



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
Second Session

Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, March 3, 2020

Day 5

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta
The 30th Legislature
Second Session

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Party standings:

United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, March 3, 2020

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Lord, the God of righteousness and truth, grant to our Queen and her government, to all Members of the Legislative Assembly, and to those in positions 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.

Be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Hon. members, we have several school groups in our galleries this afternoon. From Edmonton-Decore please welcome Evansdale school. From Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright welcome Irma school, the grade 6 students. From Edmonton-Ellerslie I'd like to welcome the grade 6 classes from Jan Reimer school. Welcome. Joining us a little later on will be students from St. Teresa of Calcutta school in the constituency of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. Thank you, all students, for being with us today.

Hon. members, visiting this afternoon as guests of the President of Treasury Board and the Minister of Finance, welcome representatives from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business: Dan Kelly, Annie Dormuth, and Keyli Kosiorek. Please rise and receive the welcome of the Assembly.

Members' Statements

Education Budget 2020-2021

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, the budget is out, and it's time to uncover the minister's and the Premier's education agenda. Let's talk about the numbers. The government's own estimates, page 79, show clearly that base funding is being cut in this budget by \$177 million, and there is a net cut to the education system of \$118 million from general revenue. The same page shows clearly that while public, Catholic, and francophone supports are going down, accredited private school supports are going up.

For the members of the government caucus who are getting angry e-mails from your constituents and are supposed to respond with talking points that disrespect the truth, remember that it's in black and white on page 79. When you get these talking points and you try to decipher what they mean, here's a bit of a code. When the minister says, "Maintained education spending," she's not talking about government investment in kids and classrooms; she's talking about your voters paying \$102 million more in education property taxes. She's talking about parents paying more through premiums, fees, and licensing – \$32 million – including things like increasing the rate that your school gym charges for the volleyball league. This is on top of the \$136 million cut last year that was uncovered through FOIP.

Students with special needs are paying the price. Students who use distance learning to finish high school are paying the price. Speech-language pathologists and school district psychologists are being dismissed. Students in growing class sizes are paying the price. Why? It's certainly not to reduce the debt, because it's the same. It's

to pay for the \$4.7 billion no-jobs corporate handout, so members of this House are asked to play fast and loose with the truth.

Please look at the numbers before you defend this minister's terrible budget. Your reputation is on the line, too. Trust me. Students, staff, parents: they all know the impacts of this budget even if your minister won't admit them.

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

Fallen Four

Mr. Getson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to stand in this House today, albeit with a heavy heart, to remember the four RCMP officers that lost their lives in the line of duty 15 years ago today. It was a dark day in our community, and I remember.

Constables Peter Schiemann; Anthony Gordon; Lionide, or Leo, Johnston; and Brock Myrol were all killed during an investigation into a marijuana grow op in Mayerthorpe, a tragedy that will not soon be forgotten. Their loss was felt by their communities, our province, our nation, but most of all it was felt by their families, four lives that can never be replaced. Perhaps the best way we can remember them is to remember who they were and what they loved. The following is from the Fallen Four website, that honours these officers.

[Constable Peter Schiemann] was born at Petrolia, Ont. He earned a bachelor of arts degree, loved to sky dive and fell in love with the RCMP after he went on ride-alongs with [other] members.

[Constable Anthony Gordon] was born at Edmonton, Alta., raised in Red Deer, Alta., and joined the force there. The seed to be a Mountie was planted in Grade 1 when a member of the force visited his school . . . and that was his goal ever since. Gordon loved the outdoors and he loved to fish and [he loved to] snowmobile.

[Constable] Lionide Johnston was from Owl River, Alta. He joined the RCMP . . . with his twin brother, Lee. Both were ace marksmen and received their Crown Pistols and Crown Rifles badges

a year prior to the tragedy. He's fondly remembered as having a special connection with the Alexis First Nations Reserve.

Constable Brock Myrol had served less than three weeks before he lost his life.

[He] was born in Outlook . . . and raised in Red Deer, Alta. He came from a family that loved music. He sang, composed music and played guitar.

Although I never met these officers personally, I did have a chance to meet their friends and family at the Anthony Gordon annual golf tournament. They are remembered, and they're missed. I offer my renewed condolences to the families of these outstanding officers. Words can never suffice, but our thoughts and prayers are with you today. They were taken from us too soon.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake.

Canadian Energy Centre

Mr. Rehn: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. From the beginning our government has been committed to supporting our energy sector. We have been working hard to keep our campaign promise of building pipelines and getting Alberta's natural resources to market. We also promised to establish an energy war room, an organization with the sole purpose of supporting our energy sector by distributing facts and disproving misinformation. Promise made, promise kept.

On December 11 of last year our government launched the Canadian Energy Centre, an organization that will stand up for Alberta's energy sector and do what's right to promote and strengthen the economic driver of our province. Now, we know that there can be hiccups when establishing a brand new organization. The reality is that these things can take some time. But while the NDP is focused on logos, tearing down the energy sector, and attacking us for actually getting work done, our government and the Canadian Energy Centre are working tirelessly to promote our energy sector both at home and abroad. The NDP's total lack of support in our oil and gas industry and their inability to get our resources to market while in government are a big part of why Albertans fired them last year. They had the chance to support and build up our energy sector, but instead they did nothing.

Even now the NDP continues to attack our oil and gas industry by siding with the no new pipelines crowd and supporting groups like Extinction Rebellion instead of listening to the voices of Albertans and standing up for our sovereign right as elected representatives to govern and make decisions based on the best interests of Albertans. That is exactly why Albertans elected our government. Albertans elected us to clean up the NDP's mess, promote the energy sector, get our resources to market, and get Alberta back on track.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to work with a government that is doing this, and I'm proud to belong to a party and a government that works tirelessly to support, promote, and listen to the men and women who work in our energy sector.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Calgary Councillor Expense Claims

Member Ceci: Mr. Speaker, last May Calgary councillors, including Joe Magliocca, travelled to Quebec to attend the Federation of Canadian Municipalities conference. Councillor Magliocca claimed \$6,400 in expenses for the trip, double that of any other member of council who travelled with him. A number of Magliocca's expense claims involved meals with people who have since stated that they didn't meet with him.

Mr. Speaker, this isn't the first time Councillor Magliocca has found himself at the centre of an expenses scandal. In 2014 he billed taxpayers \$350 for a Nespresso machine, which he needed because the existing office machine only served regular coffee. He said: I don't drink that stuff. When someone offered to pay their share of a \$398 meal, Magliocca replied: don't worry about it, man; business is business.

1:40

This cavalier attitude to public money has been a consistent feature of Magliocca's career, yet the UCP remain silent. Days after the latest expenses scandal broke, Premier Kenney said that he wasn't aware of the issue. In the past Minister Madu has said that Calgary councillors are spending freaks, and just two months ago he met with Magliocca to discuss fiscal responsibility, yet he hasn't said a word about Magliocca's expenses. Why does the minister have something in his tool box if Calgary doesn't cut policing or low-income transit passes but nothing to deal with an abuse of public funds by his buddy?

Mr. Speaker, with a clear conflict of interest for the integrity watchdog, who enjoyed a \$163 lunch with Magliocca, it's time for someone from the outside to take a look at this file. "As legislators, we must remember that we were all elected to serve our residents, and use their precious tax dollars to enhance their success, not our own." Those aren't my words. They're Minister Madu's. Will he live up to them now and launch an inquiry into Magliocca's expenses?

