



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, March 8, 2023

Day 15

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta
The 30th Legislature
Fourth Session

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UC), Speaker
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie-East (UC), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees
Reid, Roger W., Livingstone-Macleod (UC), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Bilous, Hon. Deron, ECA, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)	Orr, Hon. Ronald, ECA, Lacombe-Ponoka (UC)
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Ceci, Hon. Joe, ECA, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)	Panda, Hon. Prasad, ECA, Calgary-Edgemont (UC)
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Nally, Hon. Dale, ECA, Morinville-St. Albert (UC)	
Neudorf, Hon. Nathan T., ECA, Lethbridge-East (UC), Deputy Premier	

Party standings:

United Conservative: 60

New Democrat: 23

Independent: 2

Vacant: 2

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Todd Loewen	Minister of Forestry, Parks and Tourism
Jason Luan	Minister of Culture
Nicholas Milliken	Minister of Mental Health and Addiction
Dale Nally	Minister of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction
Demetrios Nicolaides	Minister of Advanced Education
Jeremy Nixon	Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services
Brad Rutherford	Minister without Portfolio
Sonya Savage	Minister of Environment and Protected Areas
Rajan Sawhney	Minister of Trade, Immigration and Multiculturalism
Joseph Schow	Minister without Portfolio
Rebecca Schulz	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Tyler Shandro	Minister of Justice
Travis Toews	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
Rick Wilson	Minister of Indigenous Relations

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Jackie Armstrong-Homeniuk	Parliamentary Secretary for Ukrainian Refugee Settlement
Tanya Fir	Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women
Shane Getson	Parliamentary Secretary for Economic Corridors
David Hanson	Parliamentary Secretary for Procurement Transformation
Martin Long	Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business
Miranda Rosin	Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism
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Devinder Toor	Parliamentary Secretary for Multiculturalism
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Tany Yao	Parliamentary Secretary for Rural Health
Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary for Community Outreach

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Deputy Chair: Mrs. Allard

Eggen
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Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Chair: Mr. van Dijken
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Allard
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McIver
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Standing Committee on Families and Communities

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Armstrong-Homeniuk
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Dang
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Long
Sabir
Smith, Mark
Yao
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Standing Committee on Private Bills

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Nixon, Jason
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Sweet

Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

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Allard
Armstrong-Homeniuk
Deol
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Renaud
Yao

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Ms Phillips
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Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

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Aheer
Dach
Ganley
Getson
Issik
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Sigurdson, R.J.
Singh
Turton

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, March 8, 2023

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: Good afternoon.

Prayers

The Deputy Speaker: Let us pray, hon. members. Lord, the God of righteousness and truth, grant to our King and his 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 ideals but, laying aside all private interests and prejudices, keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all. Amen.

Please be seated.

Statement by the Speaker

International Women's Day

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, today we mark International Women's Day, a day to celebrate the collective achievements of women here in Alberta and across the world. As legislators we have an incredible opportunity to lead change and take action to drive gender equality. Women who sit in this Chamber have contributed significantly, lending their voices to this and other important issues every day. In 1917 Alberta made history when they elected the first two women to serve as representatives anywhere in the British Empire. They were Louise McKinney and Roberta MacAdams. From Irene Parlby, the first woman to hold a cabinet position, to Helen Hunley, the first female Lieutenant Governor, women continue to speak out and to lead change. We must continue to reinforce that women's voices are welcome and needed as we celebrate the social, economic, cultural, and political achievements that they have made.

Today, as you may have noticed, we have an all-female table as well as a group of incredible caucus staff which we have invited to join us in the galleries for this afternoon. We're also the only province with a female Premier and Leader of the Official Opposition. I want to take a moment to thank our caucus staff as well as my female caucus members in this Assembly for all of the ways you have contributed to making this province an incredible place to live.

Please join me – and stand in the galleries – as we recognize International Women's Day.

Introduction of Guests

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, I'm pleased to rise and introduce a friend, soon to join us, Ms Cynthia Moore. When Cynthia arrives, we will welcome her to the Assembly.

Also seated in the Speaker's gallery are two guests from the wonderful constituency – this is in the script – of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, and I'm pleased to introduce them on behalf of the Speaker. Please welcome Mr. Greg Skoworodko and his daughter Ms Lauren Skoworodko, a grade 7 student who is currently learning about the Alberta Legislature. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly. I can assure you that the Speaker would butcher your last name worse than I did.

We have a school group joining us here today. The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Mr. Walker: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am pleased to introduce to you and through you to the Legislature the grade 6 B, D, and M classes of St. Theresa Catholic school. This school is famous for its Ukrainian bilingual program. And a special shout-out to Aubrey: I'm really good friends with her mom, Leanne. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of this House.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations has a guest.

Mr. Wilson: Thank you. I'm so glad today, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you two special guests in the gallery today, Bekinkanyiso Khumalo and Pinky Mathema. They live in the constituency of Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin. They've just moved there from Nunavut and are wanting to open a diabetic treatment clinic in my riding. Thank you so much for joining us. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Jobs, Economy and Northern Development.

Mr. Jean: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you my friend Jennele Giong. Jennele is a former ethnic outreach co-ordinator for the UCP caucus, a former UCP nomination contestant, and is currently a business owner and a senior adviser to the Calgary Chinatown Development Foundation's important work to revitalize Calgary's historic Chinatown. Thank you, Jennele, for your tireless work for your community. Please stand and receive the warm welcome.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Chestermere-Strathmore.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and happy International Women's Day. I'm very happy to rise today to introduce my very dear friend Scott Silva. Mr. Silva wears two hats in our community. He's the executive director for the Strathmore Wheatland Chamber of Commerce and the director of business and development for a private real estate group in Strathmore. Thank you so much to the minister of affordability for meeting with us today, and thank you, Scott, for all of your incredible hard work in making our community what it is today. Please rise. Let's give him the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Ms Gray: Madam Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all of the Assembly the all-women crew who support myself, my House team, and all NDP MLAs each and every day: Jodi Learn, Annie Wachowich, Parul Kanwar, and Emma Pyke. I believe some of them may not be here yet because we asked them to finish the notes and run them in to us. But for those who are here, please rise. Welcome here on International Women's Day.

The Deputy Speaker: So great to have all of you here.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Member Irwin: Thank you. I'm so happy to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly just a few of the amazing women that we have in our caucus and in our offices: Catherine Harder, Laura Paquette, Ashley MacInnis, Elizabeth Strange. Please join me in welcoming them all here today on International Women's Day.

The Deputy Speaker: We love our staff.

Members' Statements

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Camrose.

Child Care

Ms Lovely: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. As a mother I know that safe and affordable child care is critical to ensuring women could get back to work and participate in the renewed Alberta advantage. This is a particularly important message on International Women's Day as a majority of caregivers in our province and the majority of child operators are women.

To support these women, our government has negotiated an agreement to increase accessible, affordable, and high-quality child care spaces across Alberta. We are also protecting Alberta's world-class and diverse child care system, which includes both private and not-for-profit options. Our government values choice, Madam Speaker. That is why we support the ability of Alberta parents to choose the child care provider that best meets the needs of their family, and that is why we are making sure that parents have access to thousands of more affordable, inclusive, and high-quality spaces. On behalf of our entire government I want to thank all the women who make our province's child care sector world-class. From business owners to workers, women are making Alberta's child care sector inclusive for families, and women are making our province a great place to live and work.

