government fails to act, when the federal government and Justin Trudeau are derelict in their duty, other levels of government like the provincial level of government and the municipal level of government step up.

I am honoured to say that my municipality of Strathcona county is forwarding to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities a resolution on the creation of a national utility corridor this year at their meeting. Thank you, Your Worship Mayor Frank, for your leadership on this file. Municipalities and provincial governments need to come together when we have a hostile, antienergy federal government in Ottawa. The Strathcona county motion reads: for the creation of national utility corridors from coast to coast to coast to accommodate the future development of everything from telecommunications infrastructure to utility and to pipeline.

3:20

You know, something that I was also really struck by in the Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland's comments was that we're lacking competitiveness and that we need a national utility corridor. You know, this has all been self-inflicted. Over \$150 billion in investment capital has fled Canada, disproportionately from Alberta, because of hostile, antidevelopment, anti natural resource policies emanating from Ottawa and in the previous four years, Madam Speaker, emanating from the former provincial government. Thank goodness they're gone. I hear that again and again of the former NDP government from residents in Sherwood Park, that they're so glad that that was a one-and-done government because they inflicted so much pain on the people of Alberta, standing with their ally Justin Trudeau to really, frankly, severely undermine our economy with their radical green left policies that have no place, in fact, only in left-wing fiction that David Suzuki would bother to read.

We're lacking in competitiveness. We need a national utility corridor to get to global markets. We have major, trillion-plus-dollar economies in Japan, in China, in India, in the other Asian tiger economies in Southeast Asia that desperately want our products, but we don't have the competitiveness of a national utility corridor to get our products – be it ag products, energy products, telecommunication products – to market. Japan, for example, is a very energy-impooverished nation. Since the Fukushima disaster of 2011 they've turned off their nuclear reactors – they have 54 – and they're now reinvesting in coal. They're establishing over two dozen new coal plants. Well, Alberta needs to export their coal to Japan, needs to export their coal to China. These are major opportunities that we're missing out on without the competitiveness of a national energy corridor.

You know, Texas is booming right now, so this whole notion that we're not competitive on certain metrics or areas of jurisdiction I just don't necessarily buy, Madam Speaker, because we have another North American jurisdiction in Texas, very similar in many ways, and they're economically booming, but we're not. Why? Because south of the 49th parallel they have a supportive executive in their President and the federal government whereas here in Canada we have a federal government that is ultimately hostile to Alberta developing its natural resources in a responsible and timely manner. So we must act at the municipal level, we must act at the provincial level to see that we build a national utility corridor.

I would conclude with these remarks, Madam Speaker. This common-sense, pro-business, pro-wealth generation motion: I really hope it passes with unanimity here in this House. There is no reason why we should not all be supporting this great motion that would lead to wealth creation, opportunity generation, and then allow for Albertans to realize their God-given potential. I really hope that once this debate is done, the NDP opposition will stand

for common sense, free enterprise, a national utility corridor that is a Confederation-uniting project rather than standing with Extinction Rebellion and the Leap Manifesto.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise on this wonderful Monday and speak to this motion. Let me begin by saying that I absolutely support energy corridors. It is critical that Alberta have access to tidewater, that we have access and the ability to get our energy to our market. That's something that I think every single member of this Assembly agrees with.

However, unlike members across the aisle and apparently unlike the member who proposed the motion, we are actually serious about this. We're not doing this in this opposition caucus just to score cheap political points. Really, it's interesting that the member that introduced the motion, the Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland, I believe, actually said that he absolutely does not support the intention of consulting with indigenous communities and the economic issues around climate change. Madam Speaker, that is something that is absolutely shocking because when we talk about these issues, when we talk about this motion that speaks on how to get our energy to tidewater, how to get our energy resources out to markets: those are essential things in this province.

Almost every single member of this government caucus, particularly from the rural areas, has an indigenous community in their riding, Madam Speaker. They have just stood up here today and said that they unilaterally support that they will not consult with those people, that they will not consult indigenous communities. That is the intention, absolutely the intention, in the Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland's own words, of this motion.

It's also absolutely his intention not to deal with the economic issues around climate change. We're talking about getting our energy resources to market, things that will affect many, many areas in this province, particularly in the regions that have been identified in this motion. I believe it's Kitimat. We talk about Hudson Bay. We talk about all these things. When we see projects like Teck Frontier not being built because of a complete disregard for the issues around climate change and indigenous communities, when we see these types of things already happening and having effects here in Alberta, it is absolutely shocking that the government and the government members could be so naive not to understand that there are consequences to what we say and what we do here.

It is something that they should be ashamed of, Madam Speaker. If they truly support the intention of this motion, as they've said they do, if they truly want to strengthen the economy, and if they truly want to get our energy resources to tidewater, then they need to recognize that consultation with the people whose land we are going through, with those indigenous communities, with those indigenous leaders, and recognizing the global risk of climate change is vital to that goal. It is essential to that goal.

That's why, Madam Speaker, when the NDP was in government, in 2015 we helped get an agreement on the Canadian energy strategy, which supports energy corridors and pipelines. In fact, we had been working on this file for years before this member was even in this House. What this member does not realize and what this member has said that he absolutely does not support is the consultation piece that comes with it. It's the piece that says that we actually need to talk to communities. It's the piece that says that we actually need to listen to Albertans and Canadians.

That's what is so shocking. It's that this government absolutely does not want to consult, absolutely does not want to listen, and absolutely does not want to hear. It's something that we can see

very clearly in his own words, Madam Speaker. We can see very clearly in this motion that they would not consider even the economic and regulatory conditions of climate change. They wouldn't consider indigenous consultation in communities. They wouldn't consider any of these things across the entire province when nearly all of these communities are in their own ridings.

The Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland, for example, Madam Speaker, has multiple indigenous communities right in his riding. When we see these things and he says, "Well, we'd better not consult those communities, particularly when talking about energy projects; we'd better not go out and actually talk to these people being affected by this," then it's essential that we recognize that this member does not care about that consultation. When this government bench gets up and votes in favour of it, when these government members get up and vote in favour of this motion and vote in favour of those words . . .

Mr. McIver: Point of order, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation, point of order.

Point of Order Imputing Motives

Mr. McIver: Under 23(h), (i), and (j), assigning a false motive to another member. The member that moved this actually in his remarks talked about working with First Nations and other people, and the member who has the floor right now has gone out of his way several times to say that he's not interested at all in doing that, which is, I would say, exactly the opposite of what the member that moved the motion said. I understand that the member is looking for an excuse to not vote for this motion, but he should probably not avow those false motives to the mover of the motion, as he is so doing.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, I will not proceed with debate on this matter. However, I will say to move on from that topic. The Speaker has made a ruling on the amendment to the motion, so let's proceed with the motion that we're on without further discussion about the amendment that was ruled out of order by the Speaker previously.

Debate Continued

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member for Edmonton-South, please proceed.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Well, I'm speaking to how in the current motion, the motion as proposed by the Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland, there is indeed no reference to any type of consultation with any community, whether that's indigenous or otherwise, and I think . . .

3:30

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, please just move on from this topic altogether. I think that the ruling has been made. There are lots of discussion pieces in the motion in front of us that I look forward to hearing your thoughts on, along with the members of this Assembly, as I know that you have the skill set to be able to proceed.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Madam Speaker. As I was saying, I think that when we talk about energy projects across this province and we talk about energy corridors, this NDP opposition, when we were government, did significant work on the matter. Indeed, we were in

2015, as I have already mentioned, part of actually creating agreements around the Canadian energy strategy, which supports these types of projects. We fought for national pipelines like the Trans Mountain project, and we increased national support for these projects. We did that by making sure that every single person across this country was committed to that project. We did that by actually going out and doing the work and talking to people in British Columbia. We did that by talking to people in Ontario and across this country. We didn't do that by showboating and having these sorts of extravagant affairs with pieces of motions that don't speak at all to how we actually wish to support these projects, that don't speak at all to how we actually wish to support these people and how we wish to get our products to market.

Yes, we want to support energy corridors, but this motion absolutely fails to get into the nitty-gritty. It absolutely fails to talk about the issues at hand. It absolutely fails to talk about the issues that Albertans and Canadians are going to care about when we try to push forward getting our products to market. It completely fails to talk about issues like climate change, Madam Chair, and those are real issues. Those are issues that were cited in the Teck withdrawal of their application just a few weeks ago.

When we see those types of withdrawals, when we see those types of job losses that this Premier and this UCP government are presiding over, when we see 50,000 jobs lost since the UCP has come into power and then they come out with this motion and then the Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland says, "Well, but we support energy corridors, so we're going to fix all the jobs with that," Madam Speaker, when we see that type of work moving forward, we can see that this member is clearly not actually serious. We can see that this government is clearly not actually serious. They're here to score cheap political points. They're not here to do the work. They're not here to actually get down and consult with Albertans. They're not here to actually get down and do the things that our economy depends on, that a responsible government and an adult government actually depends on.

That's the type of thing that we're seeing. Instead of investing and actually creating these energy corridors and actually going out and meeting with other provinces, just like this motion is presenting, what we actually see from this member's own government, Madam Speaker, is that they're going to spend \$30 million on an embarrassing war room that can't even make a logo after two tries. That's the type of thing that we're seeing. So when we see these types of motions, we can see that it's all grandstanding. We can see that it's not actually talking about the issues.

We can see, when the member starts laughing in the corner, Madam Speaker, that he's not serious about the issues, that he doesn't think this is serious debate. He thinks that this is something that is a joke, that he can get up and make this motion and say: "Well, I did my job. My hands are tied, everything I tried to do is done, and this motion was my only opportunity to try and push the government to do anything better." That's what this motion is suggesting. I wouldn't suggest what a member thinks or wants to do, but that's what this motion is suggesting. It's something that we think is very clearly a complete disregard for how this process actually works. It's a complete disregard for the understanding of governance. It's a complete disregard for the understanding of the legislative process. It's a complete disregard for the understanding of how national energy projects actually get built. It's basically a child's assessment of how this is done. It's ludicrous.

Instead, what we see is companies like Teck, companies like basically every major oil company taking hundreds of millions of dollars in corporate giveaways from this UCP government, 50,000 jobs lost since the UCP came into power, and then we see companies like Teck just pulling out. We see companies like

EnCana just pulling out. We see jobs being lost. So the member can get up and say, "Well, I tried to make my motion, and then it passed because all of my Conservative friends helped me, and I'm really good friends with my Conservatives," but, Madam Speaker, that doesn't actually help, right? That doesn't actually create any new jobs. That doesn't help any of these workers. What would have helped is if they had gone in and actually tried to do the work.