The Speaker: I might remind the Member for Calgary-Buffalo, who has been here for quite some time, that the use of, say, the Minister of Municipal Affairs' name would be wildly inappropriate and unparliamentary, and I'm certain that in the future he'll refrain from using the names of any member of the Assembly.

The hon. the Member for Banff-Kananaskis.

Investment in Alberta

Ms Rosin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and welcome to the first sitting of the new decade.

Last year was a big year. Albertans resoundingly acknowledged that the trajectory our province was on was not a healthy one, and those Albertans demanded change. That's why our government took swift action last year to reverse the downward spiral our province was on. We scrapped the carbon tax, and we won our challenge in the Alberta Court of Appeal. We repealed some of the costly labour regulations imposed on small businesses, and we lowered business taxes to the lowest in most of North America, a change that will enable over 100,000 existing small, medium, and large-sized Alberta businesses to expand, and they'll make our province more competitive in the global markets.

Now, we've heard a lot of whining from our opposition across the aisle about our economic policies, who can't seem to figure out the difference between a tax cut and corporate welfare, so that's why today I want to set the record straight and start our session on a positive note to highlight the successes we've already achieved.

Mr. Speaker, CNRL has announced that they'll be increasing their capital expenditure by \$250 million and creating a thousand new jobs, directly citing . . .

Mr. Schmidt: They got a billion-dollar tax break.

The Speaker: Order.

Speaker's Ruling Interrupting Members' Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar is very familiar with the long-standing tradition of not heckling during members' statements. I recall a very robust statement from the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo where members of the House remained silent for such a statement. I expect the exact same out of you.

You can start again from the top.

Investment in Alberta

(continued)

Ms Rosin: Well, Mr. Speaker, our opposition may not like to hear it, but CNRL did announce they will be increasing their capital expenditure by \$250 million to create a thousand new jobs, directly citing our newly lowered taxes as their incentive. Greengate Power Corporation is investing \$500 million to construct Canada's largest solar plant in Alberta, directly citing our TIER legislation and newly deregulated energy markets as motivation for their investment decision. Dow Chemical announced a \$200 million expansion in Fort Saskatchewan. Groupe Nordik announced a \$50 million investment and 400 permanent jobs right in my riding.

Our red tape score jumped from an F to a B minus, our deficit has reduced by \$1.2 billion, and banks all across the country are predicting that Alberta is going to lead the country in economic growth.

Mr. Speaker, our opposition, who hiked taxes, lost 180,000 jobs, spiked insolvencies by 75 per cent, and protested every pipeline that they could, can promote a mediocre status quo all they want, but

here on this side of the House we will not settle. The numbers are true, and they indicate a great decade ahead, and I am feeling optimistic because we're just getting started.

Budget 2020 and Red Tape Reduction

Mr. Nielsen: Reading through the government's budget, the so-called blueprint for jobs, I don't see any job creation. In fact, all I see is 50,000 full-time jobs lost since the UCP's \$4.7 billion corporate handout. There is very clearly no real plan for jobs. However, what is lacking in real employment is made up with mentions of red tape, 33 times in the fiscal plan.

This government likes talking about red tape so much that they named a week after it and bought novelty scissors to try to distract Albertans from their deep cuts to services and their attacks on front-line workers. What are the cuts to red tape that this government is so proud of? Do they include cuts to PUF funding, directly affecting children with disabilities? Is it the elimination of the seniors' drug benefit program, which leaves thousands of Albertans wondering how they will afford their medication?

Do they include the cuts to Advanced Education? We all remember how the associate minister patted himself on the back for introducing online student loan applications during red tape reduction week. While it sounds great in a press release, the reality is that students will pay \$146 million more to postsecondary institutions while world-class instructors and the support staff are laid off across the province. The cherry on top: an increase to student loan interest. I've spoken with students, and I can assure you that they would far rather fill out a paper application than take on substantially more debt for the privilege of applying online. It isn't just students who will be saddled with higher debt because of this government; we all will be.

Now don't get me wrong, Mr. Speaker. I am completely supportive of reducing overly complicated processes in government and saving hard-working people's money. I don't think a single member in this Chamber would disagree with me there. But has the new associate minister proved it's worth \$10 million to bill taxpayers? Between increasing debt, losing jobs, and cutting essential services that Albertans rely on, it is not a time for the UCP to celebrate.

Budget 2020 and Provincial Debt

Mr. Sigurdson: Mr. Speaker, many Albertans can remember the image of former Premier Ralph Klein holding up the "Paid in Full" sign to recognize Alberta as a debt-free province. Premier Klein stated that Alberta had slain its debt. The then Finance minister, Pat Nelson, stated that we can go home to our kids and grandkids and say: we have protected your future so you will not be carrying the burdens of the past.

It's important to remember those statements as we reaffirm the importance of debt and deficit reduction and acknowledge the strength in last week's budget. For the first time in years Albertans are seeing a serious commitment to ensuring responsible spending of taxpayers' dollars as well as a \$1.2 billion decrease in our deficit, saving taxpayers \$35 million in debt-servicing costs.

We see a commitment to economic trade and tourism, oil and gas, and the agriculture sector. We also see a continued focus on job creation and restoration of investor confidence. With our job-creation tax cut leading the charge, we will ensure that Alberta will return to the most attractive tax jurisdiction in the nation.

Speaking about our job-creation tax cut, I feel that it's important to separate NDP deception from reality. The NDP continue to provide misinformation about a so-called \$4.7 billion giveaway to rich corporations. I quote from the article in the *Edmonton Sun* titled

Lowering Corporate Taxes is Not a Giveaway: "You cannot give away something that is not yours in the first place."

I think that we can all agree that the only giveaway right now is something I've appropriately nicknamed the \$2 billion-a-year NDP debt-servicing giveaway, a giveaway that will send over \$8 billion this term overseas to foreign banks and bondholders.

Today I'm proud to stand with a government that is working towards a day when we can go home to our kids and say: we did everything to protect your future so you don't have to carry the burdens of the past.

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

Oil and Gas Industries

Mr. Yaseen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to talk about the importance of resource development in our province. Now more than ever there's a need to highlight its contributions. It seems that at every turn our industry is under attack with misguided, relentless, and outright false information. This propaganda, spread by special-interest groups, has led to blockades across the country. These groups have taken our national economy hostage in an attempt to push their flawed ideological agenda. Enough is enough.

Now, I want to talk about how this industry has benefited Albertans and Canadians. Oil and gas have played a crucial role in the prosperity of this province and have uplifted many Albertans' quality of life, like myself. Our province is highly regulated, intently scrutinized, and has the highest environmental and workplace standards as compared to any province, any state, or any country in the world. We are leaders in ethical and responsible resource development. For over 100 years this industry has offered prosperity, economic development, and employment. Many people came here to work in oil and gas. They contributed to our province and to our communities.

I had the opportunity and privilege to work in oil and gas for 40 years. Thanks to the Alberta advantage and an enduring energy sector I have never been without work. It's high time we bring back the Alberta advantage. Albertans and Canadians should be proud of how we produce and manage our natural resources. I am grateful to the men and women who worked hard to develop this sector and made it possible for many Albertans to have long and fulfilling careers in oil and gas.