Going forward, our government is fully committed to supporting licensed child care operators, the majority of whom are women, as we work together to deliver child care for Alberta children. We are investing \$32.8 million in new funding to help child care operators across the province with immediate relief from inflation. We're also investing more than \$4 million through a one-time payment to cover the cost of mandatory benefit contribution increases for the last few months of this fiscal year. We're hearing from child care operators who've expressed how much of a world of difference this new support is for them and Alberta families.

These operators are leaders. They're integral to the social and economic fabric of our province, and on International Women's Day we say thank you to all the caregivers across the province.

Thank you so much, Madam Speaker.

Women's Equality and Government Policies

Member Irwin: Women are the backbone of our communities, our families, our city, our province. They're unrelenting agents of change. They're activists, they're community leaders, and they're the reason I'm so proud to be here today marking International Women's Day. It's pretty great to be standing here in the Legislature beside my wonderful and fierce female colleagues, before a gallery filled with women and an all-women clerk table.

Alberta is the province it is today because of the labour, energy, efforts, and advocacy of women, but the weight of this day is also not lost on me. This government has not made the last four years easy for women. They killed the ministry for status of women, a historic ministry that we created and that we can't wait to bring back. They abandoned women in budget after budget, they denied supports needed to support women experiencing domestic and sexual violence, and they've consistently failed to meet the unique needs of women and gender-diverse folks in this province.

1:40

I'm also acutely aware of all the women who aren't here today, who've lost their lives due to misogyny, anti-2SLGBTQ-plus violence, racism, and colonialism. I'm committed and we're

committed to doing everything we can to make our province safe and equitable for women and gender-diverse people.

But today, despite all the challenges and the work still left to do, I feel hopeful. It's hard not to because every day I meet women who are determined, who are inspiring, who are getting stuff done. I was just part of the NDP's historic commitment to protect women's reproductive rights in this province, and I feel hopeful today that in May Albertan women will go to the polls and vote for the party that supports them, that is filled with MLAs just like them, and that wants to see them thrive, that they will vote Alberta NDP. Our promise to them and to all of you is that we will work every day as a government, just as we did the last time and just as we have as an opposition, to advance women's rights.

Happy International Women's Day.

The Deputy Speaker: The birthday girl, the hon. Member for Calgary-Peigan.

Women's Equality

Ms Fir: Thank you, Madam Speaker. As parliamentary secretary for status of women it is an honour to rise in this Chamber in celebration of International Women's Day. For 2023 the theme is Embrace Equity. We do that by celebrating, respecting, and empowering women every day, by creating opportunities and removing barriers so women can achieve their greatest potential, by championing women role models and leaders in our communities present and past, Alberta women like the Famous Five, who stood before the Supreme Court of Canada so women would be considered persons in the Constitution: Henrietta Muir Edwards, Nellie McClung, Louise McKinney, Emily Murphy, and Irene Parlby. I remember in elementary and junior high school doing many book reports and presentations on Nellie McClung.

Madam Speaker, the Alberta dream serves as an equal opportunity for everyone to pursue financial prosperity in the best place in the world to work, play, volunteer, and raise a family. The realization of this dream is an indicator of the considerable progress we've made as a society, and in this Chamber I see many powerful, determined, accomplished women who are fighting for their values and beliefs and stand as representatives for their constituents. I'm honoured to be part of a government that has put forth initiatives that support women in all aspects of their lives.

Alberta's government is committed to empowering women and girls to succeed in a fulfilling career of their choice, including fields where their gender has traditionally been underrepresented, such as STEM fields and skilled trades. STEM – science, technology, engineering, and mathematics – are industries that push innovation, our economy, and our society forward. Alberta's government wants to empower and encourage women to pursue careers in STEM.

Alberta women bring invaluable strength and dedication to our communities and our economy. When they have opportunities to fully participate in our economy, Alberta thrives. By empowering women, Alberta continues to help create an equal and better future for women and girls.

Happy International Women's Day.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Holi

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Holi is a wonderful custom and celebration, and I extend the greetings from the government of Alberta on this colourful celebration we call Holi. The festival of Holi marks the beginning of spring and the end of

the winter and the blossoming of love. It is a day to meet others, laugh, play, forget, and forgive. The festival originated in India but since has spread through the diaspora of the Indian subcontinent as well as the western world and Fiji. We understand the importance of festivals like Holi to Albertans, and we want to show our support for this beautiful festival.

Holi, also known as the Festival of Colours, is a vibrant and joyful festival celebrated world-wide. The festival is powered by a variety of colourful traditions, each with their own significance. One of the most well-known aspects of Holi is the throwing of coloured powder known as gual. The practice represents the celebration of diversity and the triumph of good over evil. During Holi people of all ages come together to play with colours, throwing them at each other and covering one another in vibrant colours. Another important tradition of Holi is the lighting of bonfires on the night before the festival.

Holi holds a special place in my heart. It is a time to celebrate the rich culture and traditions of my heritage and to come together with loved ones to embrace joy, love, and unity. The government of Alberta is proud to recognize and celebrate the diversity of our province and contributions of our community. May this festival bring joy, happiness, and prosperity to you and your families. Let us all come together to celebrate this beautiful festival and to embrace the diversity that makes our province and our country so great. Happy Holi to everyone.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Prescription Contraception Coverage

Ms Hoffman: Today is International Women's Day, and I'm so proud to be part of a caucus that's making real commitments to advance the causes of women's rights across our province. Earlier today I joined the Leader of the Opposition and the other women in our caucus in committing that an Alberta NDP government will provide universal coverage for prescription contraception. That means that Alberta women can get oral hormone pills, contraceptive injections, copper and hormonal IUDs, subdermal implants, and Plan B, all with absolutely no out-of-pocket expense. This will save Alberta women hundreds of dollars every year. For someone buying the pill every month, this program would save them up to \$10,000 over their lifetime.

But, more importantly, providing free and universal access to prescription contraception keeps Alberta women in control of their own bodies, their own lives, and their economic future. In the words of our leader earlier today, this is good health policy, this is good economic policy, and it's the right thing to do. This is the kind of good government we can have when we commit to gender parity in our caucus, among our candidates, and in our cabinet, all of which the UCP have utterly failed at.

So on International Women's Day know this: Alberta's NDP will always stand up for women, with women, and for the rights of women. Alberta's NDP embraces equity. Albertans can bring that promise into government in just a few short weeks. We can elect a stable, competent, and caring government, one that's focused on good health care and affordability, and that's an Alberta NDP government.

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

Allergy Awareness

Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk: Thank you, Madam Speaker. My first private member's bill, Bill 201, the Protection of Students with

Life-threatening Allergies Act, unanimously passed in this Assembly earlier in this 30th Legislature. As of January 1, 2021, Alberta became the first province in Canada to have Epinephrine in every school. This rollout would have not been possible without the staff at Alberta Health and Alberta Education. Because of their hard work, schools across this province have access to life-saving medicine.

I'd like to specifically thank Food Allergy Canada. They provide free online training through their allergy aware program; it covers anaphylaxis in the community, school, and child care settings. Two thousand people completed the program in 2019 and 14,500 in 2020. Programs like this are critical because there is still so much about anaphylaxis that people do not understand. Children are bullied, people are ashamed to talk about their allergies, and if you're not careful, your allergies can take your life.

Due to the luck of the draw, I have another private member's bill coming up. As many of you know, my advocacy around anaphylaxis is deeply personal and important to me. My son, my daughter, and myself all have severe allergies, and as a child my daughter almost died from a severe anaphylactic reaction. I've decided for this upcoming private member's bill to also focus on this issue. As planned, it will allow Epinephrine to be available outside of our schools in public spaces in case of emergency.