If this motion had spoken to things like what the issues are that are restricting market access, what the actual issues are, and what the problems are that a responsible government actually needs to work through, actually needs to have hard conversations about – I know that the member opposite and the member that introduced this and indeed many of the government members don't like to have hard conversations, Madam Speaker. I know that many of them like to scream, and their faces get red, and they choose not to answer the questions. Indeed, what we actually need to do is that we need to talk about, in an adult way, what types of issues are the problems. Indeed, right here in Canada, as we've been seeing throughout the last few weeks and as we see as we try to grow out energy access in many types of projects and as we try to create new projects here in Alberta, it turns out that those issues include consultation.

Those issues include climate change. Those issues include having to make sure that the global economy recognizes that we have products here and recognizes that we can actually get to them. But, indeed, it seems that this government, this Conservative government in particular, does not care about any of those issues – right? – does not want to actually do that consultation, does not want to actually address that in the motion, Madam Speaker. I think that's something that we think is very shameful. We think it's very shameful.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Are any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to be able to rise and to speak to Motion 501. I would like to thank the hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland for pushing and putting this before the House today. You know, we have just had the opportunity to listen to the hon. Member for Edmonton-South speak and in some ways go on a bit of a diatribe, I guess I would say.

You know, for him to suggest that the hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland doesn't understand indigenous consultation and doesn't understand the whole idea of what it takes to get a project through: let me just give you some of the background from the Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland. He was the senior manager for planning and execution. He has done project management for the Grand Rapids pipeline, for the Alberta Clipper, for the Southern Lights and the Montana-Alberta tie-line as well, for fibre optics, for CPR across Canada. This is a gentleman, the hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland, who, if anybody in this House understands what projects are like and how we move them through this nation and indeed across this continent, is the man that probably knows what he is talking about. So to suggest that that is not the case: I would ask the hon. Member for Edmonton-South to maybe do some more homework and figure out exactly what this side of the House and what this government has in the way of caucus members when we stand up to speak to motions that we get drawn for. So I would like to thank the Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland for standing up and providing us with this motion today.

You know, I would guess that I would start my comments with regard to this motion by asking us to consider a little bit of history and to create a vision, a vision for what this country can and should be, Madam Speaker. When we became a country, a nation, in 1867,

the Fathers of Confederation understood that they wanted a country that would go from sea to sea, one that would be united, one that would cross this continent. They understood that the only way that that was going to happen was to create a railroad called the CPR, that would tie us from the Maritimes and eastern Canada all the way through the west and all the way to the Pacific Ocean, that that would be a utility corridor, we could call it, that would allow trade to go across this country east to west, that would tie us together as one strong nation, that would allow us to be able to become the nation that we are today. And I am very pleased that the Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland has seen fit to ask us to consider today where we could go as a nation, what we could be, where we could end up if we simply consider the concept of a trade/utility corridor.

3:40

Transportation/utility corridors are transportation routes that would support economic and social and environmental vitality by connecting markets in and out of Alberta. We would have the capacity to ensure that Alberta would be strong and competitive in the international marketplace. It would allow us to create that one- or two-kilometre-wide area that would go, say, from Fort McMurray all the way up through the Yukon and the Northwest Territories and perhaps even into Alaska, where we could then have rail or road or fibre optic or pipeline, that we could have this utility/trade corridor that would allow us to be able to harvest the resources and the bounty that God has given us in this province and in the Northwest Territories and in the Yukon, that would allow us to be able to break through to the world's markets, that would allow us to take these resources and sell them around the world, create goods out of them and sell those around the world, and create the jobs that would be necessary to take and create a strong and vibrant and healthy community in Alberta, in Yukon, and in the Northwest Territories.

Now, Madam Speaker, Alberta has seen major resource projects halted and applications retracted as a result of our inability to break through to tidewater. These trade/utility corridors would perhaps provide that alternative that would allow us to be able to break through to tidewater.

You know, something needs to be done. Albertans are weary. We're getting jaded. Announcements from major resource development projects are met with skepticism now. How can we blame them when opportunities are being rescinded at every turn? How can Albertans have the hope that they need when we have to fight for consideration on these projects, let alone get any follow-through on them? So that is why I can truly say that I wholeheartedly will support this motion, Motion 501. These trade/utility corridors can provide us with new hope and a new vision for where this country can and should and will be going. Not only will transportation/utility corridors bring investor certainty back to Alberta, but they will help to restore investor confidence in the energy industry in this province.

Establishing a new transportation/utility corridor will also help to diversify the Alberta economy. These corridors could be a very integral part of the long-term planning that we have not only for this province, for this nation but also for the communities that will be along those transportation corridors. They would allow governments to review and to consult with stakeholders and with aboriginal groups along the – what would be the correct path for this created utility corridor? What would be the best right-of-way for where these projects that we need could be built? We would make sure that those trade/utility corridors follow that path after we've had the consultation with Canada's First Nations peoples.

Trade/utility corridors could create the connective routes to the northern communities, and they could provide an easy and

economically feasible way for producing a greater quality of life in these remote areas. As a matter of fact, Madam Speaker, it could bring hope to these communities, hope for jobs, hope for stable families and for stable infrastructure. That would allow them to be connected perhaps for the first time in the history of our country, in our North American continent, would connect them to the other trade routes for the rest of this continent. Imagine the Northwest Territories and Yukon being tied into a North American rail network for the first time, the resources that are in those areas being tied into not only the North American trade network but the international trade network. Imagine what that does for the jobs and for the families and for the communities in Canada's north and in Alberta's north.

Madam Speaker, we need to be more aggressive in getting our energy in Alberta out to the global market, and transportation/utility corridors will do that. It opens up Alberta and North America to the Asian markets and to the rest of the markets around the world.

Madam Speaker, I'd like to talk a little about just one example of how a transportation/utility corridor could be used. We've had conversations with a company by the name of A2A, that has a vision for building a railroad, that could be one of the clients of this transportation/utility corridor. They believe it would take 1.2 million barrels of oil a day into Alaska and out of the coast of Alaska and Anchorage, where tankers four times the size of those that presently go into Vancouver would be able to dock, would be able to take that bitumen, and would be able to take it into the markets in Asia.

They are telling us that it could take four to eight days off the transportation networks. That's four to eight days that all of the secondary industries in this province and in North America could use to transport their goods into the Asian market. But it also means that we could have them coming back in from Asia, into the North American market, where now four to eight days' worth of transportation is taken off that route from Asia into the heart of North America. Madam Speaker, it would mean that if I had my way, Alberta and specifically Edmonton would become the inland port for North America for all of those trade goods coming from South Korea, coming from Japan, coming from Asia into Alberta, into Edmonton, where they have for the first time the rail, the road, and the air that are going to be able to allow us to transport those goods around the world. I said that these transportation/utility corridors are the same as the CPR. That vision for tying our nation together, these transportation/utility corridors could tie North America to the rest of the world. It's a vision that we must pursue.

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

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to address this motion. I must say that what's happened here in the House this afternoon is quite demonstrative of the problem that we're concerned about.

I came to the House with the intention of supporting this motion. I would like to see some corridors. I'd like to see opportunity for our energy industry to benefit from being able to sell their products internationally. But what I've heard from the other side of the House has made me decide to vote against it. I think I need to spend some time talking a little bit about why that is because it's not that often that I come into the House and change my mind after listening to the government side of the House. But they've actually convinced me this time, and they convinced me that they clearly don't understand the point we are trying to make here. The point we're trying to make is that we need to include everyone in order to create a national dream. We need to involve people so that they can be part of that national dream.

I know that the MLA from Drayton Valley-Devon commented about being able to tie us together sea to sea, forgetting the third sea, but I get the point. You know, I do think we need to be tied together sea to sea to sea. But there's a problem if we do that without ensuring that we are truly allowing the participation of the rest of Canada, not just the builders.

It reminds me of the fact that when another Conservative, Prime Minister Macdonald, worked so hard to get a railroad across the country, which was something, of course, that we all think was a positive thing for the development that subsequently occurred, he then refused to allow Chinese labourers who built the railroad to be in the picture of the last spike. That's not a part of our history that we should embrace. That's a part of our history that we should be ashamed of.

What I'm concerned about now with this motion, which I wanted to support because I certainly want to see a corridor – in fact, I attended meetings with Chief Rupert Meneen, for example, from Tallcree to talk about a corridor between here and Hudson Bay, to support him when I was Minister of Indigenous Relations. I had meetings about the railroads going to Alaska, which have been mentioned here, and I've been working with First Nations to support exactly these kinds of things. So I was hoping that here it is, that we were going to have a moment where we could join together. But what we suddenly have is a situation where the consultation is not front and centre in the motion, where the commitment to the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous people is being rejected, and I can't support that.

Let me just bring in some of the words of some of the chiefs of this province around issues of development in the north. The first one I'd like to share with the House is from Chief Conroy Sewepagaham from Little Red River Cree Nation. He was, at the time of this statement, the grand chief of the North Peace Tribal Council, and he says:

I remind Premier Kenney, and all Albertans, that as Dene, Beaver, and Cree peoples, we have occupied our Territories since time immemorial, and continue to do so today. We did not cede title to the lands when we entered Treaty No. 8, but agreed to share our Territory in peace and friendship. Alberta should understand this by now, and realize it has no authority to take up and sell our land in our Territories without our free, prior, informed consent.

He goes on to say:

We are spiritual peoples; our churches, our cathedrals, our places of worship are braided in these forests that surround us.

3:50

I think that the point here to be made is that indigenous people have been on this land from time immemorial, and they are asking to be participants in the projects that help to benefit all Albertans. They're not rejecting them. They're not trying to get in the way of them. They are in fact sitting down with us and having conversations about how they can be participants in that.

We worked very hard to try to make sure that they were at the table. In fact, we were very successful in a number of ways. We, for example, worked with them to create the indigenous climate leadership program, which involved every one of the 48 First Nations and all eight of the Métis settlements moving ahead in terms of building solar and other kinds of environmentally designed projects. They participated because we invited them to sit at the table.

We were also successful in our renewable energy program for the electrical grid, where we had First Nations from treaties 6, 7, and 8 all win contracts to build wind facilities in this province in order to provide electricity to this province. They were there, they were

successful, and their economies have built as a result of the work that we did in participation with them.

All we're wanting to see in looking at this amendment and what I was hoping to hear today is that we were going to see significant indigenous participation, and I'm afraid that the members opposite have convinced me that that's not really in the cards, and I can't support it if it's not really in the cards.

I agree with the statements in the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous people. For example, article 26 says in section 1:

Indigenous peoples have the right to the lands, territories and resources which they have traditionally owned, occupied or otherwise used or acquired.

Section 2 says:

Indigenous peoples have the right to own, use, develop and control the lands, territories and resources that they possess by reason of traditional ownership or other traditional occupation or use, as well as those which they have otherwise acquired.