Let common sense and logical thinking prevail. The petroleum industry is a rich part of our history, and it will remain an essential part of our future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

1:50

Oral Question Period

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

Budget 2020

Ms Hoffman: Five days ago the Premier told this House that he planned to cut 2.8 per cent from the provincial budget, but in a sit-down with his favourite typist at the *Calgary Sun* yesterday he let it slip that it's actually far bigger, a 14.1 per cent cut per person, said the Premier. This is the deepest cut in a generation. Will the Premier correct his statement from last week and confirm that he is cutting services to Albertans by more than 14 per cent?

Mr. Kenney: Well, I will do no such thing, Mr. Speaker, because that is not true. What I will do is invite the hon. member to actually read the budget. On page 122 and other tables she will see the last year of the NDP government, \$48.4 billion in operating expenditures,

and in 2022 under this budget, \$47.4 billion. That's a decline of \$1 billion on a \$50 billion budget. That's not an opinion. That's a cold, hard fact.

Ms Hoffman: Albertans have never heard this Premier fess up to the full extent of his plans to dismantle public health care, public education, and supports for the most vulnerable. He laughs. The 14 per cent number was definitely not in the UCP platform. He can add this to his grassroots guarantee and the public health guarantee and the growing list of other Premier's broken promises. Why didn't he tell Albertans the whole truth as he was asking for their vote?

Mr. Kenney: Actually, the Conservative platform in the last election did say, Mr. Speaker, that through spending restraint under conservative fiscal management Alberta would gradually approach the average per capita expenditure of other provinces. Currently we have by far the most expensive provincial government in Canada. As Dr. Mackinnon's panel outlined, we are not getting the results to justify that. As she will see at the chart on page 121, even after this modest 2.8 per cent reduction in operating spending, Alberta will still spend more per person than other Canadian provinces.

Ms Hoffman: He told Rick Bell that it was more than 14 per cent. Elsewhere in the news today the Finance minister told us that, quote, Rome is burning and that he can't stand by the numbers that he put in his budget last week. Neither can Canada's major banks and economists. So my question to the premier is this. Is your new 14.1 per cent cut the real number, and have you withheld it until now? Or is the truth that it's going to be even worse as your fairy-tale budget continues to unravel?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, speaking of a fairy-tale budget, we inherited a fiscal plan from the NDP that projected \$6 billion more in revenue. They were projecting – what was it? – \$71 oil . . .

Mr. Toews: Seventy-dollar oil.

Mr. Kenney: . . . \$70 oil in their last fiscal statement, Mr. Speaker. They were trying to wish away the fiscal catastrophe that they created. We have been left with the challenging task of undoing those reckless years where they added over \$50 billion to Alberta's debt. That's why we have this plan to modestly reduce spending to get our finances back in order.

Ms Hoffman: Under the UCP government profitable corporations get \$4.7 billion in a handout, but Calgary homeowners get a hand in their pocket. It's the Premier's hand. Mr. Speaker, he's taking an average of \$130 in additional new property taxes from Calgary families to pay for his corporate giveaway. A conservative city councillor calls it ugly news. What's the Premier's spin today, to deny that he did it or blame someone else? Go for it, Premier.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the NDP continues to purposefully mislead this House and Albertans about the job-creation tax cut, the total estimated fiscal cost of which this year is not \$4.7 billion but \$200 million, as verified by several of the most highly reputed economists in the province and in the country. The reality is this. The NDP wants, in the middle of challenging times, to increase taxes on job creators, increase taxes on incomes, and they want to bring back their job-killing carbon tax. Thankfully, they won't be able to do it.

Ms Hoffman: In addition to skyrocketing educational property taxes and downloading provincial costs onto the city, the Premier is paying for his \$4.7 billion no-jobs corporate handout, page 144 of last year's budget, by plaguing the police budget. He knows there's

a crime issue in our largest city, but millions of dollars of fine revenue, that should be going towards boots on the street in Calgary, will be padding profit margins of companies that aren't creating a single job. Why won't the Premier just own his choices and admit that his corporate giveaway is more important to him than public safety in Calgary?

Mr. Kenney: Well, in fact, Mr. Speaker, the member can see on page 136 of the budget that last year's expenditure of the Ministry of Justice was \$1.452 billion and that in 2022 it will be \$1.41 billion, virtually identical. The new police funding model will allow for additional revenues to support hiring more police officers, particularly in rural Alberta.

Ms Hoffman: Somebody else's revenues, Mr. Speaker.

This is on top of the additional hundred million dollars this Premier will take from the pockets of Albertans to increase personal income taxes. The bracket creep continues, Mr. Speaker, with \$200 million next year, \$300 million the year after, and no end in sight. It is an underhanded way of jacking up Albertans' taxes, and the Premier knows it. In fact, he called it an enormous insidious tax grab, but now it's his government policy. Why won't he level with Albertans about his sneaky backdoor tax increase?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the tax policy of this government was to deliver Albertans the single largest tax cut in Alberta fiscal history, a \$1.4 billion tax cut that's saving the average Alberta family about \$1,200 a year and the average small business \$4,000 a year, by repealing the NDP's carbon tax, which they never told Albertans they would introduce. At the same time, we're reducing taxes on job creators. We will not let the NDP inflict on Albertans the higher income taxes they proposed in a recent so-called shadow budget.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora for her third set of questions.

Public-sector Layoffs

Ms Hoffman: Yesterday, after the Minister of Advanced Education pushed 230 Albertans out of work at SAIT and another 240 at NAIT, at least he had the good manners to claim that it wasn't easy. But when this Premier was confronted yesterday with 2,100 job losses he's intentionally destroying with this budget, he shrugged it off. "Less than the . . . annual turnover," he said. These are real people, Premier. Are you really so detached from reality that you can't understand that you could force thousands to lose their income?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, if the member would bother reading the budget, she will see that the government is projecting the loss of 1,600 positions, which is unfortunate, out of the broader public sector of over 200,000 positions in this year – this year – and that's less than 1 per cent. It's less than the average turnover. We hope that primarily those positions will be affected through attribution.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP added 15,000 positions to the public sector when private-sector families were getting clobbered with higher taxes and lower incomes. That is not sustainable. That's why Albertans hired us to bring fiscal responsibility back to Alberta.

Ms Hoffman: Not one of the six major banks in Canada supports the Premier's forecast for job creation in his budget. We saw almost 500 people lose their jobs yesterday alone, Premier. Those are real people, not less than 1 per cent, real families. But what's the state of this government when it comes to the 2,100 job losses? Shrug them off. Maybe they don't register on his conscience given that

50,000 full-time jobs have already been lost since he brought in his \$4.7 billion corporate handout. But these are real people. Will the Premier take responsibility and apologize, or is he just going to keep saying that they're inconsequential?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, obviously, everybody that works and everybody that lives in Albertan is consequential. We honour and respect the good work done by people in the public sector. They understand, I believe, that the path of unlimited debt is the greatest threat to sustainability of public services and their future employment. The NDP plan is simply this: to go and indebt ourselves to bankers by tens of billions of dollars more, to spend billions more on interest payments, which means that a future government would have to have much wider layoffs and reductions in spending. That's not responsible.

