



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, March 15, 2023

Day 19

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
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Reid, Roger W., Livingstone-Macleod (UC), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Party standings:

United Conservative: 60

New Democrat: 23

Independent: 2

Vacant: 2

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, March 15, 2023

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Lord, the God of righteousness and truth, grant to our King and to 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 ideas but, laying aside all private interest and prejudice, keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Visitors

The Speaker: Hon. members, this morning I had the absolute privilege to meet a very special guest to Alberta who's now joining us in the Speaker's gallery, His Excellency Kakha Imnadze, the ambassador of Georgia, on his and on the country of Georgia's very first official visit to the province of Alberta. We had a wonderful opportunity to discuss the future of Alberta-Georgia relations and know there is much work we can do together in our shared values of democracy and freedom. I invite the ambassador and his assistant minister-counsellor to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. the Member for Calgary-Peigan.

Ms Fir: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you my mom, Josie Fir. She regularly watches question period, so much so that when we argue, she'll end the argument by saying: I consider this matter dealt with and concluded. After the Speaker and the Member for Grande Prairie, I'm honoured to be my mom's third-favourite MLA. Mom, please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: I consider this matter dealt with and concluded.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud has a school group.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very proud to introduce through you and to all members of the Assembly the fantastic grade 6 class from Earl Buxton school and their teacher, Ms Kristine O'Driscoll. I had the honour of meeting this class when they came through the Legislature a couple of weeks ago, but, even better, I got to celebrate Carnival at their school just a few weeks ago, where they had taffy pulling, potato sack races, and tug-of-war. They're fantastic students, if I dare say, some of the best in the province. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore has a school group.

Mr. Nielsen: Well, thank you. It's a thrill to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly 41 of some of the brightest minds in the province of Alberta, the grade 6 class, from my home constituency and home neighbourhood, of Evansdale school. I ask you all now to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Mr. Williams: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am delighted to rise today to introduce to you and through you the young men and women participating in the United Conservative caucus internship program. They've come to serve our caucus, learn about our province's great tradition and institutions and rich heritage, and invest in our democracy, that we share. It's an immense pleasure to work with these young men and women. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the House.

Mr. Reid: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you some great folks from Scleroderma Canada. Please welcome Erin Stanhope, Scott Munnoch, and my good friend executive director John Malcolmson. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Legislature.

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

Mr. Getson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to the House two special guests from the Ukrainian Canadian Congress Alberta Provincial Council, Alyssa Stoddard, also known as Miss Alyssa to my kids and many of the other Shumka kids out there, and Orysia Boychuk, president of the organization. With their concern and advocacy for landing Ukrainian newcomers in Alberta, it's an honour and a privilege. Thank you so much for what you do, and we look forward to helping you more.

Members' Statements

School Transportation Funding

Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk: Mr. Speaker, through Budget 2023 our government is providing school authorities with an additional \$414 million over the next three years to support school transportation and ensure affordability and accessibility for all Alberta families. This will be a 32 per cent increase for the 2023-24 school year.

To help relieve inflation pressures, we have made significant investments in school transportation to ensure more students can take the bus, rural students have shorter rides, and families can save money. With these new changes 80,000 more students will be eligible for provincially funded school transportation. We will be saving parents over \$20 million by expanding provincial supports for bus services to 47,000 more students. We're also increasing eligibility for busing by 30,000 students through a reduction of the minimum distance they must live from their school to be eligible.

Budget 2023 student transportation funding will also continue to address costs and inflationary pressures faced by school authorities and bus contractors by providing funding for an additional 100 bus routes serving rural students. Rural ride times are expected to decrease significantly. Increased funding for driver training will support 1,250 drivers, including 350 new drivers, and increase the driver workforce by 6 per cent. Alberta's government is also continuing the fuel price contingency program for the 2023-24 school year. To date this program has saved school authorities \$16.5 million in the current school year, '22-23, and is projected to save them a total of \$23.5 million in the upcoming school year.

Mr. Speaker, more than 300,000 Alberta students and their families rely on transportation services to and from school every day. The investments we are making now will benefit Alberta families today, tomorrow, and for many years to come.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Budget 2023

Ms Phillips: Mr. Speaker, this budget does not inspire confidence in accountability, transparency, or common sense, and I must admit that I'm a little surprised. While the Premier and I don't agree on much, I do remember her last time in this Chamber, where she was very concerned with these principles that are seemingly being thrown aside in this budget. Would as a member that Premier of 2012 or 2014 have stood by while an out-of-touch PC government created a potentially multibillion-dollar slush fund right before an election, or would she have agreed that a Premier should give herself the ability, right before an election, to spend potentially billions? The answer to that is: I don't think so.