So just examples of the things that we've committed to previously in this government that don't seem to be supported now.

I'm not sure that I understand why, because an idea like a corridor could be very beneficial for this province, and we've seen that in Canada, when you do something like that and you don't actually ensure the full participation of the people who are going to be affected directly by it, then it leads to problems. This actually led to the point where we have international companies telling us that that's the issue. The issue is that we're not involving people who are going to be affected.

Teck industries writes a letter, and seven times in that letter they say that the problem is that we don't have a climate leadership plan in the province of Alberta. They're not saying that they're against building in Alberta. They're saying that you just need to be able to do the complex work that will make this succeed, that you can in fact do two things at once. You have a left foot and a right foot. You can step forward in building the economy with one foot and step forward in building the environment with the other. You can actually build a national project like a utility corridor or a railroad or other incredible projects if you actually sit down and say that we're only going to do this in full consultation with indigenous people and that we're going to include the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous people as our model of how we're going to proceed.

If the government would commit to that and do that and hear the words of the chiefs about how they feel about things happening, particularly in northern Alberta, without their consultation, then I'd be happy to stand up beside the government. It would be my joy to go with the member who has proposed this to the bands in his community, like Alexis, where we've both been together at different events, and have a conversation with them about how we move forward. I would work with him to make that succeed. That's an offer.

But I can't do it if I don't have the philosophical commitment that the government actually cares about the indigenous peoples' point of view. I'm not trying to imply their intent. I mean "cares for it" by actually taking action to ensure that they're involved. A single line in this motion could have changed things for me, a single line in the motion that said that we actually care about the environment and therefore – it's the "therefore" that matters – we are concerned about the indigenous peoples' participation. The "therefore": that's what I wanted to see. It's only a single line, yet here we are again, with Conservatives suggesting a proposal . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, according to Standing Order 8(3) the hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland has five minutes to close us out.

Mr. Getson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. What we've seen here is a fantastic demonstration of yet another Trojan Horse by the NDP. What happens is that they put a nice little motion across here, an addendum to my motion, on which they didn't consult. They had over a week to ask me any questions on it – about the definition of consultation, the process, et cetera – again proving their own point, that they don't consult. They didn't even have the professional courtesy to pass me in the hallway and ask what this was about.

Immediately they imply that they're going to put an amendment forward so that we can have, once again, divisive politics. The reason why I made a short answer here, Madam Speaker, was because I wanted to hear the debate. I had the hope of hopes that when we put something in – and I make my plea here to say that we've actually got something in the national interest, that we can unify our country, unify our province, unify our peoples – that we don't get divisive. It's implicit on the consultation process to include our First Nation partners, our brothers and our sisters. The call I get is on the phone with the chiefs. We talk about folks like this not dividing us. This is what they take their time for in this House? They want to take that?

Mr. Carson: I can hear you.

Mr. Getson: And I'm being heckled by this fellow. The Member for Edmonton-South is allowed to wave his arms and rant and rave, but I raise my voice? My goodness.

The whole idea about this is to unify us. They're so flipping short-sighted that they're going to trip over this. Again, my comment about tripping towards the finish line: they spent the last amount of time debating about this, that, and the other thing and dividing us. I'm talking about joining us. It's implicit. The AIOC is a way to get forward. We look at that in all the other territories. There is no way in my career I wouldn't have included consultation because I was the one doing it. I don't need your offer to come to the table and hold – what? – a peace pipe. It's the most disingenuous thing I've ever seen.

Madam Speaker, when I was up talking to the First Nations, they couldn't understand why a construction manager or a project manager or a general manager was there. It was this simple: when I'm sitting with the First Nations – and I had my indigenous consultation group – I'm there so they don't make promises I can't keep. My word and my handshakes got us through areas that never would have happened before. And you know what? It's just like Treaty 6. It's a handshake. The symbolism of Treaty 6 is two people shaking hands, keeping their commitments, and that's what this is.

I want partners in prosperity. I want the divisiveness to end. When we start talking, we're talking about all Albertans regardless of race, creed, or colour. What the members of the opposition haven't figured out is that no matter how long or short your oar is or which colour it is, you better be in the same boat as us, Madam Speaker, and pulling the same way. That's exactly why our country has stood divided, because of this juvenile behaviour. Professionals building projects across this country can't get through the systems because of this. Because of this.

This is what I'm proposing. Let's get our act together. Let's pull together. Let's establish a corridor. Let's get full participation. Let's get our products to market, both in and out. Let's build this economy. You want a diverse economy? I want it, too. We'll argue about the nuances of how to get there rather than agreeing to the goal. The folks in the States have shown us the way. Yes, I agree in concept, as I read from the A2A. They already have their border crossing. It's imminent. That's why they're turning things around. That's why we can't get a blessed thing done. Again, you didn't

ask. You didn't consult. You don't understand the process, and I do, and so do we.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I hope folks vote for this because this is how we build our country.

[The voice vote indicated that Motion Other than Government Motion 501 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Allard	LaGrange	Reid
Barnes	Loewen	Rowswell
Copping	Long	Shandro
Ellis	Lovely	Singh
Getson	Madu	Toor
Goodridge	McIver	Turton
Gotfried	Milliken	van Dijken
Guthrie	Nally	Walker
Hanson	Nicolaides	Williams
Hunter	Orr	Yao
Issik	Panda	Yaseen
Jones	Rehn	

Against the motion:

Carson	Feehan	Nielsen
Ceci	Ganley	Phillips
Dang	Loyola	Sigurdson, L.
Eggen		

Totals: For – 35 Against – 10

[Motion Other than Government Motion 501 carried]

Government Motions

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Child and Youth Advocate

8. Mr. McIver moved on behalf of Mr. Jason Nixon:
Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly concur in the February 2020 report of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices, Sessional Paper 2/2020, and recommend to the Lieutenant Governor in Council that the Child and Youth Advocate, Mr. Del Graff, be reappointed for a term to expire on October 31, 2021.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is my honour, and I stand to move Government Motion 8 on behalf of my good friend and colleague the hon. Minister of Environment and Parks and Government House Leader.

I give it my heartfelt support. I recall the time we spent on the children in care committee, an all-party committee, just for the record, and I think I'm safe to say that members of all sides of the House would agree that Mr. Graff cares very much about the children of Alberta. His decisions and his actions are always in concert with what he believes creates their best future and protects them.

So with a certain amount of satisfaction and happiness I make this motion, feeling very good about what it will do for Alberta's children.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, this is a debatable motion. Are there any other members wishing to speak?

Seeing none, would you like to close debate, Minister?

Mr. McIver: Closed.

[Government Motion 8 carried]

Consideration of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor's Speech

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

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

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

[Adjourned debate February 26: Mr. McIver]

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

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and respond to the Speech from the Throne today. I think that there are a couple of points that I would like to take out. Obviously, the speech, as it usually does, has many, many different things in it. I have many large concerns, but I have three that I'm going to address today.

4:20

I think that one of the first things that I want to raise is the sentence:

My government will also implement recommendations of the Curriculum Review Committee, including its call for a refocus on teaching core competencies, depoliticizing the curriculum, and standardized testing.

This is a huge concern for me, obviously. As many of you know, I am the parent of a young child who will shortly be entering our public school system, and I think that what really troubles me about this is that, you know, these words themselves, "core competencies," "depoliticizing the curriculum," don't really sound like they mean anything. They all sound like bluster, but if one were to turn simply to the social media accounts of the Minister of Education, it becomes clear very quickly what those things mean.

I think what really troubles me is that what they mean is: we would like to remove critical thinking from the curriculum. I think that's a big problem. We live in an age of unprecedented information. There is more information available at the fingertips of individuals now than at any other time in history. When I was entering the school system, library research was still performed by way of card catalogues. That is no longer. I don't even think kids know what a card catalogue is anymore. I don't know what they did with all those little cabinets with the drawers in them, but those seem to have gone away.

I think with this incredible access to information that individuals have, there's a huge amount of benefit that comes with that, a massive amount of benefit. You can look up almost anything now, and I think that that's really good. The challenge is that what comes with that is a massive amount of misinformation. In terms of information on the Internet, I would be surprised to find – I'm sure no one has ever catalogued this, but if I were to discover that 50 per cent of the information on the Internet was true, I would be surprised. I think it's probably significantly lower than that.

The problem is that you have, you know, young people now whose primary resource is not an encyclopedia or a book or a card catalogue; it's the Internet, and that Internet has information of varying quality on it. If there is one single thing that we can teach our young people that I think is absolutely critical, it's to analyze that information and to analyze it themselves because they're not necessarily going to get – other people have their own motivations. They always do. Whether their perceptions are simply slanted by the fact that they hold certain perspectives and those perspectives don't align with reality or whether they're deliberately slanting the information they present, it often is slanted in that way. Children being able to analyze that information and draw their own conclusion is the skill that will be the single most important thing we can teach them.

The fact that we have a sentence like this in the throne speech and we have a Minister of Education going on Twitter and literally attacking a question that says, "Which one of the following things makes this argument stronger?" – many people in this room, anyone who has written the LSAT will actually recognize those questions because those are the questions that the LSAT asks. It's a test of analytical reasoning, so what it asks is a series of questions like: "Which one of these things, if true, would make this argument stronger? Which one of these things, if true, would make this argument weaker?" The idea that the Minister of Education would attack a question like that I find just mind-boggling because that's exactly what we should be teaching our children to do.

The idea that we're politicizing the curriculum – look, these young people are going to grow up, and they're going to go out into the real world. The real world: it's political, whether we like it or not. The information that people are presenting is presented from a perspective, and people need the ability to hear that information, hear from both sides, and draw a reasonable conclusion. The idea that simply because the argument that's being questioned, about whether it would be stronger or weaker, happens to be an argument about a subject matter that we consider to be of concern, whether it be energy, whether it be environment, whether it be women's rights – you know, it is precisely in these circumstances where the subject matter is emotional, it is precisely in these circumstances where the subject matter has a fundamental impact on the lives of everyone in this province that we really do need to be able to analyze the rationality of an argument. The idea that that will now be removed from the curriculum is incredibly troubling to me.

I mean, this goes hand in hand with teaching to the test. We're going to see mandatory testing at grade 3. Those are eight-year-olds. Now, setting aside for the moment the anxiety that some people feel around that, standardized testing doesn't really test much except your ability on standardized tests. I happen to be someone who performed very well on standardized tests. I wrote the MCAT. I wrote the LSAT. I wrote the GRE. I wrote them all. I scored very well on all of them because I score well on standardized tests. Part of that has to do with my background because I was raised here in a North American culture, because English is my first language, because I have a bunch of those background suppositions that tend to underlie standardized testing that all of the research suggests to us tend to make people who were not born in this country or who don't have English as their first language or who have a different background score much, much worse on those tests despite the fact that they know the subject matter as well or better than those who are around them.