2:00

Ms Hoffman: Only this Premier would have the gall to sign off on a plan that pushes thousands of people out of work and then call it "A Blueprint for Jobs." More than 2,000 families, supported by the income of Albertans who felt the call to help their friends and neighbours through public service, are thrown into chaos to pay for this Premier's \$4.7 billion corporate handout; 136 of those are Albertans who worked in Community and Social Services, Premier. Why are you paying for this corporate handout by firing people whose job it is to support the most vulnerable?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, in the NDP's campaign of deception and deceit apparently the truth is completely irrelevant. The notion that the 2.8 per cent reduction in spending over four years is because of the job-creation tax cut is completely ridiculous. Even without the job-creation tax cut the deficit this year would still be in the range of \$7 billion. It doesn't change the fiscal fundamentals. It is a shame that the NDP here in Alberta does not have the kind of leadership of a Roy Romanow in Saskatchewan or a Gary Doer in Manitoba, who understood these things.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for St. Albert has a question.

AISH Payment Schedule

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This morning the Minister of Community and Social Services claimed that she's made no policy changes without, and I quote, extensive consultation, yet we know the minister's own staff admitted in an e-mail accidentally sent to the CBC that the cruel decision to change AISH payment dates did not involve any formal discussion. That decision has inflicted so much harm on the thousands of people that rely on AISH. To the minister: why didn't you talk to anyone before changing the date? They probably would have told you that they couldn't manage the change on such short notice.

Mrs. Sawhney: Mr. Speaker, the monthly payment date was changed to ensure consistency and predictability. I've had multiple conversations with staff, front-line workers, who indicated that, irrespective of this date change, our department received numbers of calls every month talking about inconsistency in the previous schedule. So there was consultation.

Ms Renaud: I've started to hear reports from dozens of Albertans on AISH that they've yet to receive their monthly payment. They expected to be paid Friday. It's now Tuesday, and they're still waiting. This minister seems to be completely in over her head. In fact, I don't believe a word she says, so I will ask you, Mr. Premier.

Will you take charge of this mess and ensure that every eligible Albertan on AISH is properly funded by the end of the day today?

Mrs. Sawhney: I am happy to answer this question. Our government knows how important income support and AISH benefits are for Albertans. I know that for some of our clients it has caused some stress and anxiety, and to those clients I say: please reach out to your caseworkers. Call my office. Call the disabilities advocate. I can tell you that for the March 20 payment run, 120,000 direct deposits were made; 123 were returned, but that is typical of what you would see in most months anyhow.

Ms Renaud: Three hundred and fifty-six jobs in four months. Call your caseworker. Sure.

I'm deeply concerned about the decision to change AISH payment dates, that was made in an attempt to inappropriately and artificially reduce the deficit in the current budget. This would be a gross, unethical decision to mislead Albertans about the state of the province's finances. Late yesterday we sent a letter to the Auditor General requesting them to investigate. To the minister or the Premier, if you'll even make eye contact. I want to give you the chance now to come clean. Did you or did you not change the AISH payment date as part of an unethical scheme to artificially lower the deficit?

Mrs. Sawhney: Unbelievable that the member opposite would keep reiterating the same message even though I talked about it in estimates vastly. This policy change was to ensure consistency and predictability in the payment dates. I gave a variety of examples of inconsistency that existed with the previous schedule. Again, I will reiterate that this policy change was made to ensure consistency and to ensure that clients knew that their cheques and payments would be coming in on the 1st. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East has the call.

Drug Treatment Courts and Addiction Treatment

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My constituency has been hit hard by the addiction crisis, in particular with the rise of methamphetamine use. Yesterday I attended an announcement, with the Minister of Justice and the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions announcing drug treatment courts and Lethbridge's share of a \$20 million commitment to expand drug courts in the province. To the Health minister: can you please inform this House what effect drug courts will have on my community?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our approach to addiction is fair, it's firm, and it's compassionate. Drug treatment courts have been proven to combat addiction while keeping our communities safe. They have a 70 per cent success rate in their graduates not reoffending. These people who have gotten the help that they need will be able to move past a life of addiction into a life of recovery, giving back to the communities that they were helped by.

Mr. Neudorf: Mr. Speaker, given that the addiction crisis is an important issue for the province of Alberta and given that the government has been clear about expanding access to life-saving recovery services for Albertans, especially Albertans that have made their homes and raised their families in Lethbridge, can the Health minister inform this House what strategies they will employ to help communities and assist families in achieving that recovery?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government has been rapidly increasing access to treatment spaces for Albertans. This is part of our \$140 million commitment to mental health and addiction and our expansion of 4,000 publicly funded spaces over the next four years. When Albertans enter into recovery, not only are they better for it but communities and families are better for it, too. The expansion of drug treatment courts and treatment spaces and more recovery supports puts us on the way to fighting addiction in our communities.

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you to the minister. Mr. Speaker, given that the previous government doubled down on a one-pillar approach and left treatment beds across this province empty while Albertans waited in line to get the care that they needed and given that we must help those who are committed to and seeking opportunities for recovery, can the minister please tell this House about how our government will do this differently?

The Speaker: The minister.

Mr. Shandro: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For far too long Albertans have not been able to get the support that they need to receive treatment and enter into a life of recovery, and it's shameful. We will not continue to sit by while Albertans and their communities and their families suffer because of a lack of treatment options. We are funding treatment. We are funding recovery. We're making sure that Albertans have the tools that they need to live a life of health and wellness as positive, engaged citizens in recovery.

The Speaker: From one side of the river to the other, the hon. the Member for Lethbridge-West.

Budget 2020 (continued)

Ms Phillips: It'll be a little different, Mr. Speaker.

Every day I become increasingly convinced that the Minister of Finance wrote his 2020 budget with crayons and a magic eraser. Need to bring the deficit down? Scratch out that AISH payment line and move it to next year. Need to make the numbers jive a little better? Project oil prices that are pure fiction. Now, I know that these guys aren't fans of curriculum reform, Mr. Speaker, but frankly the math in this budget wouldn't get past my kid's grade 3 class. The Minister of Finance yesterday took time off from harassing the Calgary Chamber of commerce to imply that he really has no clue about the actual state of the province's finances. But isn't that the job?

Mr. Toews: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure where the question was, but I will say this. We recognize and acknowledge the significant economic volatility caused right now by COVID-19. We commit to Albertans that we will provide a steady hand at the wheel, that we will continue to stay fluid and adjust our plan as required. We will double down on spending restraint and creating the most competitive business environment possible to ensure that Alberta businesses can compete.

Ms Phillips: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that we just heard that the cuts are going to get worse and given that in the minister's fiscal plan it states that the AISH payment date change was made to save \$63 million and given that the Auditor General confirmed that this is not consistent with proper accounting rules and the government's own MLA from Airdrie confirmed this as well, can the minister tell

us at what point in his accounting courses he learned that it's okay to cook the books?

Mr. Toews: Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General has actually made a recommendation that program payments be made as close as possible to the time when those amounts will be expended. That's why the Minister of Community and Social Services made that adjustment, so it would best serve the recipients of those payments. Again, in the Q3 projections of Budget 2020 we're projecting a \$1.2 billion better, more positive result than we projected in Budget 2019. We're delivering on our promises.