There will be no requirement to carry Epinephrine, but entities would be allowed to carry it in the case of emergency. This is currently the case in B.C., New Brunswick, and 35 of the 50 U.S. states. By reducing red tape in this area and following these many jurisdictions who have already made the change, we can ensure that Albertans across the province who suffer from anaphylaxis have the support that they deserve. Public spaces where this will be allowed would include colleges, universities, airports, and recreation centres.

My hope, with the support of all my fellow MLAs, is that this will be . . .

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Chestermere-Strathmore.

Sexual Assault Economic Costs

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's an honour to speak on International Women's Day, and I want to speak about the economy today but not in a typical way. Sexual assault, sadly, is common and the statistics overwhelming. According to StatsCan there were more than 34,200 reports of sexual assault in 2021, an 18 per cent increase from 2020 and the highest level of reported cases since 1996. Despite its increasing prevalence the economic costs associated with sexual assault continue to be either minimized or completely disregarded. The costs are well over \$100,000 per person, minimum, not to mention the economic insecurity, loss of jobs, impact on schooling, and the effects of attaining any sense of stability or economics otherwise. It's time to speak out about the economic costs of sexual assault. This is not an incidental relationship, and it impacts all of us financially and professionally. This is lost human capital.

Imagine that your size or gender or sexuality leaves you vulnerable to being controlled or raped. Imagine you are a student and the perpetrator shares a campus with you even if they've been charged. Charged perpetrators in Alberta on a student or work visa are allowed to wander freely. Every time they are summoned to court, they are not required to enter a plea, and the case gets pushed down the road.

A person raped: the perpetrator is caught and charged and then given a promise to appear. Meanwhile the survivor is subjected to

a rape kit, STD testing and AIDS testing, mental breakdowns, all the while being told to get over it and get back to work. The arrest and charges should matter, and where are the consequences?

Thank you to those of you on the front line for doing the work. Thank you to all of you in here who are doing their level best to help. I am tired of being told that sexual assault and rape doesn't impact the economy. It does. Safety impacts the economy. Women alone are 51 per cent of the population, Madam Speaker. We are the economy.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, we are very efficient today, and it is now time for Oral Question Period.

1:50 Oral Question Period

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora to kick us off.

Executive Council and Women's Equality

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm very proud to have been part of Alberta's first cabinet with gender parity, and our leader has made it clear that if we form the next government, Alberta will have at least 50 per cent women sitting at the cabinet table. The member opposite can't make that same promise. More than half of Albertans are women, but under this Premier they've been governed by a cabinet where men outnumber women 4 to 1. Why did the current Premier continue with the Jason Kenney model of limiting women's voices around her cabinet table?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Smith: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm delighted that we have such strong women in our cabinet. I'm delighted that we have an environment minister who is going toe to toe with the guys in Ottawa, standing up for our energy industry. I'm glad that we have a Municipal Affairs minister who is doing an incredible job of managing our relationship to improve it with Calgary and Edmonton. It wasn't all that great for a number of years. I think she's done a terrific job. I'm glad she's tackling some of the tough issues like unpaid municipal property taxes and unpaid landowner leases from our energy companies, and I fully expect that she's going to keep on driving that one forward. I'm delighted that we have an immigration and multiculturalism minister who is just . . .

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

Ms Hoffman: She named four because there are only four.

Our ministers that we had for the status of women did important work to move Alberta's agencies, boards, and commissions towards gender parity, ensuring that whenever decisions are made about people's lives, half the folks around that table are women. The member opposite created the largest, most bloated, expensive cabinet in Alberta history. Albertans could probably live without a minister for red tape reduction, and we could definitely survive without two ministers who don't even have a portfolio, but why did the member opposite decide to abolish the ministry for status of women?

Ms Smith: We have two voices talking on the status of women. Our Minister of Culture represented us very well in Ottawa and managed to get us matching grants for I believe it was over \$50 million worth of programming. His voice at the table was welcome because we are bringing more men into the discussion about

domestic violence if we're going to solve it. Plus, I'm delighted that we have a parliamentary secretary on the status of women, who adds an additional voice and is constantly bringing issues to the table to make sure that they stay front and centre. I think that we've done a terrific job of representing women's voices.

Ms Hoffman: In Alberta's NDP we get half the seats at the big kids' table.

Alberta's NDP takes women's rights seriously, and we work to advance them every single day. I am very proud that our leader has made the commitment that an Alberta NDP government will provide free universal coverage for prescription contraception. This can save a woman who buys the pill up to \$10,000 over her lifetime. But, more importantly, it keeps women in charge of their own lives, bodies, and economic destiny. To the members opposite. There's nothing like this in your fake budget, that's male dominated. Why won't the Premier fully support women's participation in the economy and every part of her cabinet?

Ms Smith: Well, Madam Speaker, the Alberta government supports protecting choice for women accessing reproductive services in Alberta. We've got coverage for many contraceptive drug and health products. It's available to Albertans who are enrolled in government-sponsored drug and supplemental health benefits. It includes oral contraceptives, injectable contraceptives, intrauterine devices, and others to support women in their reproductive health choices. The women's choice program allows Alberta women to . . .

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Prescription Contraception Coverage Policy

Member Irwin: Our Alberta NDP team is so proud to commit to Albertans that we will make prescription contraception universally available with no out-of-pocket costs. Our plan tears down barriers, it supports Albertans, it's good health policy, it's good economic policy, and it's the right thing to do. These are the good things that happen when strong, progressive women lead. My question to the Premier is simple. Why is she so opposed to universal coverage for prescription contraception?

Ms Smith: I'm not sure why the members opposite are wanting to give a subsidy to private health insurance companies, because the vast majority of prescription drugs are covered under private plans. Essentially, having the government step in and taxpayers step in would offer a subsidy to those insurance companies. We want to make sure that everybody has reasonable access to pharmaceuticals. Through a combination of private insurance and public insurance they have access to the full range of drugs. We also have supports, of course, for our most vulnerable.

Member Irwin: Well, you've got \$20 billion for your friends but not a few million for millions of Alberta women.

Our neighbours in British Columbia have introduced similar policy, and this follows New Zealand, Australia, the U.K., and some Scandinavian countries as well. When B.C. announced their policy, so many Albertans reached out to me and asked if we would do the same. I told them, "Well, not with the UCP government; that's for sure," but Albertans can choose to have universal coverage for prescription contraception if they choose an Alberta NDP government in May. A whole lot of Albertans want this. Why doesn't the Premier?

Ms Smith: As I said, Madam Speaker, there is a broad range of coverage already available through public and private health plans. The experience that I have seen in watching those programs that are publicly funded is that they actually provide a narrower range of choices. We want to make sure the maximum number of choices are available for women to support their reproductive choices, and that's the reason why we continue to support a mixed system like we have.

Member Irwin: For someone buying the pill every month, this new coverage will save them up to \$10,000. These are huge costs for Albertans. Our commitment for universal coverage for prescription contraception builds on our plan for family health teams as well. Our offer to women and to all Albertans is easy access to your health care professional, close to home, when you need it. That's the Alberta I want to live in, that's the Alberta we all want to live in, and that's what we're offering to Albertans. Will the Premier agree that she's offered nothing to Albertans?