That is my concern with standardized testing because when a school's funding, in particular, is tied to that standardized testing, teachers start to teach to the test. They want to do the best job that they can for their students, and they can't do that job if they don't have money for new textbooks, so they focus on the test. They focus on the test even though maybe there are other things that they could

better be teaching their students. You know, I don't particularly remember most of the information I was taught in the third grade. What I remember is being taught how to consume information, being taught how to research. Now, admittedly, the research part itself has changed – again, no more card catalogues – but I think that that's what sticks with us.

That's what we need our children to be learning. It's not to have sort of information jammed in their heads – they're going to have access to that information; they need only the ability to analyze it – but instead to be provided with the tools to understand statistics, to understand analytical reasoning, to understand unstated premises. I would say that unstated premises are the single biggest problem in politics today. You know, again, my own background: I got into politics because I don't believe that trickle-down economics works, and trickle-down economics is an unstated premise in so many political arguments that it's absurd. Without the tools to be able to pull that out, to be able to say: oh, well this sounds reasonable on its face because they've stated a series of premises, but actually those premises don't lead to the conclusion, not without additional premises, which are wrong. I think that if there is any one thing that we could teach our children, it should be that. Looking at that in the throne speech, it troubles me. It troubles me deeply because if there is any one thing I would like my child to be taught, it is that. The idea that that will not be taught is just incredibly troubling.

Other comments, you know, that we've seen from the Minister of Education on social media have to do with the fact that teachers shouldn't use a word like "communism." Well, if you think communism is bad, we should probably teach the history of it because the history is not really a stunningly flattering example. Why would we not give children this information? Why would we not teach them? Like, here is a horrible thing that happened. Let's teach our children about it, maybe not at an incredibly young age but in high school, so that when they go out into the world, they understand the background and they understand the reasoning and they understand what happened in history, so that when they vote and when they make decisions, they don't fall prey to those same problems again. I could go on about this all day, but I would say that that is probably, for me, the number one top troubling piece in the throne speech.

The next piece that I would highlight is this piece about diversification. I find it a bit of a ridiculous statement. "My government will continue to advance . . . diversification." I mean, "continue to advance" would imply that it had been advanced under this government previously, which it was not. If there's one thing that I objected to incredibly strongly in the last budget, it was cutting all of those diversification initiatives. They cut initiatives to AI. They cut initiatives to universities to train people in AI. That was a huge area for growth. They cut film and television, which was a huge area for potential growth. They cut the Alberta investor tax credit. There were tech companies that were looking to either move an office here, start an office here, have a second office here, but they aren't coming because that credit is gone. Why are they not helped by the cut to corporate taxes? Well, because those are start-up companies. Start-up companies are not posting profits in excess of half a billion dollars, in excess of \$500,000. They just aren't. They're not at that place yet. They're still hiring staff. They're still reinvesting their money in their business, which is why diversification requires these sorts of incentives rather than a blanket tax cut, because a blanket tax cut only privileges already existing industries. That hurt the goals of diversification. It hurt them incredibly badly.

4:30

I actually think – you know, I'm troubled by the budget. I'm troubled by the cuts in the budget. I'm troubled by what it will do

to our future, but this failure to invest in diversification is, in my view, actually the thing that may hamstringing us the most. The reason I think that is because the more diverse the economy becomes, the more resilient it is, especially as sort of global markets are doing things that are unpredictable. It is important to have that resilience, it is important to have that resilience in the economy, and the longer we take to build that resilience in our Alberta economy, the more challenging it is going to be and the more people will be hurt by that fact.

There were some incredible diversification initiatives coming out of even the climate leadership plan, out of Energy Efficiency Alberta. We saw a huge amount of uptake and a huge amount of job growth, companies starting up here, and those are jobs that we're not going to see anymore. I think that I'm troubled by that, and one of the reasons is that that's what Albertans want the most – I actually think that that is what they're looking for, that is a top-of-mind concern, that is what I hear from people most frequently – jobs. Cutting this diversification hampered long-term job growth, it hampered short-term job growth, and it hampered the creation of long-term, sustainable, good, mortgage-paying jobs that people can move into. That's really, really troubling.

So if this government chooses to begin investing in diversification, I will be very happy. We haven't seen it yet. All we've seen are cuts. All we have seen are cuts to diversification, and I think that's really, really sad because, honestly, almost every business leader I've talked to can name a company that was looking to have research done and to have a set-up here, and now they're not.

One other thing that I think is worth highlighting here in the throne speech: "amendments will be proposed to the Victims of Crime Act to strengthen financial benefits." What's kind of funny to me about this is that, in fact, in the recently produced budget, in Justice it is clear that two things are happening. One is that the compensation to victims appears to be being eliminated. Obviously, I haven't been to estimates, so I don't have a timeline on that, but it's there in black and white.

The other is that they're going to expand what's allowed under the victims of crime program to include public security. Essentially, a large hole was blown in the budget by giving money away to already profitable corporations. They, for that reason, have cut the public security budget significantly, so now they intend to backfill that public security budget with money that is intended for victims of crime. Up until now, money that was paid into the victims of crime fund went to support programs for victims or the victims directly. Now that money will go to pay for policing, policing . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you. I appreciate the opportunity to speak on 29(2)(a) to ask the member who was just speaking a couple of questions because I was very intrigued by some of the points that she was bringing forward. I'd like to take her back to some of the earlier statements she was making regarding standardized testing in the school system. I want to just ask her to address some of the research or some of the thoughts around standardized testing because I know, as a university instructor myself, that we examined a lot of these kinds of concepts.

One of the things that research that has been done on standardized testing has very dramatically showed is that the results of schools on standardized testing are very specifically correlated with the wealth of the families in the school as opposed to either the abilities of the students or the abilities of the teachers to teach the subject, and that is that in neighbourhoods in which the families tend to be upper middle class or upper class and therefore have lots of resources,

have lots of access to computers, have the ability to take time away from work without losing income to come into the schools to provide extra supports and services, have the ability to hold fundraisers where they bring in sometimes literally thousands of dollars of extra resources into the school system, all resulted in children in those schools doing statistically better on standardized testing than children in other systems, in other parts of the system where they don't have all of those resources, that have nothing to do with the classroom per se, nothing to do with the teacher's ability or the curriculum that the teacher is teaching but, rather, have to do with the ability of parents to provide the circumstances for success by those students, by their own children.

I am very concerned about this because there was, prior to this government's actions, a fund which would allow the school boards to provide extra resources to some of the schools who are in those lower income neighbourhoods, who don't have parents who can raise thousands of dollars during fundraisers, who don't have parents who have the ability to take time off work to contribute to the well-being of the school and to visit in the school and provide resources, who don't have parents who can provide computers and other supports at home such as, you know, further tutoring or perhaps are even themselves able to provide supports to the students because they have been through the education system and have the time and resources to be able to do that kind of thing. There was a fund that did exist in the school board that allowed the school board to somehow deal with that obvious difference that occurs in jurisdictions between wealthy communities and less wealthy communities. Unfortunately, this government has chosen to eliminate that fund.

They're doing two contradictory things at the same time, and I'd love to hear the Member for Calgary-Mountain View just speak a little bit to the fact that at the same time that they are destroying the possibility of equality, they are demanding a test which, in fact, only shows the effects of inequality. If the member might have something more to add.

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

Ms Ganley: Yeah. I would actually be happy to address that issue because it is a huge concern, and it's a huge concern when you're talking about mandatory standardized testing, which I think is hugely problematic. The concern is that that's ultimately linked to funding, so what you get is standardized test results that we know will be lower in certain populations because they don't have the same background, because their parents don't have the same money, because their parents don't have the education, because English may not be their first language. So they don't necessarily score as well at that school, and then that school gets its funding cut, so those students who were already behind, who we were already trying to provide an equal opportunity for, fall further behind, and it just gets worse. I think that that, I mean, the just incredible . . .

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

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I really appreciate the opportunity to speak to the Speech from the Throne and to talk a little bit about some of the concerns that I have with regard to the Speech from the Throne. I think we need to just take a moment to talk about what it is that is usually intended when a Speech from the Throne is constructed and is presented by the Lieutenant Governor. I think the important thing to remember about the Speech from the Throne is that it is largely aspirational. The intention of it

is not to introduce the bills that will of course be subsequently introduced in the House but, rather, to talk about the intention of the government and the direction they want to go in as they proceed to suggest policies and laws for the rest of the term.

4:40

The first thing about this Speech from the Throne is that I find it very much a concern in that the document is not aspirational in the sense that it seeks to talk about the construction of a well-integrated society in which they are hoping to draw in the diversity of the population of Alberta to create well-being and to ensure appropriate participation and to ensure that those democratic principles, such as equality of opportunity and equal voice and the opportunity for all people to participate in their government, even to challenge their government, because we are a democracy and we don't simply just ask people to get onboard and agree to everything the government does – in fact, in a democracy we actually seek the citizens' reaction to what government is doing, and therefore, as opposed to dictatorships or other forms of government, we actually invite people to challenge, to disagree with, to oppose government.

In fact, our whole democratic system is based on the idea that we have a government side of the House and we have an opposition side of the House. It is called the opposition. Its intent is to be at times the devil's advocate, to challenge the government, to seek the faults in their thinking, to pry open the errors of their ways and to demonstrate better ways to proceed. We actually, in a democratic system, desire that kind of significant, thoughtful exchange of ideas because we believe, ultimately, in that synthesis that occurs when two opposing forces come together, challenge each other, and new ideas emerge.

Unfortunately, what I see here is not that, not a reflection of those deep parliamentary, western democratic philosophies but, rather, a narrow perspective that suggests that only one train of thought will be allowed and others will not. I find it very concerning when I look at what's happening in this document, when they do talk about what they wish to do, and then I look at the bills that they've begun to present in the House subsequently because there is significant inconsistency philosophically between the two. How can an overarching, guiding, philosophical document like the Speech from the Throne say one thing and then the actions of the government subsequently demonstrate the opposite?

I think we can go through and take a look at a few of the different sections in the Speech from the Throne that demonstrate this inconsistency, this inability to write sentences with the word "therefore" in the middle: we believe this; therefore, we will do that. Instead, it's "We believe this, but we're going to do that anyways," whereas the hope is that we see "therefore." Instead, we can read this document with the word "but" inserted in most of the statements.