2:10

Ms Phillips: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that we are taking a 14.4 per cent cut, the deficit has gone up, property taxes are up, and we just heard that there's going to be more of this, and given that we've lost economic confidence, we've also lost 50,000 full-time jobs: why are we now losing confidence in the integrity of our books as this minister tries to pull a fiscal fast one over payments to people with disabilities?

Mr. Toews: Mr. Speaker, this government committed to Albertans that we would bring sound, responsible fiscal management to the province. We're delivering. In fact, our four-year fiscal plan, which now is a three-year fiscal plan, results in an accumulated deficit of \$16.2 billion less than the members' opposite plan would have delivered to Albertans. We are bringing the responsible fiscal management that Albertans elected us to bring. We will continue to deliver.

Provincial Parks

Mr. Schmidt: Once again this UCP government's words and actions are in direct conflict with each other. In his business plan the minister of environment states that "Alberta's natural environments offer educational and recreational experiences that positively contribute to human health and quality of life." But at the same time the minister is putting 60 parks on the auction block to cover the cost of his government's failed \$4.7 billion corporate handout. Can the minister explain why he thinks this is a good deal?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, we ran on two big issues when it comes to parks inside our province. One, helping to do our part with balancing the budget. We have several underutilized facilities across this province that are undergoing a review. The second thing that we ran on was partnering with nonprofits, indigenous communities, and municipalities to be able to run our park system going forward. We've seen success already within the department across the province doing exactly that model. That's what Albertans voted for back in April. We're proud to be able to move forward in partnership with communities, something that party avoided doing while they were in power.

Mr. Schmidt: Given that the minister of environment praises our parks in one breath and then moves to do everything he can to limit the use of them and given that what I'm referring to are fee hikes, reduced operating seasons, closed visitor centres, and the elimination of cross-country ski grooming in a number of popular parks, to the minister: do you actually think the answer to covering for your failed multibillion-dollar corporate handout is to take away people's ski trails?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, it's pretty rich coming from anybody who is part of that caucus talking about blocking Albertans from accessing parks and public land given that that party, when

they were in power, just over a year ago, tried to shut down my entire backyard in my constituency from Albertans having access to it. We're committed to working with parks. There are under-utilized facilities across this province. We're going to see if we can build partnerships with indigenous communities, municipalities, and nonprofit organizations to be able to make those parks more viable while at the same time diverting resources to the crown jewels of our park system inside this province.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, given that under this minister 20 parks will be closed either fully or partially and given that this minister gives us nothing but bogus answers day in and day out in this House and given that his terrible choices will make it harder for Albertans to be able to use public parks for camping, hiking, skiing, or any other activities, will the minister listen to the families that use these parks and immediately reverse the cuts that he's making?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, who I will listen to are the families across this province who are struggling to pay their mortgages because of the policy of the NDP government, that we are trying to fix. We have some campgrounds, not many but some, inside our province that are losing significant money, millions of dollars. The previous government wanted to sit there and watch taxpayer money go down the drain. We don't accept that. We have a better way forward. We're going to continue to partner with municipalities, with indigenous communities, and nonprofit organizations to move our park system forward and to be able to make sure that Albertans have the best recreation opportunities that they can.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Name Change Statutes and Regulations

Mr. Walker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was surprised, shocked even, to hear that there are currently no restrictions in place that prevent convicted sex offenders from legally changing their names. This seems to me to represent a large gap in our legislation around name changes and even a potential safety risk to Alberta families and communities. To the Minister of Service Alberta: what does our law require of people who want to legally change their names?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Service Alberta is rising.

Mr. Glubish: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to my colleague from Sherwood Park. You know, I was also shocked to learn that convicted sex offenders can legally change their names in Alberta, and that's why I started looking into this. Now, I can tell you and tell my colleague, through you, that Alberta is currently among the strongest in the country. We are one of only four provinces that require electronic fingerprinting of everyone 12 years of age and older when changing a name. This is sent to the RCMP so that they can link the old name to the new. This is an important thing. But we can do better, and we are going to do better under this government.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Mr. Walker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that preventing a convicted criminal from changing his or her name would be a measure designed to protect the most vulnerable and keep our communities safe and given that the government of Saskatchewan just recently took action to restrict the ability of convicted sex offenders to legally change their names, again to the Minister of

Service Alberta: what actions is our government exploring to craft an Alberta solution to this important issue?

The Speaker: The Minister of Service Alberta.

Mr. Glubish: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you again to the member for the question. We've been having conversations with not-for-profits from across the province who support survivors of sexual violence to make sure that we understand their priorities. But I want to just inform the member, through you, Mr. Speaker, that we are working to ban convicted sex offenders from legally changing their names. You know, if survivors of sexual violence have to live with the trauma for the rest of their lives, we should be making sure that their offenders have to live under their own names.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Walker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. Given that one of the core responsibilities of government is to protect public safety and given that in my riding of Sherwood Park I had the opportunity, along with the minister, to meet with staff from organizations like Little Warriors and the Saffron Centre to hear about the damaging, lifelong effects from sexual assault and sexual abuse, to the Minister of Service Alberta: what has our government done to date to support survivors and protect the public?

Thank you.

The Speaker: The minister.

Mr. Glubish: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, I'm pleased to remind this House that in the fall my colleague the Minister of Community and Social Services tabled and passed Clare's law, legislation which allows people at risk of domestic violence to obtain information on an intimate partner's previous history of domestic violence or other relevant acts. In our previous budget, from 2019, we allocated \$6 million over the next four years for a sexual assault hotline to help connect emergency services with specially trained nurses from the Sexual Assault Response Team. I'm proud also to be leading the efforts of our government to amend the Vital Statistics Act to protect . . .

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

Mental Health Services and Physician Compensation

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta psychiatrists are speaking out about the crisis in mental health that this government's policies are creating. They're warning that patients can't be treated in the 10-minute medicine model. We are also learning about two psychiatric residents who, instead of moving to work in Alberta, have now chosen to move to B.C. and Ontario. To the associate minister of health: explain to me why I should believe you over the hard-working, credible professionals who fear you will worsen our mental health crisis if it's not improved?

Mr. Shandro: Mr. Speaker, I'm quite proud to talk about the work that our government has done to be able to extend the services provided for mental health and addictions and for us to be able to talk about the \$140 million more that we're spending each year on providing for the supports for folks who need that treatment, who need that help in the community, and as well to talk about the \$137 million that we're investing in the Peter Lougheed Centre in Calgary, including being able to add for the first time in Calgary psych ICU beds. We're going to have 10 to 12 beds for the psych ICU as well as investing in the short-stay mental health unit in the

Peter Lougheed. I'm very happy to talk about the work that our government is doing to be able to support those psychiatrists.

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

Ms Sweet: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Calgary doctor Aaron Mackie reports that the policies this government is pursuing were tried and failed over 25 years ago and given that one impact of this policy could be doctors unable to take on patients with complex mental health needs, meaning they'll end up in emergency rooms and not receiving the treatment they need, will the associate minister explain why he is digging up failed policies from the past?