Ms Smith: Well, Madam Speaker, I accept that there are probably a certain number of women that may not have coverage through some plans. We want to do everything we can to make sure someone has access to a private health plan. We also want to make sure that they have options through Alberta Blue Cross. Maybe I should just mention that we've got a nongroup plan available through Alberta Blue Cross so that people would be able, if they're not currently covered, to access that. We want to just make sure everybody has the appropriate coverage. We have that in Alberta.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Wage Growth and Tax Policies

Ms Gray: Madam Speaker, Albertans are working harder and harder but falling further and further behind under the UCP. Every day I hear from Albertans who are struggling to put food on the table and keep up with their bills. Income taxes, fees, tuition, auto insurance, and utilities have all gone up dramatically under the UCP. At the same time, Alberta has some of the slowest wage growth in Canada under the UCP. Why is this government making a bad situation worse by piling on costs while Albertans' real wages shrink under the UCP?

Ms Smith: You know, Madam Speaker, I am always perplexed when the NDP talk about how concerned they are about taxes, considering that they raised taxes 97 times when they got elected. The hidden agenda as well of the members opposite: they campaigned and didn't even tell the public that they were going to implement a carbon . . . [interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: Order.
The Premier.

Ms Smith: They didn't even tell the public that they were going to implement a carbon tax. Now we can't get rid of it, and their boss in Ottawa, Jagmeet Singh, who's propping up the Liberal leader – they intend to increase the carbon tax 300 per cent, which will increase the cost of everything. I also should mention, Madam Speaker, that we brought the tax rate down for corporate taxes to 8 per cent after they raised it to 12 per cent and chased investment and jobs and people out of Alberta.

2:00

Ms Gray: Under the UCP we see the slowest wage growth in Canada. Alberta had the highest wages in Canada when the UCP came into power. Now provinces like Quebec and B.C. are catching

up. Last year wages in B.C. increased by 3.4 per cent and wages in Quebec increased by 4.1 per cent. [interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Ms Gray: Here in Alberta they barely increased 2.5 per cent, well below current inflation. [interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Ms Gray: And the UCP Finance minister's response? He told Albertans to get a better job. Is this really the best the UCP can offer? Or maybe it's time everyone on the government side of the House changed to a different job.

The Deputy Speaker: We were doing so well.

Ms Smith: Well, Madam Speaker, the reason why they're focusing on growth rate is because they don't want to focus on the actual level of average weekly earnings in Alberta, which is the highest in the country. It is over \$1,200 per week, \$65,000 per year. The reason why people are flocking to Alberta is that they know that there is opportunity here. There were 13 consecutive quarters of people leaving this province under the NDP, and their job-creation plan was: go get a job in British Columbia if you don't like it here. They're coming back, and they're coming back for the jobs.

Ms Gray: You know, Madam Speaker, Alberta had the highest average weekly earnings under the NDP as well. It is the UCP that are putting it at risk. Last election the UCP promised their corporate tax cut would fill office towers in downtown Calgary and boost wages for Albertans. Sound too good to be true? Yes, it was. Downtown office vacancy rates are the highest in the country, corporate profits are leaving the province, and we have the slowest wage growth in the country. Study after study shows that corporate handouts never reach working people. In other words, trickle-down economics do not work. They are a trick.

Ms Smith: Highest average weekly earnings in the country, and I would remind the members opposite: 183,000 jobs lost under the NDP, 13 consecutive quarters of people leaving our province. We have turned that around completely. In fact, when I had a courtesy call with Premier Doug Ford, he said he was so angry about our Alberta is Calling campaign; he wished that we would stop it, and the reason he wished we would stop it is because it's so effective. People are coming here because of the environment we've created, there are jobs, it's affordable, and they're happy.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View on the last set of leader's questions.

Energy Company Liability

Ms Ganley: The UCP is just full of bad ideas, and they're hiding most of the details until after the election. When will we find out about the UCP's risky plan to take us out of the Canada pension plan? After the election. When will we find out about the costly and dangerous plan to create their own police force? After the election. When will we find out more about Smith's \$20 billion royalty handout? After the election. Why . . . [interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member. Order. You know as well as I do that the use of names of members is not allowed in this Chamber. Perhaps rephrase your questions. You have 11 seconds to finish.

Ms Ganley: When will we find out more about the Premier's \$20 billion royalty handout? Why is the Premier trying to hide the biggest pieces of her agenda? Doesn't she know that Albertans don't support her risky ideas?

Ms Smith: Well, I'd like to know when we're going to find out about the members opposite's secret agenda to increase corporate income taxes again. They keep talking about that, saying that we're still going to maintain a competitive tax environment but don't want to rule out tax increases. I can tell you that the only place the taxes are going in this province under a UCP government is down, but I don't think that they can say the same on the other side. In fact, if they want to show how serious they are, they should phone up the boss, Jagmeet Singh, and ask him to oppose the federal increase in carbon tax, which is going to increase the tax by 300 per cent and increase the cost on everything.

Ms Ganley: Albertans hate this \$20 billion royalty giveaway. They hate it because Albertans believe we should all be responsible for [interjection] cleaning up our own messes, and this is the opposite. It's irresponsible, it stinks so bad they can smell it in Saskatchewan, and there's no policy justification. The ones provided by the UCP are conflicting, inconsistent, and defy logic. The Premier's friends will benefit from this; Albertans will not. If the Premier has any evidence to disprove this, will she table it today or admit that it's a scam?

Ms Gray: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: Point of order noted.

Ms Smith: Madam Speaker, a number of years ago all of our junior oil and gas companies were distressed. I know the members opposite know it because it was Sequoia and Trident that went under after their tenure in office, leaving 9,000 wells that got handed off to the Orphan Well Association. Why is that? It's because when you have active wells and a company goes belly up, then it ends up falling to somebody else to pay for it. We believe that we've got to find a way to enable companies to clean up their liability. This is part of the reason why we've put a mandatory spend in place. They're going to have to spend \$740 million to clean up.

Ms Ganley: One of the authors of the Premier's \$20 billion handout now works in the Premier's office. The other instigator now runs a PAC attacking the NDP. Despite objections from economists, despite banks calling it anticapitalist, despite those inside her own cabinet being on record against it, it goes ahead. Policy this bad demands an explanation. From every single angle this looks like quid pro quo. Albertans deserve straight answers. They know this won't benefit them, so tell us, Premier: who's it really for?

Ms Smith: Madam Speaker, I would just like to fast-forward to where we are now, because a policy that was conceived three years ago under different circumstances is not the same as today. The policy that we have today is now that energy companies – we've seen an increase in oil and gas prices, we've seen an increase in profits, and that is why we are demanding that now is the time for the energy companies to address their historic liability, \$30 billion of liability. It's part of the reason why we have demanded that they spend their own money this year to spend \$740 million on reclamation. It's going to keep on growing up.

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

Support for Women

Ms Issik: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Today is International Women's Day, a day to celebrate women's achievements and a day to recognize the perseverance of women around the world. We know that Indigenous women and girls suffer domestic violence, addictions, and suicide at rates disproportionately higher than levels in the rest of the population. To the Premier. Please tell this House what this government is doing to support women and families, including First Nations and Métis women in Alberta.

Ms Smith: Thank you to the Member for Calgary-Glenmore. The safety and well-being of Aboriginal women is our top priority. We have a Premier's council on missing and murdered Indigenous women that I have met with, and they're giving me recommendations on what we can do to be able to address those issues. If passed, Budget 2023 includes \$5 million in new funding to support Alberta's response to the ongoing missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirited individuals. Our government also implemented Clare's law in April of 2021, and we have since received 600 applications seeking to access information on current and former partner history of . . .