For example, it says in the Speech from the Throne that there's a desire to support skilled tradespeople. It's something, of course, that we fundamentally agree with on this side of the House. Many people would know that we have long been associated with tradespeople in our political party. We invite them to be part of our party. We invite them to have a seat at the table with us. We invite them to help us form government policy. We do everything possible to try to create a world in which tradespeople will have opportunity, where they'll be successful in getting jobs that will provide for them the opportunity to provide for their family, to put food on the table, to enjoy the good life that is possible in the province of Alberta.

And yet in this very same document, while they say that they support trades, they then go on to do things to undermine that. They go on to suggest, for example, that the party which has actually affiliated themselves with tradespeople: they are going to directly work to prohibit that party who is affiliated with us from somehow

contributing to the discussion during elections by limiting their donations. So they want to support tradespeople, but they do not want to provide them with any voice. They don't want to allow them to actually spend money, to speak to what it is that they would like to see in the democratic process. It's a glaring contradiction to what they're talking about.

Then subsequently the rest of their bills that come forward, the budget that they put in the House take money away from the training. Today they bring in the firefighters, and we all stand and give them a standing ovation, which they richly deserve. I have deep respect for the firefighters in this province, and I appreciate the fact that they took the time out to go to Australia to help our brothers and sisters there in a terrible time. Then, at the same time, they eliminate the grant to municipalities to train firefighters here in the province of Alberta. They did that in this budget right after writing that they wanted to support these kinds of people.

At the same time as they say they want to support these trades, they then reduce the amount of money going to institutions such as NAIT and SAIT, such that those two institutions have, over the last couple of days, begun to announce a series of cutbacks that they're going to impose in their institutions. They're going to reduce the number of people available to provide education to the very people who they pretend to support.

You know, those kinds of contradictions are very difficult to understand when we see what's happened in actual practice. I can go through a number of the things that they say in this document, this speech, and point out that what they say that they want to do and then what they subsequently do are incompatible. For example, they mention diversity in this document and the desire to have a diverse workforce, diversification of our economy and opportunities and so on, something, again, which I of course would support, were they to actually do that kind of thing, but then I notice that all of the things that we created when we were in government as an opportunity to try to create diversity, they're not supporting.

Where is the support for tech industries? Where is the support for all of the extra places and colleges and universities that we had put in to ensure that 2,000 new people would be graduating so that when we go to companies like BioWare and other tech companies in the province of Alberta and say to them, "We want you to build here; we want you to grow this economy; we want to create this to be a hub of great tech advancement," then – they don't have it. They don't have support for it. They didn't put it in their budget. They say that they want diversity, but the very thing that we know is going to be the most important part of our diversity moving forward they're not supporting.

We have to remember that technology and the IT industry is not merely a job creator in and of itself, but it's also the utility for every other profession in this province. It doesn't matter what you do. It doesn't matter if you're a carpenter or if you're a farmer or if you're a doctor or a lawyer or if you're a social worker; having strong IT, having good computer programs and services will enhance the work you do, will provide greater productivity, and will result in you being able to contribute to Alberta in a greater way. And yet, do I see any supports for that? Do I see any tax credits? Do I see anything that's being done to particularly help that? No.

4:50

I can say the same thing about the film industry. Again, we had a tax credit under the previous government to encourage the film industry to come to Alberta, to help build up the resources, particularly in southern Alberta. They really have benefited over the years from having the film industry come in. I know, for example, whenever I go to the Stoney nations and visit with the chiefs, along the side of the wall of their hotel and casino they have all the movie

posters of all the movies that have been shot here in the province of Alberta. Those are creating jobs in communities that most need them, in indigenous communities in southern Alberta, yet we see no support for that kind of thing in the film industry.

As well, there are concerns about the lack of any particular supports for tourism. These are the kinds of things that I am concerned about as I read this document, as I listen to what it is the Lieutenant Governor had to tell us, and I look then at the subsequent behaviour of the government. There's such a deep inconsistency on where we're going, a lack of taking that overarching ideal and turning it into practice. It's something, therefore, I am very upset and concerned about.

I'm also concerned about the fact that this document is really based on a fallacy, and the fallacy is that we are in an economic emergency that needs to be handled with this brutal, closed-fist approach. Clearly, we had some concerns about the economy. We need to ensure that we do better, particularly at a time when the world is telling us that we are in transition and that we should be planning for the future and we should be understanding the economy in a transitional sense. I don't see any discussion here about the transition of our economy, about moving to where we're going to be five years from now.

Wayne Gretzky is famous for having said that he always skated to where the puck is going to be, not where it is. I see absolutely no skating here, no movement to where the economy is going to be. It's a vision of the economy that is rooted in a prior era, and I'm afraid that all I can say at this point is that this government is yesterday's man. They understand how it used to be. They have wishes and hopes to reclaim some golden era. But they simply have no vision for where we're going to be, no plans for transition, no supports for people to be part of that transition. Meanwhile they're imposing draconian cuts, they're hurting people unnecessarily. As a result, I can't support this speech.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie. Not 29(2)(a)?

Any other speakers on 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other speakers? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Member Loyola: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's a great honour and pleasure to stand in this House, especially in response to the Speech from the Throne.

As was so eloquently put together by the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, it's true; it seems that in this Speech from the Throne – and I'll borrow the member's words – there's only one train of thought that is allowed with this government. It's either our way or no way. There's no room for plurality. There's no room for looking at it from another perspective, and this is what I find most frightening of all. As I've stated many times in this House, I think that when we look at problems especially and we're trying to find solutions, it's important that we look at the problem from different perspectives.

Now, I understand. All of us are here because we follow a particular ideology. We have a particular way of looking at life, a philosophy. That has really provided the foundation for why we chose to run for office and actually be inside of this House. But let us not be blind, because even an individual like myself, who is very ideological – and members from the other side know that I have my particular beliefs, but at the same time I always stop to listen to people who have another perspective. That's because very early on in my life I was taught something very important, that is: a point of view is nothing but a view of one point. I'll repeat that for the

benefit of those members who are on the other side because I can see that so many of them are enthralled in what I have to say right now, that a point of view is nothing but a view of a point. That is to say that because of the culture we were brought up in, because of the way that we see the world, what was passed on to us, we were taught to look at the world in a specific way.

Now, I'm not saying that members on the other side are closed-minded. No. I'm not saying that because I know that it takes effort, it takes a great deal of effort for us to listen, to understand, and to truly understand. How many times have you been in an argument, especially when it comes to politics, and you're already thinking about what your rebuttal is before the other person even finishes speaking? You're not actually listening because you're still in your own head thinking about what your argument is going to be against that person's position, and this is what I fear is happening inside of this House. I'll be humble enough to admit that it happens on both sides, and it even happens with myself. Because it's the nature of what we're here to do; it's politics. As I said, we're all on a firm foundation of our own ideology and philosophy. But, members, let's be open-minded. Let's listen to one another. Let's not simply put forward particular ideas and stand so rigid to what we are presenting. I mean, that's what amendments were designed to be for.

Now, many times I had the pleasure of sitting on the other side when the Alberta NDP was government, and we did accept many an amendment from members from the Progressive Conservatives and from the Wildrose. [interjections] I hear members on the other side laughing and mocking me, but it's true, and you can look at the record. There were several amendments that were accepted by the Alberta NDP government, and I don't think that one amendment has been accepted by this government cabinet on one of its government bills to date in this session. I could stand corrected, Madam Speaker, but to my knowledge not one amendment presented by this side of the House has ever been accepted by this cabinet to date.

Now, Albertans trust that we are here to represent them, and a particular number of Albertans have chosen that this opposition should be in this House to represent them. What I'm stating here for all of us to perhaps gain some insight and reflect upon is the fact that we should be sharing ideas with one another, and we should be listening to one another, and we should be working towards the benefit of all Albertans, all those who are represented in this House. That's why it rang so true to me when I heard the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford speak about how only one train of thought is going to be allowed, and this is dangerous. It's dangerous.

5:00

I was door-knocking a week ago, not this past Sunday but the Sunday before that. I spoke to so many teachers and to so many nurses who were talking to me about specific ways in which they are already hearing how the cuts from this government are going to be affecting them, and they're concerned. One particular group are parents with children who have special needs and also the teachers that actually teach those kids with special needs.

Now, I wasn't actually leading the constituents when I went out on the doorstep. I simply asked a very simple question: how do you think the current government's budget is affecting you personally? Now, if they were a teacher, they would answer as a teacher. They would say: "I'm a teacher, but I'm also a parent. This is how it's affecting me." I wasn't leading them and saying, "Hey, so these big, drastic cuts, these big, draconian cuts that are coming." It wasn't rhetoric. It wasn't rhetoric, members. I was there simply to ask a very simple question without leading the constituent: how is this budget affecting you?

I hope that this government and those members sitting across the way that form cabinet will actually listen to the things that we have to say because they're not coming from my mouth. They're not coming from my personal experience. They're not coming from my ideological point of view. They're not coming from my own philosophical way of seeing the world. I'm here to share with you the people's voices, those that I represent in my constituency of Edmonton-Ellerslie.

When I get up in this House and I table petitions or I table letters, those are from constituents, and they're actually responding to what your government is doing, so I hope that you would listen to them. As was stated in the throne speech, the responsibility is to govern on behalf of all Albertans, but I fear that not all Albertans are being listened to by this government.

One of the drastic things that we've learned recently is about the PUF funding. Now, very early on in my first year of being elected, back in 2015, I actually knocked on the door of a young mother. She had two children. Both of them had special needs. She was explaining to me the challenges – and that's to put it, like, modestly – the uphill battle that she had to fight for her children in order to get the assessments so that her children could get the help inside of the school system. It seems that instead of making that situation better for Albertan mothers and fathers and families out there and those specific children that require these needs assessments, we're making it more difficult for them.

Now, Madam Speaker, through you, of course, I see the Minister of Education shaking her head no, that we're not making it difficult. I'd like to hear how, then. If we're not making it difficult by cutting specific funding to specific programs or moving money from one program over to another, we're not making it explicitly clear on how these individuals are going to get the help that they need. The parents don't understand. All they see is that there are more hoops to jump through and that it's getting harder for them to get the actual help that their children need within the system. That's what they see. That's the concrete of what they see, and that's what they are talking to me about on the doorstep. I remind you, Madam Speaker, that I'm not leading these constituents. I'm there to humbly listen to them and what they have to say regarding what they have already formulated an opinion on regarding the budget of this government. I'm going to continue to do that, and I'm going to continue to bring those voices into this House, and I hope that the members on the other side will respect that.

I could go on and on and on and on. I could go on and on and on, but I feel that I'll give other members within the House time to actually respond to some of the things that I've said here today. I'd love to hear from other members on the statements that I've made, and I'd also love to hear from the other members on their door-knocking experiences and what they're hearing from constituents as well. Genuinely – genuinely – I say that.