Mr. Shandro: Well, Mr. Speaker, the fact is that alternative relationship plans, which, unfortunately, Alberta has not adopted at the same rate as other provinces in this country – now, this is where physicians are paid on a contract basis, a bunch of different models, sometimes on a per-patient basis. The fact is that that's not an old policy. This is new, and we're very proud to be able to encourage this type of compensation for physicians so that we can support the patient's medical home model and be able to support the amount of time that physicians need to spend with their patients.

2:20

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this government's policies are driving Alberta towards a real mental health crisis and given that the Health minister's only response to these psychiatrists is to drag out the same old talking points and given that he continues to completely ignore the mental health disaster that he himself may come to have to deal with and take responsibility for, to the Minister of Health: will you commit today to sitting down with Dr. Mackie and a group of other psychiatrists of his choosing before continuing to pursue your terrible, chaos-filled health care agenda?

Mr. Shandro: Mr. Speaker, again I'm going to point out that we are spending \$140 million more every year to be able to provide those supports for Albertans and for those patients. We're going to continue to be able to do that. It's incredibly important for me to be able to correct that misstatement from the member. As I've said, after we announced our new funding compensation framework for physicians, I'm happy to continue to meet with physicians to be able to get their feedback. I actually am meeting continually with physicians to be able to get their feedback. I'm happy to be able to meet with this physician as well.

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

Rural Physicians

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Chaos and clinic closures: that's this minister's gift to people in rural Alberta in order to help pay for his government's \$4.7 billion corporate giveaway. Four days after this minister tore up the legal contract with family physicians, Dr. Cathryn Zapf announced that she would close her clinic in Canmore, leaving more than a thousand patients without a family doctor. This minister was warned this would happen, and he didn't listen. Does he understand now the chaos he is creating in family medicine?

Mr. Shandro: Well, Mr. Speaker, I am aware that some physicians have expressed concerns with the new physician funding framework that we've announced recently. If the AMA or individual physicians have suggestions or ideas, as I've said, my door is always open. But

our government will not compromise on our efforts to fix a broken payment model, and we will not follow the lead of the NDP and do nothing and leave taxpayers on the hook for an additional \$2 billion in cost overruns.

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

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that some of those physicians are indeed listening to the minister today and that indeed four days later, on Friday, all nine of the family physicians who work in the emergency room at the Stettler hospital gave their notice to AHS and given that six will be gone by the end of this month, leaving AHS scrambling to find temporary doctors to fill those positions, and given that physician town halls are taking place across the province, including Sundre, where one doctor said, "I will never trust this government in anything that they say" – so much for his meetings – does the minister recognize the chaos he's creating in rural health care, the trust he's lost, and how he's jeopardizing rural Albertans' access to timely local care?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. A number of physicians have engaged their communities via town halls. That type of advocacy is a well-established type of advocacy. It raises no concerns. I'm also aware of and will be responding to a letter that was recently sent by Calgary-based ER physicians. There also have been recent reports of some physicians telling media that they may rescind their ER privileges. Let me be clear. If some physicians choose to rescind their privileges, Alberta Health Services will be bringing in temporary physicians to ensure that proper resources are going to be in place for Albertans.

Mr. Shepherd: Given that also on Friday Dr. Gerry Prince of the family medicine maternity clinic in Medicine Hat said that changes this minister has imposed mean his clinic may not be viable anymore and given that he warned of a coming, quote, death spiral of physicians' resources and given that a doctor in Edson said that if the minister sitting in Calgary doesn't value that anaesthetists and surgeons are paid to be on call in rural communities, that means the standard of care for a pregnant mom and baby is less for a rural Albertan than an urban Albertan, how many more of these stories does this minister have to hear or does his caucus have to hear before he admits he's made a terrible mistake that's creating chaos in our health care system?

Mr. Shandro: Mr. Speaker, I point out that we're spending \$5.4 billion on physician compensation. We're going to continue to spend \$5.4 billion in compensation for our physicians in this province. We spend the highest on a per capita basis of anywhere else in this country. With the new physician compensation framework that we've recently announced, we're going to ensure that the physicians in Alberta are going to continue to be among the highest paid in the country.

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

Peter Lougheed Centre Expansion Project

Mr. Amery: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Peter Lougheed Centre is one of the busiest and most congested emergency departments in our province. For years Calgarians have been calling for the PLC to be expanded as wait times have continued to grow. Two weeks ago the Minister of Health announced a \$137 million upgrade to the PLC emergency department. Can the Minister of Health explain

how these upgrades will give families in and around Calgary better access to life-saving emergency and mental health services?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The staff at the Peter Lougheed hospital have been running at capacity for years, providing top-quality care for patients in Alberta to twice as many patients as the space was actually designed for. Our government has recently committed \$137 million to expand the emergency department to be able to invest further in the short-stay mental health units as well as being able to provide for the first time in Calgary a psych ICU, with 10 to 12 beds, there at the Peter Lougheed. The project will provide faster care, more privacy and comfort for patients and families in a space that will serve Calgary and southern Alberta families.

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

Mr. Amery: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that in the 2018-19 year the Peter Lougheed Centre handled almost 82,000 emergency visits and given that mental health visits to the emergency department have increased by more than one-third in the past five years and given that the PLC has provided life-saving emergency services to Albertans for more than 30 years, can the same minister please explain how this important expansion will reduce overcapacity issues at the PLC?

Mr. Shandro: Well, these renovations, Mr. Speaker, will improve access to emergency care and boost mental health services by adding a new mental health intensive care unit and expanding the mental health short-stay unit. A new rapid response laboratory as well will be built to replace the current aging lab there, providing state-of-the-art diagnostic services. This expansion will greatly benefit both the patients and staff today and in the future by ensuring that our health care and infrastructure and services keep up with the growing needs of the people in Calgary and southern Alberta.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Amery: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Minister of Infrastructure visited the Peter Lougheed Centre on the weekend and met with AHS staff to discuss these planned upgrades and given that our government is spending \$6.9 billion of taxpayers' money on capital projects this year and that every taxpayer dollar must be wisely spent and given that the recent \$137 million upgrade is intended to increase capacity at the Peter Lougheed Centre, can the Minister of Infrastructure now outline the time frame, scope, and schedule of the PLC upgrade project?

The Speaker: The Minister of Infrastructure is rising.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Saturday I was pleased to meet with the Alberta Health and Alberta Infrastructure team to review this project's scope and schedule. By working closely together, we will create an additional 38,000 square feet to expand the emergency mental health and laboratory departments. I'll continue to work with our Health minister to accelerate the timelines where possible. We'll ensure that this project is properly planned, designed, and built safely and as quickly as possible.

Tourism Promotion

Ms Goehring: Alberta tourism and travel organizations are feeling the effects of the spread of the coronavirus. Many operators have seen flights, events, and conferences cancelled, which is having deep impacts on Alberta's tourism industry. This government has

claimed that they will double tourism spending in Alberta to \$20 billion within 10 years, but only days after the budget was tabled, we are already seeing less tourism spending, which throws this entire government strategy into doubt. Does the minister responsible for tourism actually believe her numbers, or will this just be more broken promises from this government?

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

Ms Fir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, just this morning our cabinet was given a briefing by the Health ministry on the efforts that they are taking with respect to the coronavirus. Certainly, we're doing all we can to prepare and inform for the situation. We know that our Minister of Health and the ministry are doing all they can to control the situation, and to date there is not a single confirmed case in Alberta.