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

Ms Issik: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the Premier for providing those insights. Given that the work to promote the health and safety of Indigenous women is incredibly important and given that, unfortunately, domestic abuse is not just limited to Indigenous women but something experienced by women from all communities and from across the province, could the Premier please elaborate on the support available to all women across the province, including those in rural and remote communities and women from ethnic and cultural minority groups?

Ms Smith: Thank you again to the Member for Calgary-Glenmore. We have increased the funding for women's shelters this year by \$3.8 million, for a total of \$55 million this year; \$9 million for family violence prevention services; and, of course, we've got our recovery communities, first one in Red Deer, and we're going to be establishing those with half or more of the beds dedicated to supporting women. We also have \$17.1 million for sexual assault centres. We provided \$20 million to civil society groups. I could list off a whole range of them: the Nigerian Canadian Association of Edmonton's family wellness project, Next Step Ministries, and many more.

2:10

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

Ms Issik: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Given that Indigenous women make phenomenal contributions to our economy and bring a unique perspective to entrepreneurship and given that Indigenous women entrepreneurs make incredible contributions to our province and country as restaurant owners, artists, and oil and gas logistics providers, to just name a few, could the Premier please tell our province about the supports available to bolster Indigenous women in business and in the workforce?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Madam Speaker. This morning I had the pleasure to be at the Junior Achievement announcement, and they were making their International Women's Day event this year focus on support for Indigenous women entrepreneurs. We have appointed councils to support Indigenous women in Alberta, including the Métis women's and First Nations women's councils

on economic security. In addition, we have \$195,000 that we have increased to expand the next step to success program, which offers Indigenous entrepreneurs mentorship, training, and other supports. We also have the Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women to help remove barriers to employment.

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

Energy Company Municipal Tax Payment

Ms Sweet: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. The UCP is failing rural Alberta again. Yesterday we learned from the Rural Municipalities of Alberta that the amount of unpaid taxes owed to rural municipalities was \$253.7 million. This is more than three times as much than in the 2019 survey. The failure of the UCP to address this problem is forcing some communities to either raise their taxes from their residents or cut services. Can the Minister of Municipal Affairs explain why she has failed to address this growing issue?

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

Ms Schulz: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Now, the nonpayment of taxes is absolutely unacceptable and cannot be allowed to continue. We agree with the RMA's assessment that the problem of unpaid oil and gas taxes to rural municipalities is absolutely unacceptable. We're actively looking at options to ensure taxes are paid as a condition of licence transfer. We will be in contact directly with delinquent companies reminding them of their responsibility to pay their taxes. Municipalities also continue to have the option of pursuing unpaid taxes through legal action or the insolvency process.

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

Ms Sweet: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. Given that in this Chamber there sit three former Municipal Affairs ministers who failed to get this done over their term despite the most recent former minister promising a hammer to address the problem and given that that same minister admitted a year ago today that his strategy failed and that it was time to try something new and given that the RMA president, Paul McLaughlin, has said that he's shocked that we're still having to discuss this issue, what does the minister say to rural voters who want to know where the money is?

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

Ms Schulz: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Now, as I mentioned, we are exploring options to make sure that taxes are paid as a condition of licence transfer. That, in fact, is a request of RMA. We committed to work on that, and we are with the Minister of Energy and the AER. Now, we also implemented the special lien during fall 2021 which gives the municipalities priority over other creditors. We also provided RMA with grant funding to provide training and resources to help municipalities use this tool. We worked with the AER, strengthened the regulatory frameworks so that it has the option to consider company records for property taxes and service lease payment.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Sweet: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. Given the previous minister said that none of the tools that this current minister is using work and given that rural municipalities are owed over \$200 million in unpaid taxes and given that the RMA president, Paul McLaughlin, has described this as rural municipalities being forced to "subsidize

an industry in a massive boom period" and given that the Premier is pushing a massive \$20 billion giveaway to pay off companies to clean up messes that are already legally obligated to clean up, is the reason the UCP is refusing to act on unpaid taxes because they're too busy planning to hand out \$20 billion to their friends?

Ms Schulz: Madam Speaker, I know the member had her questions written in advance, but I'm going to just remind her that, as I said, we are exploring options to make sure that those taxes are paid, to make sure that that's a condition of licence transfer. That is, in fact, a request of the RMA, and we're working on that. More news to come on that soon. Now, our recent survey showed that payment plans or agreements with companies have already been put in place for municipalities to recoup \$48 million of those unpaid taxes. There is further potential for municipalities to recoup another \$28 million from companies that are still in operation. We continue to work with RMA on this issue.

School Construction in Edmonton

Ms Pancholi: Twenty twenty-seven: that's the year the high schools in Edmonton public school division, the fastest growing school district in the country, will be at 100 per cent capacity. At that point there'll be no more space for attendance for area students in Edmonton high schools, and, yes, that factors in the spaces from the high school in southeast Edmonton that opens next year. The year 2027 is four years from now, and it takes three years to build a school, but there are no construction dollars for a new high school in this year's budget. How can the UCP look the parents of Edmonton in the eyes and tell them they don't think their kids need a space in their local high school?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Again the members opposite are incorrect. In fact, out of the 58 schools that we announced in Budget 2023, Edmonton is receiving nine projects. Nine projects. I have to tell you that under the NDP, during their four years, they only constructed eight projects in Edmonton. We are already way above that: 18 projects.

Ms Pancholi: It's a skill to be that arrogant and wrong at the same time.

Given that I'm proud to represent the students and families and staff of Lillian Osborne high school – shout-out to the Legends – and given that Lillian Osborne is absolutely bursting at the seams – crowded hallways, huge class sizes, and last year they had to go to a lottery for students living in the area and this will continue for the foreseeable future – and given that is why Edmonton public schools made a new high school in Glenriding their number one priority, to take the pressure off Lillian Osborne, would the UCP agree that this is an insult to southwest Edmonton families to not fund full construction of a high school this year?

Member LaGrange: Madam Speaker, again incorrect. Incorrect. Nine projects for Edmonton. We are going to be building all of the top priorities for Edmonton public school division, and I'm so glad that Edmonton public school division this year was able to prioritize areas that are growing in Edmonton. We are continuing to build. Unlike the members opposite, we are actually addressing need through an auditor-approved gated process.

The Deputy Speaker: With great respect to not using preambles, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Mr. Schow: Point of order.

Ms Pancholi: Given that I'm also proud to represent the students, families, and staff of Riverbend junior high school – shout-out to the Centurions – and given that I invite any UCP minister to drive by the school and see how it has become a sea of portables in an effort to fit all their students, the highest enrolment of junior high students in the city, and given that in their four years in government the UCP has only fully funded and built one school for Edmonton public, while the NDP completed 13 and began six more, and after shutting down Edmonton public out of their budget cycles for two years, can we agree that having a UCP MLA in southwest Edmonton has been a waste of time for Edmonton students and families?

The Deputy Speaker: Point of order noted at 2:17.

Member LaGrange: Madam Speaker, it is obvious the members opposite do not know how the capital plan works. The school divisions actually put forward their top asks. We have actually committed to building 58 schools across this province, nine of which will be in Edmonton. All of the top asks for both Edmonton public and Edmonton Catholic – and in fact, as I said, the NDP only built eight when we're building 18.