With that, Madam Speaker, for now I will finish my comments there.

The Deputy Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Are there any members wishing to comment?

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to provide some comments in regard to the Speech from the Throne. It's interesting to pair the Speech from the Throne with the budget, which we saw just a few days ago as well, so that we can take perhaps some of the guiding comments and sentences from the throne speech and see how they're actually being put into

action or into use through a financial commitment from this government. I just want to point out some of the obvious discrepancies that do exist between the throne speech and the stated objectives of the throne speech and how we actually saw them played out in the budget.

We all know, for example – we're just hearing over the last, I guess, four or five days – about some quite significant cuts to jobs in both the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology and the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology, both SAIT and NAIT, in Calgary and Edmonton respectively. These are very significant cuts to positions in both of these institutions. Both of these institutions are recognized as leading polytechnics, not just in Canada but, I think, providing direction for polytechnics around the world. Their graduation rates and their close ties with industry are models of how we build and provide postsecondary education to fit the needs of the economy here in the province and indeed across Canada as well. So I don't think that we can in any way question the integrity of these institutions nor their quality nor, I think, the illustrious history that both of these institutions have put down over the last number of years. I can't remember exactly when they were started but certainly at least a half century ago.

This notion that the UCP said in the throne speech – right? – that they are supporting the trades and, you know, are going to move in a new direction to ensure that the trades are supported in the broadest way was quite significantly undercut by the reality of the budget, where the budgets of both of these institutions have been reduced significantly. With the job equivalents that we see from SAIT, for example, in Calgary, it's, like, about 1 in 10 of all the positions in SAIT are on the block as a result of this budget. With NAIT – we just sort of heard about it this morning – I would imagine that the proportions are very, very similar.

5:10

So to find that the UCP government is professing to support the trades in the throne speech is not borne out in the budget in any way, shape, or form. Perhaps there are a couple of very small increases with scholarships and so forth that you see in the magnitude of hundreds of thousands of dollars. When you see cuts to postsecondary in the magnitude of tens of millions of dollars – and the results, of course, are quite obvious – I would suspect we should prepare, I guess, brace ourselves for further announcements in regard to loss of positions in more postsecondary institutions around the province in the next coming days and weeks. It's a direct result of a marked lack of support for polytechnics, trades colleges, and postsecondary in general.

I find that very difficult to square because, again, taking the words that were put forward in the throne speech and then seeing how they might be applied in the actual budget, another word or words that occur more than once in the throne speech is this idea around diversification of our economy: “catalyzing job creation” – I'm quoting here from the throne speech – growth in “advanced technology,” “artificial intelligence,” “medical technology, aviation and aerospace,” and so forth. Madam Speaker, all of those things reside in our postsecondary institutions: in NAIT, in SAIT, at the University of Alberta, at the University of Calgary, the University of Lethbridge, and so forth. That's where the cutting edge of these new areas to diversify the economy does reside. I don't think that anyone doubts the importance and the need for Alberta to diversify its economy now more than ever, considering the instability around the global price for energy, especially considering so many different circumstances that can cause your reliance on a single industry to really destabilize the economy, both in a boom time and during more difficult times, as we're experiencing here now, today.

So why would we undercut the single biggest, perhaps the strongest asset we have to help to diversify the economy in terms of artificial intelligence, in terms of medical technology, and so forth? The universities are where these things are happening. I mean, we're sending a very mixed message here, both to the business community and to the actual institutions themselves. But, Madam Speaker, I would say that perhaps the most dangerous message that we're sending by making such significant cuts to postsecondary education is to young people here in the province of Alberta.

I can tell you, Madam Speaker, that we have a very large demographic of young people that are now in junior high, high school. We know – I certainly knew as minister – that we had to build 200 new schools over the last four years to accommodate this very significant, large young population that's moving through the ranks. And guess what? They will be attending postsecondary education here in very, very short order. So rather than making cuts to postsecondary, we need to actually create more spaces in our postsecondary institutions to accommodate the tens of thousands of students that are moving through our school systems here today. There's no debate about that, right? We know that they're there. We had more than 15,000 new students showing up in our schools every year for the last number of years and, I would suspect, in the next number of budgets as well, which this government doesn't seem to be acknowledging by providing the funding that those young people need in grade school.

I would suggest that the indication is that they are reluctant or have no intention of providing the funding and the growth to provide for those young people when they reach postsecondary age as well, which is disturbing. It's unconscionable on a moral level, and it's counterproductive to any aspirations that this government might have to actually improve, diversify, and grow the economy here in the province of Alberta. Those young people, those tens of thousands of kids, more every year, that are coming through grade school – grade 9, grade 10, grade 11, grade 12 – represent the actual future prosperity of this province.

You can drill oil. You can provide natural gas. You can, you know, provide agricultural products and all of those wonderful things that we do have here in the province, but if you're not keeping and retaining and having those young people stay and work and prosper and start families of their own here in the province, then the whole thing falls apart, Madam Speaker, quite frankly. We can see examples of this in any number of places in the world, where if you have a drain of the young people that provide the backbone for the future of your society, your economy, then there is nothing else that you can really do. If they can leave – and they're much more mobile and more likely to be able to move to different jurisdictions, different provinces where they feel that the postsecondary education system is being supported and where new diverse economies are being encouraged – then they will do so.

I've been around long enough to see different versions of this here in the province of Alberta through the '80s and the '90s and parts of the early 2000s, where if a graduating class or group gets a negative message about their prospects for either studying in postsecondary in the province or the jobs that they might get when they become graduates, then they leave – it's as simple as that – and they don't come back, necessarily.

We are lucky right now. We're in the crucible of two very, very valuable things, and that is that we have the youngest population in Canada and that we have a very, very good public education system that has provided for them to this certain point now, right? I kind of wonder about the immediate future, but certainly, you know, we have a young, educated population. Those things are not set in stone, Madam Speaker. You can easily undercut either one or both of those things by making the wrong decisions around nurturing and

building both an education system, postsecondary in particular, and the economy and diversifying that economy, too.

We've seen the debate in Calgary, and I suspect that it's a similar phenomenon in other cities around the province, where people are feeling, at least anecdotally and with some statistical backup, that young people are making decisions to not stay in some of our cities here in the province right now. In Calgary, in particular, we saw the debate in the media – right? – in the last few weeks talking about people wanting to make choices around their schools, the uncertainty around the universities and colleges, the uncertainty around support for the oil and gas industry, with building a proper climate leadership plan that would allow the big energy companies to continue to move forward with confidence. The lack of investment in diversity in the economy in the city of Calgary makes some people vote with their feet, quite frankly.

I find that troubling because what I do still see in Calgary now – I've been there for the last couple of weekends at least – is that it still is a superdynamic city that has so much potential. It has a very diverse population in terms of culture. It has a very interesting development and redevelopment of neighbourhoods. You see a lot of entrepreneurial spirit in moving to start-ups and so forth. But all of that can be wiped away very quickly at this time when we have a shaky economy and a government that is not sending clear signals to support young people in the city of Calgary. It's as simple as that.

I don't wish that on any place or anything at any time. We're here to provide constructive criticism to try to turn something like that around, but I can tell you that it's not rocket science to say that one of the key areas to demonstrate a commitment to our young population in Calgary and Edmonton and other places is to make sure that you have a demonstrable investment in our postsecondary institutions – right? – in trades colleges, in SAIT, in Grant MacEwan, in the University of Calgary, in Mount Royal. If there is a clear message and a sustained message of the opposite, which is to cut those things, then people can make presumptions: maybe this government is not in it for me, not in it for my interests, and maybe I'll just look elsewhere.

5:20

I hope it doesn't come to that. I don't think we're in that position now. It's only been 10 months or so since the UCP has been providing leadership here in the province, so there's still time to help turn that around. Again, Madam Speaker, looking at the discrepancy between what words were put forward in the throne speech and how that was manifested in the actual budget, whether it was supported or not supported, I just wanted to point out the gaps between those two things.

You know, I see other areas that concern me around the throne speech, certainly around kindergarten to grade 12 education. Again, some of my colleagues expressed it very clearly around their concerns, concerns that I share as well, in regard to increasing standardized testing, making cuts to operating budgets of our school boards, the whole curriculum review committee, and so forth. There are always, again, places in both this throne speech and the last one and the ongoing sort of messaging that you get from this government that there's an incongruity there – right? – between reality and what's actually being said.

I mean, certainly, this whole idea around choice in education I think is fine, but all I hear is a reaffirmation of the choices that we have in our education system now. We have public schools. We have Catholic . . .

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

Seeing none, any other speakers? The hon. member for . . .

Mr. Carson: My apologies. Under Standing Order 29(2)(a), Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: I'll allow it. Go ahead.

Mr. Eggen: Oh. Thank you very much.

Mr. Carson: You've got to let me make my statement first.

Mr. Eggen: Oh, right. We want to hear this. It's not too long though, right?

Mr. Carson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is an honour to rise, and I most definitely appreciate the member's comments around the Speech from the Throne. I appreciate that the member also brings great depth of understanding to the piece around education and other important topics that he's brought up. I'm hoping that the member might elaborate just a little further on things that are missing in what we've seen in this Speech from the Throne.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Eggen: Thank you. I appreciate it. I didn't mean to shortchange the hon. member. To explain, I just didn't want to lose it. I was in the middle of a sentence, and now I have to think about where I was in that sentence.

Ah, yes. You know, we already have all of the different choices in education here in the province of Alberta. We have public education. We have Catholic education. We have charter schools. We have private schools. We have home-schooling. Each of those over the last number of years while I was minister had been funded for enrolment just alongside in an equal way regardless of what delivery system that happened to be.

I don't know what else, you know, government has in mind. I mean, it seems as though those are all the different ways by which you can deliver education between them. The key to all of those systems, like being private or charter or public or Catholic or francophone – right? – is to make sure you're funding them properly. I don't see that part. You see that as an affirmation in the throne speech, but then you go to the budget, and there's something completely different. I find that just to be incongruent. You know, I think I know what the government is up to here, and it's really not entirely honest. They're suggesting that those things don't exist when, in fact, they do exist. They were both being funded and supported over the last number of years, over the last many, many years, really, here in the province. Nothing has changed as such.

Another issue that I think is again playing some political game and where, in fact, when you look at the budget, you know, we actually run into a bit of a problem is in regard to the curriculum, right? We know that we are way overdue for a new curriculum here in the province of Alberta. It's a process that takes quite a number of years. It was a process that was started probably more than six or seven years ago, maybe even eight years ago, as part of the normal cycle of updating curriculum to ensure the best results for our kids in regard to literacy and numeracy, critical thinking, and so forth. The whole idea of suspending that venture – I can't remember how much had been spent on the curriculum up to that point, with hundreds of people working on it and thousands of inputs from Albertans. Suddenly to put all that on ice: again, I seriously think that there was a political intention there, and that political intention got in the way of updating our curriculum for our kids in our schools.