2:30

Ms Goehring: Given that this minister claims to want to double tourism spending in Alberta but only days after the budget was tabled, her projections are already in doubt and given that this government vowed support for our tourism industry while at the same time levelling large cuts to Travel Alberta and given that the chair of the Tourism Industry Association of Alberta board stated that this government isn't pulling their weight where their mouth is when it comes to boosting the tourism industry, will the minister tell this House why it seems like her own stakeholders think her tourism numbers are nothing but hodgepodge?

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

Ms Fir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our department, our ministry, is doing all we can to increase tourism in this province. What the members opposite don't understand is that much can be done to increase tourism without spending more taxpayer dollars, from increasing more direct flights into our province to efforts to reduce red tape. For example, my colleague the Minister of Environment and Parks changed public land leases from 25 to 60 years, reducing red tape without spending a cent more of taxpayer money. We will double tourism spending without spending more taxpayer dollars.

Ms Goehring: Given that fears of a coronavirus pandemic are raising concerns amongst international travellers and impacting our vital tourism industries and given that these concerns are coming at a time after the minister has levelled deep cuts to Travel Alberta and at a time where we need to promote Alberta in every way we can and given that this government's precarious path to balance is based on doubling tourism spending, something that won't happen with these deep cuts, will the minister admit that she was wrong to level deep cuts at a time when we need to promote and showcase Alberta and commit to immediately reversing these cuts?

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

Ms Fir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again, there are all sorts of ways to grow the tourism sector which don't involve spending more taxpayer money, something the members opposite simply do not understand. I've had extensive consultations with many people in the tourism industry, including just yesterday with Tourism Calgary, where they have all sorts of plans for our tourism industry to continue to thrive; for example, promoting more staycations within the province while this epidemic is being dealt with. Once again, we are confident and proud of our tourism strategy.

Justice Ministry Budget

Ms Ganley: Saying one thing and doing another seems to be the hallmark of this government's broken-promise budget. The Minister of Justice bragged for months about the investment he was making in Crown prosecutors, but now that the time has come to put his money where his mouth is, he actually cut funding by \$7.7 million compared to what he promised just four months ago. That's a total of 10 per cent, or \$33 million, over the next three years. Can the minister explain why it took him less than four months to break his promises to Crown prosecutors?

The Speaker: I see the hon. Minister of Advanced Education has risen.

Mr. Nicolaides: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me be absolutely crystal clear. Funding for Crown prosecutors is not affected at all. As with other divisions in the department we're of course continuing to look for internal efficiencies and savings, a concept that I know is completely foreign to the members opposite. We understand the importance of bringing costs down, and we're working to ensure that we do it in a way that does not affect Crown staffing at all.

Ms Ganley: Given that the Minister of Justice cut resolution services – that's court clerks – by 25 per cent this year and given that the Minister of Justice refused to answer the media's questions about his brutal budget cuts yesterday but continues to stand behind his government's failed \$4.7 billion corporate handout and given that these cuts will result in matters being stayed, will the minister please tell Albertans why he is slashing funding to the courts to pay for his government's failed economic policies?

Mr. Nicolaides: Mr. Speaker, as I just mentioned, we are moving forward in fulfilling our commitments to Albertans. In particular, Budget 2020 sees \$10 million to hire 50 new Crown prosecutors, as detailed in our campaign platform. Promise made, promise kept. Of course, we're also working to fill other vacancies, including increasing the number of articling students and prioritizing their placement primarily in smaller communities outside of Calgary and Edmonton to ensure that all Albertans have a fast and efficient judicial system.

Ms Ganley: Given, Mr. Speaker, that our last budget for Crowns was \$103 million and theirs was \$101 million, I think we all know that isn't true. Given that on top of all of that, cuts to the courts, cuts to Crowns, the Minister of Justice is taking money from the victims of crime fund to fill a hole he made in the public security budget just to pay for their \$4.7 billion corporate giveaway and given that all he can say about this is "stay tuned" and "in the coming days," will he reverse this despicable decision to take money from victims of crime and ensure that the victims of crime fund will only be used for victims?

Mr. Nicolaides: Mr. Speaker, the first responsibility of government, of course, is to protect public safety, and that's what we're doing and something that the NDP completely failed. Our government is working to give police and prosecutors the tools and resources that they need to protect law-abiding Albertans and put criminals behind bars. We won't be taking any lessons from the NDP when it comes to cracking down on crime. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Energy Resource Projects and Transportation/Utility Corridors

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta has been through the wringer as numerous energy resource projects have been cancelled, padlocking Alberta's energy resources. Projects such as Energy East and Teck Frontier mine are two such examples. The Teck Frontier mine gave Albertans hope, and when that project was pulled on February 23, that hope was ripped away. Our citizens are fed up, and they are wondering why these job-creating projects continue to face opposition. To the Minister of Energy: what are the logistical challenges energy resource projects in Canada face?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Energy.

Mrs. Savage: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Companies have told us and they've told Canada that what they need before they invest is predictability. They need predictability before they invest what can be hundreds of millions of dollars just to get a project through the regulatory process, but unfortunately in Canada we don't have that. We don't have regulatory certainty. The goalposts keep changing. We don't have political certainty. At the end of a regulatory process you can get a political veto. Finally, now we don't even have the rule of law. We can't even be sure that if you get an approval, you can build it or if protests will stop you. These are big challenges.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that project certainty in Alberta is shaky at best and given the logistical and regulatory barriers major resource projects are up against and given that these challenges are creating an economic chokehold for our province and damaging Alberta's market competitiveness, to the minister: would an infrastructure initiative like a trade/utilities corridor provide an economically sound solution for transportation bottlenecks for major projects?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Energy.

Mrs. Savage: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The answer to that question is yes. A utility corridor will take away much of that uncertainty I just spoke about. It takes away the regulatory uncertainty. You have a corridor there. It takes away the political uncertainty. You won't have a veto. We are exploring, the Alberta government is exploring, partnerships and undertaking important work to ensure that we find energy corridors. This is some of the work that the Premier has launched in the Council of the Federation. These are important initiatives, and we're committed to removing the barriers so that we can get projects built.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that it is essential to use long-term planning when it comes to transportation routes between communities and given that connective routes encourage the movement of goods and services both within Alberta, inter-provincially, and internationally and given that trade/utility corridors would provide the regulatory framework needed for our ethically and environmentally responsible resources to access world markets, to the minister: while it's clear that transportation/utility corridors might advance access to tidewater, what other impacts could it have on the North American and Alberta economy?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Savage: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know that we need to get our natural resources to market, and we know that energy corridors can help us do that. Also, we know that it's going to become exceedingly more difficult to do that under Bill C-69, the federal government's no-more-pipelines bill. That's why we're challenging Bill C-69 in the courts as being an unconstitutional piece of legislation, and that's why we're pursuing utility corridors. Utility corridors will provide clarity through a regulatory process, and as I described, it will help get rid of some of the regulatory dysfunction we have in this country.

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

2:40 Condominium Owner Consumer Protection

Mr. Milliken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many Albertans dream of owning a home, but housing prices have been very high in recent years. Condos are often an affordable alternative. This is particularly true for my constituents in Calgary-Currie, where condos are increasingly becoming a desired option. In Alberta the Condominium Property Act and its regulations establish the rules around these issues, and recently our government made changes to those regulations. To the Minister of Service Alberta: can you highlight the recent changes that were made to condominium regulations?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Service Alberta.