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

Women's Workforce Participation

Ms Pon: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. Today is International Women's Day, and we are celebrating women across Alberta who contribute the skills, creativities, and innovation to help our communities and economies thrive. Can the Minister of Jobs, Economy and Northern Development highlight for this Assembly some of the efforts of our UCP government to support Alberta women in skilled job training to pursue meaningful careers?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Protected Areas.

Mrs. Savage: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm very happy to share some of the work that we do to get Alberta women trained for their careers of the future. Through Alberta's workforce strategy grants we support projects to help ensure women enjoy economic prosperity. For example, we are very proud to sponsor and partner Higher Landing to deliver employment support services for women professionals, including coaching, workshops, and practice clinics. We also work with Canadian Women in Communications and Technology to help retain and advance women in Alberta's tech industry and create more inclusive workspaces.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Beddington.
2:20

Ms Pon: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you, Minister. I'm happy to hear that we're investing in the training opportunities for women given that we see ambitions of women are moving beyond being an employee in industry. Can the same minister highlight some of the efforts that our UCP government is making to support Alberta women assert their skills to start their own business or lead their current companies?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Savage: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Alberta's government is supporting projects that help ensure women continue to lead in

Alberta's economy. Projects like the Hyper Drive: Women in Business Summit, led by Community Futures Grande Prairie, which connects women employers with experts to attract and diversify talent to their companies. We support Chic Geek Society, which runs a women in technology talent connector event to connect women in tech to Alberta tech companies, or the Community Futures Peace Country's Women in the North Conference, a series of events that bring training and networking opportunity to women business leaders in Alberta's north.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Pon: Thank you to the minister through you, Madam Speaker. It is good to know how amazing it is that our government is taking steps to help support women succeed in business as leaders and employers given that women make up the majority of Alberta's population and the majority of our postsecondary graduates. Can the same minister highlight for this Assembly why Alberta women are so successful?

Mrs. Savage: Alberta women are so successful because they're contributing their skills and talent to fuel the renewed Alberta advantage. They benefit from our low taxes, no sales tax, and our business-friendly investment environment. But they also benefit and help ensure that Alberta has a young, vibrant, hard-working, world-class workforce. Alberta's women are taking the lead in making our province a wonderful place to live, grow a business, build a career, and raise a family. On International Women's Day I salute them.

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

Mental Health Services

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Yesterday I had the special privilege of standing with Karen Gosbee, the co-chair of Calgary's mental health and addictions community strategy, when she endorsed our family health teams policy. This strategy will ensure that 1 million more Albertans will have a family doctor and will ensure that patients' mental health needs are met, and it will address the stigma faced by those dealing with mental health. Will the minister of mental health join with Albertans like Karen Gosbee and agree that the Alberta NDP plan is the path forward to ensuring that Albertans will have the mental health support they need?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Mental Health and Addiction.

Mr. Milliken: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to rise in this House and set the record straight with regard to what we're dealing with under my ministry. If passed, Budget 2023 will actually give \$275 million. Now, that is a massive increase of over 200 per cent of what was \$87 million back in 2019 when the opposition was in power. This is an area of the work that we are doing as a government that is fixing a problem and a mistake that was made by the previous government, prior to us. They woefully underfunded this area, and we're fixing their mistakes.

Ms Sigurdson: Given that protecting and improving the mental health of Albertans is critical and given that every single Albertan should be able to access care when and where they need it, without exception, something that our policy addresses, and given that Karen Gosbee said when endorsing our plan that "increasing mental health... support through primary care will allow entire... families to be able to access [primary] care," will the minister get out of the way and support our plan?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Mental Health and Addiction.

Mr. Milliken: Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak. If we want to talk about individuals and the views that they have with regard to what our government is doing with regard to access for mental health and addiction, I would say: “We are pleased that Alberta’s government [continues] to make youth mental health a priority in this budget,” Bonnie Blakley; “We are pleased that in Budget 2023, the government has continued to place an emphasis on supporting the mental health of [all] Albertans,” Robbie Babins-Wagner; “The provincial budget demonstrates a commitment to help support vulnerable people who are struggling with mental health and addiction on their journey to housing and recovery,” Sandra Clarkson from the Calgary Drop-In Centre. And take a look at . . .

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Sigurdson: Given that our family health teams announcement builds on our commitment to provide Albertans with five insured mental health sessions, a simple and powerful policy move that this government has ignored, given that a survey conducted by the Alberta Medical Association found that 77 per cent of parents reported that the mental health of their children was worse now than before the pandemic and given that this is a crisis this province needs to tackle and requires all Albertans to come together to ensure that no one is left behind, will the minister acknowledge the mental health crisis and endorse our strategy, ensuring Albertans get . . .

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Mr. Copping: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It’s a pleasure to rise to speak on this topic, and I’m very pleased that the members opposite fully endorse our government’s approach to team-based care in primary care. You know, we reached an agreement with the AMA, and I was very pleased to do so through last summer. Part of that was actually putting models of compensation in place to be able to enhance team-based care. So not only family physicians but also others: nurse practitioners, assistant physicians, and mental health supports as well. We also helped support this through our PCNs, and we’ll continue to do so.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Government Spending and Provincial Debt

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Madam Speaker. In the 2019 provincial election the UCP promised to control government spending, but since taking office, this UCP government has seen fit to increase total spending by \$12 billion annually. Given that the UCP has also increased government’s total debt by \$15 billion and given the UCP plans to continue increasing spending to more than \$71 billion annually by 2025-26, to the Finance minister: would you care to retract your 2019 promise to control spending?

Mr. Toews: Madam Speaker, it’s really easy to give advice when you don’t have the accountability of being in leadership. We’ve delivered on bringing Alberta’s spending under control. We set a fiscal anchor back in 2019 to align our per capita spending with that of comparator provinces. We’ve delivered on that commitment, and we’ve delivered two balanced budgets right through the fiscal plan.

Mr. Barnes: Madam Speaker, given this government has a spending problem, just like the last government, and failure to

control spending will hit our youth the hardest, given that total debt-servicing costs have risen by one-third since 2019 and are poised to rise by more than \$3 billion in the coming years and given that the recent budget requires \$16 billion in resource revenue to balance the books and given the 10-year average for resource revenue is \$8.7 billion, again to the Finance minister: will you admit that your unsustainable spending plan is a recipe for more debt, more taxes, and hardship for our youth?

Mr. Toews: Madam Speaker, we on this side of the House have put the Alberta government’s fiscal house in order. We have brought our spending to a sustainable trajectory, and with last year’s surplus we’ve paid down over \$14 billion of debt – over \$14 billion – reducing debt-service costs of \$560 million a year, year after year after year, funding that can be used for health care, for education, or reinvestment in the heritage savings trust fund.

Mr. Barnes: Given, for the sake of argument, let’s assume that through the magic of wishing this government’s pie-in-the-sky revenue projections do hold true, given that increasing spending could only further drive inflation and given that Albertans are already struggling with the rising cost of groceries and heat and electricity and fuel and virtually every other consumer product, again to the Finance minister: why are you budgeting billions in new and inflationary spending rather than providing broad-based income tax relief for hard-working Alberta families?

Mr. Toews: Madam Speaker, we have brought taxes down in this province, unlike the members opposite. In fact, today Albertans have a \$20 billion tax advantage doing business and operating their households in this province relative to the next lowest tax jurisdiction in Canada, and we’re committed to ensuring that taxes remain low in this province. We’ve brought down per capita spending approximately \$700 per person. I would suggest the member opposite consider CPI and population growth and take a look as an economist would . . .