We were supposed to be starting to pilot the kindergarten to grade 4 curriculum, which had a much more updated focus on basic math

skills and language and so forth and making sure that kids are reading to their grade level and providing extra help to catch students that perhaps were not reading to grade level and so forth. You know, all of that's gone. I find that very disturbing because I know that, again, we have a record number of new enrolments in our schools, especially at the younger grades, and you have to catch students at the right time to learn essential skills. It's a developmental issue, right? You don't get to be seven years old more than once. Some people sort of don't move past acting like seven-year-olds, but in terms of acquiring language and those basic skills, there's a window that you have to meet and to catch.

For the government to be suspending those things and cutting on the extra help that students might need at the younger grades especially – right? – having class sizes that are appropriate for kindergarten to grade 4: again, you know, I find that to be disturbing. It trumps the... [The time limit for questions and comments expired]

That's all I got.

The Deputy Speaker: That's all the time you've got.

Any other speakers? The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

Mr. Carson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Well, it's an honour to rise once again, for myself this time, I suppose. Well, the first time was for myself, too, but either way. In my response to the Speech from the Throne I think back to 2015, the first few weeks or months that I had the great privilege of representing my community in this Legislature. I remember back to my maiden speech, I believe it was at the time, and talking about the importance of taking care of seniors in my community and ensuring that they had the proper supports that they needed so that they felt that they were taken care of in a way that they could age in place and making sure that our community was a place that could support them throughout their entire lives.

I look at what we have in front of us today with this Speech from the Throne, and the fact is that what is not in the speech is just as important as what is in this speech. When I take a look through this document, a guiding document for this government, truly, I don't believe I see the word "seniors" in here at all. That is very concerning for me. I think about those very seniors that I talked about in 2015 in my maiden speech and the importance that we have to place on supporting them. To look at this, once again I'm very deeply concerned. Where was the Minister of Seniors and Housing when this document was created? How come, after being in government for nearly a year, that minister was not able to convince the Premier of our province that seniors were an important enough issue to fit into the Speech from the Throne document?

Now, we look at some of the statistics or the fact that the projected population of seniors will nearly double to reach almost 18 per cent of Alberta's population by 2035 yet, once again, zero mention of seniors. The importance of supporting them and those on fixed incomes: zero mention of it in this Speech from the Throne. When we look at the direction that we've found so far within Budget 2020, the fact is that, well, maybe the government decided not to talk about seniors in their Speech from the Throne because they saw the writing on the wall, what was coming. Once again, to the minister not standing up for seniors in our province: when we look at Budget 2020, there is a \$53 million cut over the next three years for affordable housing stock in our province. Many seniors access this housing stock because they're on fixed incomes.

Unfortunately, under the direction of this UCP government, those same seniors are seeing increased costs every single day. Whether it's their personal auto insurance, whether it's education property

taxes, whether it's bus passes for seniors and low-income families, they're getting hit from every angle by this UCP government.

5:30

Now, once again, when we look at the seniors and specifically the Seniors and Housing initiatives put forward by this government – well, simply put, the fact is that it is not good enough. We saw, as the budget was released from this government, that Mayor Nenshi stood up and said: the fact is that what your government is doing with the \$53 million cut to affordable housing over the next three years is going to devastate the housing stock in our province. So I really hope that somebody throughout the ranks of this government, whether you're a minister on the front bench or you're a private member in the back, somebody has to be standing up for these seniors, because from what we've seen in the Speech from the Throne, it truly just doesn't seem to be happening, and that's very concerning for me.

Another question that I have. Once again, when we look at the Alberta seniors' drug benefit and what this government has decided is the direction for them, to cut dependants of seniors, who are able to access those drug benefits of that program, we have compounding costs to those seniors, and you are now taking more away from them. You're taking away their ability to access important medication coverage for those that might be depending on their seniors' benefits. It's deeply frustrating for me, and I truly don't understand how we've gotten to this place.

Now, on one hand this government says that we have enough money to give, you know, the most well off CEOs and the largest, most profitable corporations in our province \$4.7 billion, but when the opposition or when community stakeholders, seniors in our community, come asking why they've made these decisions to cut \$10 million, \$20 million, whatever the number might be, how you could be okay with that tradeoff, really, this government has no answers. What they tell these seniors is that you're the most well off, you're the best compensated out of any province. Once again this government is saying that we're doing too much for seniors at this time, so we actually need to scale back.

And it's not just seniors. We hear the Minister of Advanced Education say day in and day out that costs are too high. Well, the fact is that we have one of the most well-educated populations across Canada here in Alberta, and that's something that we should be proud of. We should be proud to invest extra into Advanced Education, into Seniors and Housing, but unfortunately, once again, the direction of this government is much different than that.

When we look at the special needs assistance grants for seniors in our community – well, everyone in our community – we see an \$8.4 million cut once again. What I have trouble understanding is how ministers can sit at a cabinet table in this government and say: yeah, I think we should pay \$30 million for a war room, for somebody to sit on Twitter all day and post, you know, sometimes facts. Not all the time; sometimes. That war room has been caught in several controversies since its inception, so the fact is that I'm not sure how we can even feel confident that they are worth that \$30 million. Well, I'm not confident in that at all, to be honest, Madam Speaker, but that's another problem, I suppose. But when we're talking about taking \$8 million away from special needs assistance grants and at the same time saying that \$30 million needs to go to a Twitter troll that has failed several times already, I truly don't understand how we can be okay with that.

Madam Speaker, I have a lot to say about seniors because the fact is that this budget is devastating for them and is devastating for their budgets, and once again they are not mentioned once in the Speech from the Throne. So I have to ask: where is the seniors minister? Where is that minister? When we look at seniors' property tax

deferrals, we see that the funding remains the same. It stays flat, yet at the same time this government is increasing education property tax costs on families. So there are, I imagine, going to be more seniors needing to defer their property taxes, but once again this government doesn't seem to think that that's actually going to happen, which is an issue.

Overall, Madam Speaker, we see other things in here talk about diversification while one of the first things this government decided to do was cut many of the opportunities that they had to continue diversification in our province. We brought forward many pieces of legislation in terms of tax credits for artificial intelligence, for media, digital media, and we were able to track how those programs actually worked and who was being employed and if it was worth the money.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

Now, once again, we have a government that came in, got rid of nearly all of those programs that were supporting diversification in our province and, instead, a lump-sum handout, \$4.7 billion, to these large corporations, with zero opportunity to really even find out how that money is being spent except for when we find out there are mass layoffs from certain companies that were actually using their money from that \$4.7 billion as an exit strategy out of our province. Once again, we really have very little way to follow the money trail with this \$4.7 billion, which we were able to do with those tax credits that were in place under the NDP government and brought forward by our government. When we talk about diversification, well, this government does one thing and says another, which is very frustrating.

Now, the fact is that this government brought forward their, quote, unquote, blueprint for jobs this week, and it really wasn't much to be excited about. The fact is that this government said that their first job when coming into government and winning the election was to bring prosperity and jobs back to our province. Well, the fact is, Mr. Speaker, that we've lost 50,000 jobs since this government came into power. We've lost 19,000 jobs over the last two months, which, once again, for a government that is trying so hard to bring investment back to our province, if that is your track record, well, I hope that you might stop, to be honest, because it's not working out so far.

Now, Mr. Speaker, once again I think back to the maiden speech in 2015, where I had my first opportunity to respond at length about my priorities as a representative for my community. Frankly, this Speech from the Throne misses the mark. The budget that we've seen in 2019 – and now that we are studying Budget 2020, it completely misses the mark. It misses the mark for seniors. It misses the mark for those in the K to 12 system and the families that are trying to support those children when we see the minister cutting PUF funding for those with disabilities before they enter the K to 12 system or the grades 1 to 12 system.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

My biggest problem with the direction of this government is that they truly are – well, I don't know if it's a good thing, but they are truly good at gaslighting Albertans. When members of the opposition come forward with concerns about funding being cut – a perfect example was the Member for St. Albert saying: "Listen, Minister, I've heard that you are planning on changing AISH payment dates. That will have an extremely negative effect on those people that access that funding." The minister wrote an e-mail saying that those dates won't change, tweeted that those dates won't change. What happens a week later, a couple of weeks later? Those dates changed. Now, as we've seen, people who are trying to

survive, many of them living in poverty, that are getting access to funding through AISH benefits, are unable to provide for their family, unable to put food on their table because of the last-minute efforts of this minister to change the dates to what looks like – and it's actually written in the budget in black and white – to move some of the costs into the next budget to try and make their balance sheet look better. We've seen that through many departments of this government, and it's very concerning.

With that being said, Madam Speaker, I'm sure we'll have much more time to debate this, but at this time I would like to adjourn debate. Thank you.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. McIver: Is second reading of Bill 1 moved already? Okay. Then just waiting for debate.

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 1 Critical Infrastructure Defence Act

[Adjourned debate February 26: Mr. Jason Nixon]

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

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to speak to this bill at this early stage. At this point I think what I have are more questions, I would say, than statements. I have been examining the bill in depth and comparing it to various other legislation on the part of the province. There are some ways in which I would call it somewhat – wow. Yeah, there are some ways in which it is similar and others in which it is not.

5:40

I think that probably one of the first questions that I would be interested in addressing – well, this one isn't a question; it's a concern. And it's definitely the big, overarching, I would say giant concern that I have, and that has to do with section 1(1)(a)(xvi) of the bill. Basically, this is the definitions section, and it says:

In this Act,

(a) “essential infrastructure” means . . . the following.

Then there's a list of things that essential infrastructure means. So those things are set out. People know what they are. Some of them are private property, and some of them are public property, which is interesting in light of the fact that in Alberta currently sort of trespass acts are divided into the Petty Trespass Act for private and the Trespass to Premises Act for public. So this kind of has different effects on public and private land. That's worth noting.

But what's really troubling is section (xvi) at the bottom here, which says:

A building, structure, device or other thing prescribed by the regulations.

And then, of course, that links back to section 5, which deals with regulations, which reads:

The Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations prescribing buildings, structures, devices or other things as being essential infrastructure.

The reason why that concerns me is because there are absolutely no brackets or collars around how that discretion can be exercised. So, basically, the Lieutenant Governor in Council, i.e. cabinet, can come down and point at any old building that it's interested in or any old class of buildings and designate them under this act. That is

really, really troubling to me because what it means is that we're not dealing with a bill to protect essential infrastructure; we're potentially dealing with a bill to protect anything and anything from entry.