Mr. Glubish: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Calgary-Currie. You know, last summer we heard that the new condo regulations originally scheduled to come into effect in July 2019 had too much red tape and would have imposed unnecessary costs and burdens upon the condo owners and were not in the best interests of condo owners or condo boards or property management companies, all of which are important stakeholders that this legislation oversees. I'm pleased to say that the changes we made to those regulations were done in co-operation with all of these groups and were endorsed by all of these groups. These changes were made primarily around how information is shared, how annual general meetings are organized, and they enable more qualified professionals to conduct reserve fund studies.

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

Mr. Milliken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Albertans, including my constituents, can be devastated by any surprise expense and given that there are several challenges in the property insurance market today and given that some constituents in my riding of Calgary-Currie tell me they are seeing major increases in their property insurance premiums, to the Minister of Finance: what is our government doing to ensure that property insurance for condos is affordable and accessible for Albertans?

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

Mr. Toews: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We certainly acknowledge that property insurance premiums have been going up in Alberta and, in fact, in every jurisdiction in this country. Really, they've been going up globally. I have reached out to the insurance industry. Even though they are a nonregulated industry, they determine premiums based on risk and market realities. I've reached out to the insurance industry to ask them to find solutions in this challenging market in the property insurance space. Since then, they've implemented an action plan.

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

Mr. Milliken: Thank you, hon. minister. Given that insurance increases are not the only concern of condo owners but also conflicts between condo owners and their condo boards or property management companies and given that condo owners' only recourse to resolve their disputes is through the courts, which is both expensive and time consuming, again back to the Minister of Service Alberta: what plans, if any, does our government have to establish a dispute resolution service for condo owners?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Service Alberta has the call.

Mr. Glubish: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Calgary-Currie. We know that condo owners have been asking and waiting for a tribunal to be able to address these concerns. The first thing we had to get right was the regulations that were scheduled to come into force in July of last year. We got that right. We've got the endorsement from all of the different stakeholders: condo owners, condo boards, condo property managers. Having completed that work, we are now looking at developing a condo tribunal to help condo owners, boards, and property management companies resolve their disputes, and I invite the Member for Calgary-Currie and his constituents to stay tuned for more information.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, that concludes question period, but given the schedule this afternoon we will have no break. We'll return to Members' Statements immediately.

Members' Statements

(continued)

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod has a statement to make.

Alberta Southwest Regional Alliance

Mr. Reid: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta Southwest Regional Alliance is an internationally recognized initiative that brings together 16 southern Alberta communities, many of which are in my riding of Livingstone-Macleod. These communities collaborate on issues of economic development in the region and are currently a top-three finalist in the best of Americas award, with the winner being announced tomorrow in Berlin.

The alliance is currently working on a number of projects, including growing the renewable energy sector in southern Alberta, where we hold some of the greatest potential for expanding solar and wind power. It also includes looking at the possibility of expanding biofuel as a source of power.

The Southwest Regional Alliance is also focused on developing broadband infrastructure. Access to the Internet is still very limited in a number of the communities in my riding, which inhibits not only economic development but also community growth and development. Of the 16 communities that are members of the alliance only five have access to optic high-speed networks. When a community struggles with something as important to the modern economy as the Internet, they struggle to attract professionals and young people to our towns.

Many other projects being examined by the alliance focus on the tourism strategy. Frankly, Mr. Speaker, my riding is the most beautiful in the province. Some in this room may disagree, but they're wrong. From the majesty of Waterton and the mountains to some of the greatest small towns in the province, I'm not sure it can be matched anywhere in the world. The Alberta Southwest Regional Alliance is doing all it can to make sure that this beauty is

seen and experienced, whether it be by developing a self-drive tour guide of the Cowboy Trail; working with Crown of the Continent geotourism, a tourism collaboration between southwestern Alberta, southeastern B.C., and northwestern Montana; or by developing the Movie Map, a project offering driving tours of many of the iconic filming locations located in my riding.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to get to represent so many of the communities represented in this alliance, and I look forward to working with all of them even more in the future to make southwestern Alberta the vibrant economic and tourism hub it deserves to be.

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: Hon. members, the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board has a bill introduction.

Bill 5 Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2020

Mr. Toews: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 5, the Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2020.

Last week our government introduced Budget 2020, A Plan for Jobs and the Economy, which continues on the plan set out in Budget 2019. Today we're taking the first steps of acting on the budget. Bill 5 proposes five changes across three different ministries. These include making improvements to postsecondary education funding to ensure taxpayers get as much value as possible for every dollar spent on postsecondary education, levelling the playing field for Alberta's temporary accommodation business, strengthening how government and school boards work together to ratify collective agreements, and ensuring as many tax dollars as possible go to the classroom, where they can deliver the best outcomes for our students. Bill 5 is another step forward when it comes to restoring fiscal responsibility in this province.

Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of Bill 5, the Fiscal Measures and Taxation Act, 2020. Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 5 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

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

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table the requisite number of copies of a number of e-mails. The first is an e-mail from a constituent of mine, from the fabulous constituency of Edmonton-Whitemud, who indicates that he is very upset about the lifting of the cap on insurance rates. He indicates that while not formerly an NDP supporter, he now will be because he's very unimpressed with the way this government has handled insurance.

I would like to also table the requisite number of copies of a number of e-mails and letters from constituents both from, again, my constituency of Edmonton-Whitemud but also from the constituency of Banff-Kananaskis as well as the constituency of

Morinville-St. Albert. These are all from constituents who are very concerned about the cuts that were made by the Minister of Children's Services to the benefit contribution grant and the effects that that's going to have on making child care less affordable and the hardship it will cause for their families.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Sigurdson: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table the requisite number of copies of the article, which I quoted from earlier, titled Lowering Corporate Taxes Is Not a 'Giveaway'. Of course, I quoted from this. "You cannot give away something that doesn't belong to you in the first place." I have the requisite number of copies.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung, followed by Edmonton-Glenora.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table the requisite number of copies of an article I quoted yesterday in estimates, dated Saturday, February 29, in which I quoted the chair of the Alberta Barley Commission, David Bishop, saying, "We're very worried about the cuts, the loss of people, and where that leaves us" with reference to the recent Alberta budget

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

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have the requisite number of copies of several letters here from constituents of Edmonton-Glenora writing in to the minister, the Premier, our critic for Children's Services as well as myself about their deep concerns about the cuts to the benefit contribution grant and staff attraction initiative and the difference it's going to make to quality care as well as affordability for families when already child care is so expensive.

2:50

The Speaker: Hon. members, two days in a row that everyone deserves a gold star for a lack of points of order. Well done.

The daily Routine is now concluded. Pursuant to Standing Order 59.01(5)(b) and Standing Order 3(1.1) the Assembly stands adjourned until tomorrow afternoon at 1:30.

The legislative policy committees will convene this afternoon and tomorrow morning for the consideration of the main estimates. This afternoon 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 Alberta's Economic Future will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Labour and Immigration in the Parkland Room. Tomorrow morning the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Advanced Education in the Rocky Mountain Room, and the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Municipal Affairs in the Parkland Room.

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

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