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

2:30

Private Child Care Operators

Mrs. Allard: When the federal-provincial child care funding agreement was signed in November ’21, daycare costs were cut roughly in half. While I recognize this effort, it is critical that our made-in-Alberta plan provides fair and equitable inclusion of private child care operators based on our province’s unique mixed-market system, particularly since 67 per cent of child care centres are privately operated, accounting for roughly 80,000 spaces across the province. Alberta is on pace to lose over 80,000 for-profit child care spaces that do not currently qualify for funding. To the minister: when will this agreement include all private operators, that make up the majority of our child care spaces?

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

Ms Schulz: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I am always proud to talk about our government’s child care agreement, where we worked very hard to make sure that private operators, 70 per cent of spaces, that the members opposite, the NDP, were going to leave out – we fought for that. Instead of picking winners and losers, we fought for parent choice.

Madam Speaker, in the most recent agreement signed with the federal government, we’ve secured up to 22,500 additional licensed, affordable, and quality child care spaces in private child care facilities, which would provide employment opportunities for

thousands more entrepreneurs, often female, who open up these spaces and the amazing early childhood educators who work in those spaces to support families.

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

Mrs. Allard: Thank you, Madam Speaker and to the minister, through you, for her answer. Given that it is, in fact, International Women's Day and given that the majority of private child care operators are women entrepreneurs and further given that subsidies will be extended to all private, for-profit daycares once Alberta's cost control framework is established, again to the Minister of Children's Services: can your ministry provide a specific timeline for the release of the cost control framework and how it will affect these private operators?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Schulz: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Now, we announced this cost control framework with the federal government just a couple of months ago. Right now our government is engaging with operators to determine the details of what that is going to look like, but I can tell this House that it will be implemented in 2023-24. We will continue to engage with child care operators. We need to hear their voices. We need to make sure that they understand the changes and support the changes that we're making and make sure that they continue to be viable options in our child care spaces given the support for the families that they serve. Further details will be shared in the coming months.

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

Mrs. Allard: Thank you, Madam Speaker and, through you, to the minister. Given that some privately operated daycare programs in my constituency of Grande Prairie have expressed concerns and also that they will be closing as soon as June 1 if things do not change and given that the children on their wait-lists will now wait even longer for the flexible, accessible, and affordable child care that our government promised, not to mention the children that are served in those centres that may be closing, to the Minister of Children's Services: what is our government doing to provide support to families in my constituency and across Alberta and the centres that serve them while we wait for the \$45 million in new federal funding to be released?

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

Ms Schulz: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Now, a number of those questions are coming because under the NDP 70 per cent of those spaces and private operators were completely left out. That happened in the province over to our west, also an NDP province, that had plans to phase out private operators. That is what has Alberta child care operators in the private space nervous.

Madam Speaker, to help more families access affordable, quality child care, Alberta is working towards creating 68,700 additional spaces, 42,500 in nonprofit programs, more than 2,600 in private, and these will be open by 2026.

Cardiac Care in Lethbridge

Ms Phillips: Yesterday the people of Alberta were subjected to watching the Infrastructure minister explain why he can't build infrastructure. He blamed me. He blamed cities. He blamed some doctors. He even blamed pipelines. That was a new one. It was a hot mess express and an embarrassing mix of incompetence and flailing. He said: Lethbridge's need for expanded cardiac care was

a new thing. That's funny. Here's a report, that I will table after question period, from late 2018 on the topic. To the Deputy Premier: why won't he be honest with the people of Lethbridge about his failure to build health care infrastructure?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Very happy to be honest with all Albertans and share with them that the NDP in 2017 approved a number in their budget for the Edmonton south hospital that was plucked out of thin air. They did no business case. They had no details, no needs assessment, and no functional plan, all needed steps before anything can be designed and built in this province. That's the order and why it's done. Not only that, but the site that the NDP picked had a pipeline underneath it. They didn't happen to work on any negotiations or on how they were going to build a building around a pipeline.

Ms Phillips: Given that yesterday the Infrastructure minister claimed that 2022 was the first time anyone had mentioned the expansion of cardiac care in Lethbridge but given that that is not true, that what the minister has said is not true at all, and given that our government committed to the work that needed to be done to move this forward and given that there's public record of that fact back to 2018 – here's another article that I will table; it's right here, Madam Speaker – where is the Deputy Premier getting his facts? Why doesn't he give answers based in reality?

Mr. Neudorf: I have given answers based in reality. I've talked to the regional director of Alberta Health Services south. Not until 2022 did the cath lab in Lethbridge become a capital ask of Alberta Health Services. Yes, as a concept it was talked about from 2018 onward, but until Alberta Health Services south zone elevates that and puts it on the capital plan, which they did not do until 2022, we can't act upon that.

Ms Phillips: Well, given that it's now 2023 and nothing has happened and given that I just provided the Deputy Premier with evidence that this issue has been researched and studied by AHS and advocated by Dr. Sayeh Zielke, a Lethbridge cardiologist – I know the hon. member knows her – and given that the evidence dates back five years, yet the Infrastructure minister keeps saying that he's never really heard of it, and given that our government agreed to this project after the reports came out in late 2018, yet it's all a complete surprise to the Member for Lethbridge-East, why can't this minister just pull himself together and answer this question truthfully? Why don't we have expanded cardiac services in Lethbridge in Budget 2023?

Mr. Neudorf: So very interesting to hear that this idea came up in 2018, when they were in government, and they did absolutely nothing with it. Now, as it comes on the list in 2022, I have been advocating with the Minister of Health for that. I've had many conversations with him, and he works through the chain of command as well, elevating it from Alberta Health Services south zone to the executive leadership team of Alberta Health Services Edmonton, and it's being treated with every serious consideration, like every capital ask. We're doing the job properly, something the NDP has always failed to do.

Digital Media Tax Credit Policy

Ms Goehring: Yesterday I asked the Minister of Technology and Innovation why a digital media tax credit was not in the budget. He said that they need to do an economic analysis and ensure it's good

value for taxpayers. Of course we need to spend taxpayer money wisely, but Ontario, B.C., and Quebec all think it's good value. Digital Alberta, the industry association for digital media, thinks it's a good idea. It's year 4. Why hasn't the UCP gotten their homework done?

Mr. Glubish: Madam Speaker, of course the NDP don't care about proper process and doing homework. That's why they're over there and we're over here. I have made it very clear to all of our stakeholders in this space and I've made it very clear to the opposition and to the public that before we implement any kind of a proposal to give tens of millions if not hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars to a specific industry, we need to make sure that it would be financially responsible and in the best interests of all Alberta taxpayers. The NDP don't have any evidence that that is true and that that would be the case, but we want to assure Albertans that we will prove that before we act.

Ms Goehring: Given that today in estimates the minister said that he needs to conduct an economic analysis before moving forward on a digital media tax credit and given that there was no analysis conducted on the UCP gambling away \$1.3 billion on Donald Trump's re-election or tens of millions on their failed war room and given that we have not yet seen any analysis around the UCP's \$20 billion giveaway to the Premier's friends, we know a digital media tax credit will support our economy. Why the double standard?

Mr. Glubish: Madam Speaker, I have been very clear about what our plan would be as it relates to a digital media tax credit concept, but what I want to point all members of this Assembly to is the fact that Alberta's tech sector is on fire. We are seeing record levels of investment coming to Alberta without a tax credit. We saw \$729 million last year, which was a massive increase over the previous year and an exponential increase over whatever was invested while the NDP were in power. Our policies are working. Our approach to invest in the Alberta Enterprise Corporation, which is bringing five dollars into Alberta for every dollar they invest . . .