We're not protecting it from – there are sections in this bill under section 2. It talks about, you know, damaging “without lawful right, justification or excuse,” obstructing or interfering. I mean, those things, maybe. But with the first one, section 2(1), the prohibition is:

No person shall, without lawful right, justification or excuse, wilfully enter on any essential infrastructure.

So when we're dealing with essential infrastructure and the things that are listed – and some of them make more sense than others – I think, you know, that's one thing. But when we're saying that now cabinet can have discretion to designate anything as a place into which no one can enter, I think that that is a pretty big area of jurisdiction, and it doesn't even say that cabinet has to make some sort of determination of the essentialness of the infrastructure. It doesn't say that cabinet can designate things that will help the economy or things that are deemed essential or things that a regular person would think are essential or something like that. What it says is that they can prescribe anything they want.

That's really troubling because then you get into a situation where essentially they're able to take public land, land which belongs to the public, to all of us, and designate locations as places where no one can enter. I think that that's pretty troubling. It probably infringes on a lot of different rights, but mostly I think what would potentially trouble me – and I would love for the government to respond and tell us sort of, like, what assurances the public can have that they wouldn't do something like, say, designate a school so that now, if the funding is cut, parents can't protest that or designate the Legislature. I mean, we saw thousands and thousands and thousands of people turn out to this building to protest, and they had the appropriate permits, and that's how the system works. But what's to stop cabinet from designating this structure? What's to stop cabinet from designating a bus stop or a city hall or any number of other things? I think that that's pretty troubling because it would render it an offence just to enter, just to walk in. You don't have to do anything else. I'm very troubled by the broadness of that discretion. I really think that that discretion should be removed entirely, or if not, it should at least be tied to something. Yeah, that's really troubling.

I think one of the other things in the definition that troubles me is the highway. I understand the reasons that the highway is a problem in the sense that we don't want highways blocked. I totally get that. I think the issue is that we're talking about people just walking on the highway – right? – just being on the highway, driving on the highway, existing on the highway. That's a pretty broad category, I think, so that's a bit troubling to me as well.

I do also have some questions. This language: we talk about how “no person shall, without lawful right, justification or excuse,” enter into this sort of infrastructure. You know, the highway, again, is one of the things that's been troubling me about this, right? I think of a lot of indigenous people who will use the highway for foot transportation sometimes, on the shoulder, or for transportation in a car. Sometimes they are exercising their rights under section 35: they're hunting; they're trapping; they're engaged in all sorts of pursuits like that. Would that be a lawful justification or excuse? What if they're crossing over some of these other things listed on the list? Obviously, off the top of my head, I'm not aware of the location of every single one of these things, so I'm just a tiny bit troubled about exactly how those words are operating and what the meaning of the inclusion of “right” is in there. Usually in the Criminal Code, when you're talking about “justification or excuse,”

it's just those words. The word "right" hasn't been added. I'm interested in the meaning of the addition of that word there.

I'm also troubled because, you know, presently I've been doing some research on the meaning of those words, and they're not super well defined. I think that's troubling because when you're talking about legislation, it's communicating to the public, right? It's communicating to broader members of the public, so people should be able to pick it up and look at it and read it and without a law degree understand, at least in general, what it is that has been rendered illegal, what it is that they're not permitted to do. A definition that's a little bit vague like that, I think, can be sometimes troubling, so I would love to hear from the government what examples they considered and what scenarios they ran just to make sure that this isn't over broad and that it's not sort of in a position to be catching things that we're not intending to catch.

I think that, overall, the context of this bill, obviously, is that we're addressing some problematic behaviours, some very problematic behaviours, which I think is well within – I don't want to say "within the purview of government," because there are some issues with constitutionality around some of this, but I understand why we would want to have policy about that. I think the point here with this bill is to catch those things that we want to catch, those things which are problematic, which are damaging our economy, which are potentially damaging trains and, potentially, the people on trains, that we definitely want to be stepping in and prohibiting.

The challenge is not to catch other things, and I think that's one of the reasons why this bill – I mean, it's a very short bill, but it's very complex. I think it's complex legally. I think it's complex even from a facts standpoint, sort of understanding what impact is being had on the economy. How exactly are we sure that we're getting it right, that we're aiming at the right thing without catching a whole bunch of other things? Prohibiting someone from entering a space is a pretty big prohibition. You know, rendering walking into something an illegal act: that's a pretty big hammer being wielded by the state right there, so I think we have to be incredibly careful. We have to ask a lot of good questions and we have to do a lot of good analysis to ensure that we're getting it right.

5:50

Again I return to the fact that when we're dealing with a hammer of that size, when we're dealing with prohibiting the mere entry into a space, I think the idea of leaving cabinet the jurisdiction to literally designate anything in the entire province to suddenly be in scope without needing to provide a justification, without needing to do any sort of analysis, is troubling. I think it's troubling to me. I think it's troubling to members of the public. I think it definitely needs to be scaled back. There's no question about that.

I think there are other areas in which this is potentially a concern. I mean, part of it is that perhaps the government has done an enormous amount of analysis, right? We don't have access to that particular work. So I think it would be useful, rather than the sort of high-level talking points that we're normally hearing, to hear sort of a more detailed analysis of what exactly this bill is doing. In some cases it's doing something very broad, but in other cases it's doing very little.

In terms of private property, which is affected by this – many of these things will be private property – well, you have the Petty Trespass Act right now, and the Petty Trespass Act says that if you're not invited, you can't go in. In fact, the penalties are identical. So in the cases of those things which are private property, this act doesn't actually appear to do anything at all. You know, that seems a little odd to me, why you would bother having an act that doesn't do anything.

In the case of public property, you know, if there is a sign posted indicating "Keep out" or "No trespassing" or something like that, the Trespass to Premises Act would apply, and in that case it is automatically an offence to enter. So in the case where you're dealing with any infrastructure that has a sign posted to say "Keep out," there may not be much of an effect there either. Really, the only impact this legislation would have would be on public property which does not have a posted sign or for which the person has not otherwise been given notice not to trespass.

That's sort of a comparatively narrow slice of what we're looking at here. My concern is that even though it's a comparatively narrow slice of those things which are currently delineated, one of them, highways, is a little bit troubling in its implications, and one of them, the ability of cabinet to designate things, is incredibly troubling in its implications.

I think those are the main comments I have around this particular bill. You know, the offences are on the higher end, but again they're almost identical. Sorry. It says between \$1,000 and \$10,000, which differs from the Petty Trespass Act and the Trespass to Premises Act in the sense that they say: up to \$10,000. But it's very similar. It's the same. It's mirrored in a second or subsequent offence and in the case of a corporation offence. As well, the clause around arresting without warrant is mirrored in both of those acts. Again, it's this sort of, like, narrow slice that we're dealing with where there's no sign posted and where it is public land that is potentially impacted by simply a blanket prohibition on entry.

I actually think that every member of this House should take the time to consider this act incredibly carefully, and I think that, honestly, I would like to hear from some experts. I would like to hear some legal analysis. I imagine that there are lawyers that work in this space who could provide us additional information. I imagine there's someone who could run the economic analysis on sort of that end of the impacts of this.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Any members have questions or comments? The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker and for the comments and analysis by the Member for Calgary-Mountain View. I know that she did quite a lot of work to look at the breadth and the legality and the effectiveness, I think, of what Bill 1 represents. I mean, the area that I was most curious about – and she perhaps did touch on it, but if she could perhaps talk about it a little bit more – is, I guess, twofold.

First of all, for the cabinet's capacity to decide what space is actually considered a trespass or considered to be out of bounds for people to be in, what are the implications of the legality of being able to restrict movement in public spaces? We see, let's say, a job action, with people using the public sidewalks in the city, you know, to demonstrate around a job action for wages or working conditions or what have you. If you give the capacity for cabinet to declare public spaces like that to be out of bounds, then – I don't think I've ever seen that, for one thing. I think it's a very bad idea as well because, of course, you are literally contradicting the definition and the notion of what a public space is and what it entails.

I'm just curious to see where or how this might be taken from any jurisdiction, really, outside of totalitarian regimes such as North Korea or something like that. Otherwise, the notion of allowing cabinet to have the power to declare a public space out of bounds, I think, is something I've just never really heard of before, right? Is there any capacity for that to be legal under Canadian criminal law or other statutes? Does a provincial jurisdiction have the capacity

even to entertain such a thought? If you wouldn't mind saying a couple of words on that, I would be edified, I'm sure.

Thank you.

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

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, and thank you very much to my colleague. I mean, yeah, it is a really interesting power. I wouldn't want to provide a constitutional analysis on it immediately, but I think that if you're talking about potentially being able to designate anything, potentially that action does run afoul of the Constitution, right? Like, you could designate the sidewalk or you could designate the hospital or you could designate the school, and then suddenly anyone who's not there by invitation is in breach of the law. I mean, it does, as my colleague quite rightly points out, sort of run counter to what our notion is of a public space – right? – to be able to have cabinet simply designate that public space as a place where nobody can go.

That's what's really troubling about this. It says that it's meant to aim at critical infrastructure, but then it gives this just incredible power to designate anything. I'm really worried about the impact that that has on free speech and freedom of movement and just basically civil society in general and their ability to engage in public spaces, to go out in public spaces. I mean, certainly, some consideration was given to this with respect to the Calgary airport and some antiabortion folks who were there and who had been issued a trespass notice. There is a suggestion that that sort of interference with political speech occurring in a public space is, in fact, unconstitutional.

I think it's an open question. I wouldn't want to say definitely one way or the other, but I do think that we need to guard this sort of thing very, very carefully. Obviously, I don't agree with antiabortion protesters, but I do think that it's still something that needs to be considered very, very carefully. This would affect so many more people. The swath of individuals who would be affected is so broad. What does that do to civil society and their ability to engage with each other, with us, with the debate in general? I think that ultimately democracy is a conversation about how we ought collectively to govern.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, pursuant to Standing Order 3(1.1) and the 2020-21 main estimates schedule this Assembly stands adjourned until tomorrow afternoon at 1:30.

Legislative policy committees will convene this evening and tomorrow morning for consideration of the main estimates. This evening the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry in the Parkland Room, and the Standing Committee on Families and Communities will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Seniors and Housing in the Rocky Mountain Room. Tomorrow morning the Standing Committee on Families and Communities will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Community and Social Services in the Rocky Mountain Room, and the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Indigenous Relations in the Parkland Room.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6 p.m.]

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Alberta Hansard is available online at www.assembly.ab.ca

For inquiries contact:

Editor

Alberta Hansard

3rd Floor, 9820 – 107 St

EDMONTON, AB T5K 1E7

Telephone: 780.427.1875