2:40

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Goehring: Given that the UCP has strung the digital media sector along for the last three and a half years by promising to bring back the tax credit and failing to do so and given that the minister even had it in his mandate letter and said last fall that it was still a priority and given that the minister is stalling and throwing up more roadblocks despite clear evidence that a digital media tax credit will attract jobs and investment, will the minister stop playing games and just admit he has broken his promise to bring back a digital media tax credit?

Mr. Glubish: Madam Speaker, I don't know how many more ways to say it, but we have promised to Albertans that if we are going to bring in something that costs hundreds of millions of dollars over the next number of years, it has to be done responsibly. The NDP say that just because it's done somewhere else, it's a responsible use of taxpayer dollars. That is false. We need to do the economic analysis to demonstrate that this would be a good investment for every Alberta taxpayer, not just for the folks who would be recipients of these programs. I have committed that we will do that homework, and we will take the time to do it right instead of rushing blindly in and throwing taxpayer dollars around, as the NDP are wont to do.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, that concludes Oral Question Period. We have also concluded Members' Statements, so I might ask for your indulgence to hang around for a few more minutes while we complete today's ceremony.

Notices of Motions

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Good to see you in the chair.

I rise to give oral notice of Bill 10, the Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2023, sponsored by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

Introduction of Bills

Bill 9

Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2023

Mr. Nally: Madam Speaker, I request leave to introduce Bill 9, the Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2023.

[Motion carried; Bill 9 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

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

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have two documents to table. One is from October 5, 2018, indicating that "AHS report shows need for better cardiac services outside of Calgary, Edmonton," and one document, dated October 1, 2018, is headlined: "Lethbridge doctors hope life-saving cardiac treatment comes to their hospital soon."

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 hon. Mr. Shandro, Minister of Justice, "Abridged version of the speech delivered by Canada-Ukraine Foundation Board member and Ukrainian-Canadian community activist, Bohdan Romaniuk on February 24, 2023 at the Calgary Vigil commemorating the first anniversary of the War in Ukraine"; and pursuant to the Statutes Repeal Act a report entitled Statutes Repeal Act – 2023 List.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, we are at points of order. There were two points of order called today, the first point of order at 2:05.

The hon. Official Opposition House Leader.

Point of Order

Parliamentary Language

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. At 2:05, while the Member for Calgary-Mountain View was asking questions, the Member for Calgary-Hays was heckling, yelling, shouting, booming, "You're making it up." And he did so multiple times. I waited until the member's question was fully asked before I raised this point of order because this is clearly counter to 23(h), (i), and (j) as well as the practices of this House. In multiple rulings, including November 16, 2021, and June 11, 2020, the Speakers have been extremely clear that shouting, "You're making it up" is unparliamentary. It is a form of calling a member a liar, and you cannot do indirectly what you cannot do directly.

Madam Speaker, I think this is a clear point of order, and I rise for your assistance. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. the Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would argue that this is not a point of order, that it is a matter of debate. Whether or not what the member opposite was saying is or is not factual is for the people to decide and for the members on this side to answer those questions. I don't find this a point of order. Some might agree – in fact, many might agree – that what that Member for Calgary-Mountain View was saying was made up. I encourage, you know, members, of course, to maintain the highest level of decorum in this Chamber, but this is not a point of order; it's a matter of debate.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, there are a lot of notes here, a lot of things that were said during this session. I was hoping that on International Women's Day things would go so smoothly for your Madam Speaker here. However, here we are.

I did not hear the heckle in question, so unfortunately I could not make a ruling. As such, if those words were heckled, there has been previous ruling in which that would be a point of order, and the member would stand up and apologize in this Chamber. So this is a learning opportunity. We'll take this moving forward. Let's watch our heckles. If the Speaker does hear it, that will be the ruling at that time. I do not find a point of order because I did not hear it.

Let's move on to the second point of order. The Government House Leader.

Point of Order Language Creating Disorder

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Madam Speaker. You know, if members on this side of the Chamber had said something that was unparliamentary, I would expect that they would apologize, unlike members opposite who do things that are unparliamentary and don't apologize, be it off the record.

But I do have something on the record today, Madam Speaker. At the point noted, the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud, in what was a preamble, which is in itself a point of order, said the following, and I do have the benefit of the Blues: "It's a skill to be that arrogant and wrong at the same time." Now, the member went on here, as I have the Blues, to go on and ramble about other matters, but of course being out of order as a preamble.

This is certainly contravention of Standing Order 23(h), (i), and (j). This is not the first time that member has said these kinds of things in the Chamber that are unparliamentary, whether it's on the record or off the record. I could certainly go in the big green book and find lots of precedents where this is a point of order. I would suggest that that member, with it not being the first day on the job, should recognize that she is doing her constituents a grave disservice by acting in such a poor and disrespectful manner. I ask that that member apologize herself in this Chamber to all members for being so disrespectful both to us as members of this Chamber and to her constituents and all Albertans.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Official Opposition House Leader.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. The Government House Leader can make demands, but I'm afraid it is not his decision, and I would argue to you that this is not a point of order. The member did not say "the minister is." The member did not say "she is." The member did not say "you is" or "you are." She would never say "you is"; that was my error.

In fact, Madam Speaker, using the term "arrogant" has been found to not be a point of order on numerous occasions in this House, including December 5, 2022, and June 7, 2021. Other Speakers have found this not to be a point of order but have issued cautions. I do not think that this is a point of order, and I look forward to your ruling.

The Deputy Speaker: Maybe a new Speaker makes new rulings. No; that's just a Speaker joke. Oops. Don't make the joke. Don't sing the song. Don't wear the hat. Okay.

Hon. members, this certainly is different than the previous point of order, which has been dealt with and concluded, but you brought it up, and these words are on the record. While certainly not helpful language in this Chamber and I would really caution members to refrain from this kind of language in the future, I don't find this to be a point of order.

This matter is dealt with and concluded.

Mr. Schow: Point of order, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: You can't call a point of order . . .

Mr. Schow: On Standing Order 13(2). Yes, absolutely.

The Deputy Speaker: Oh, okay.

Point of Clarification

Mr. Schow: Madam Speaker, I don't believe that the explanation you've given is sufficient, with all due respect. I feel that this is a point of order. While the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud did not specifically say "the Minister of Education" or "you" or "that member" or whatever poor language that was used, it was clearly directed at the Minister of Education, and I will say that it was in the middle of a preamble.

2:50

The Deputy Speaker: My apologies, hon. member. Standing Order 13(2) is used to clarify, to ask for clarification of the Speaker's ruling. I did provide my remarks on why I made such a ruling. I think it is not helpful language in this Chamber. It wasn't specifically pointed. While in a loose way I would argue that it is – and it will not be tolerated in the future – it is not considered insulting language directed at a member in this Chamber, and that's why it is not a point of order at this time.

Hon. members, the daily Routine is now concluded.

Pursuant to Standing Order 59.01 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 main estimates. This afternoon the Standing Committee on Families and Communities will continue consideration of the estimates for the Ministry of Health in the Rocky Mountain Room, and the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation in the Grassland Room. Tomorrow morning the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Environment and Protected Areas in the Grassland Room, and the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Advanced Education in the Rocky Mountain Room.

The Assembly stands adjourned until 1:30 tomorrow afternoon.

[The Assembly adjourned at 2:52 p.m.]

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