But that is exactly what is happening in this budget. The government's slush fund, which, if enacted, gives the government the ability to spend money that they are projected to have on, scare quotes, one-time projects – and these are scary quotes – or, quote, emerging priorities: that is a polite way of saying “electioneering.” The budget has \$3 million to advertise itself. It has \$30 million for the embarrassing war room. This is undemocratic, unaccountable, in short, the UCP in its truest form.

But Albertans have come to expect these sorts of tricks from the government. They know they will promise one thing and do the exact opposite after the election. Albertans know that this budget is not about supporting them. It is for a government that is increasingly desperate in its attempt to win back the trust of Albertans after violating it time and time and time and time again. Albertans do not trust this government or this Premier, and they know that if they want a government they can trust, they can elect an Alberta NDP government on May 29.

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

UCP and NDP Government Records

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This United Conservative government is in tune to the needs of Albertans, and we strive to bring opportunities to all parts of our stunning province. We are focused on growth and targeted funding. We are motivated to assist Albertans through extraordinary periods of high inflation. We are determined to bring forward better health care deliveries and outcomes and expand supports for mental health and addictions.

Albertans elected us in 2019 to fix the problems that the NDP let slide. Albertans trusted us to be the guiding light to new potential. They trusted us to be their representatives for Alberta but also for Canada. Albertans are confident that we have their best interests in mind.

The same cannot be said for the Official Opposition, Mr. Speaker. The NDP has vigorously promoted the carbon tax from day one, and at a time of real financial difficulties they are one hundred per cent in support of the federal government further raising the carbon tax in April. This increase will add an additional 14 cents per litre for Albertans at the pumps.

As our United Conservative government applied for the affordability action plan to help alleviate stress and financial concerns for Albertans, the NDP still wants to make life more unaffordable for everyone. The NDP brought in the largest tax increase in Alberta's history when they were in government, and they would surely do it again, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's economy was struggling when the NDP was elected, but what was their solution to a struggling economy and high unemployment? They chose to hit employers with a 20 per cent tax increase. They introduced a provincial carbon tax that raised the costs of all goods and services, and they drove away important businesses and investors.

The NDP's mismanagement greatly affected our province, Mr. Speaker, but I am proud to say that this UCP government has brought Alberta back on track, and we're just getting started.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River.

1:40

Royal Canadian Legion

Mr. Williams: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today on a crossparty homage to the Royal Canadian Legion. I know that many members of this Chamber are also members of the Royal Canadian Legion, and so am I. Very happily, I was given this gift today of a tie, a Legion tie, from Legion 62, the one of which I'm a member. I am a member because my father was a member. My grandfather was a serviceman. You can be a member of the Canadian Legion if you are a service member or not, if your family is a service member or not. It's welcome to all, and there are thousands upon thousands of Albertans that are.

The history of the Legion as an institution runs deep. In fact, it's crosspartisan, Mr. Speaker, because the CCF, on July 31, 1932, the precursor to the NDP, was founded at the Legion 1 hall in Calgary, a great part of prairie populism as a tradition that we hold here in Canada and Alberta and the prairies.

You can host your Christmas supper at the Legion, your perogy dinners at the Legion. You can do every single community event you can imagine. Mr. Speaker, I know my constituency office and my family book every single year as often as we can.

A thank you to all the servicemen and -women for all the work that they have done protecting our country, keeping us strong and free.

Thank you to everyone who is a Legion member for the work that they have done making sure that that institution is still a place where you can have your turkey and perogy dinners, where you can go to meat draws, which was my childhood with my father and grandfather coming up together. The meat draw is every single Saturday afternoon, something I still participate in at the Peace River Legion all the time.

To everyone: thank you very much for your service if you're military members. Thank you to everyone who is a Legion member. Cheers to you, Mr. Speaker.

To the Canadian Legion: God bless.

The Speaker: While I share your support for the Legion, I don't share your commitment to a prop inside the Assembly.

Affordability Plan

Mr. Feehan: Mr. Speaker, for weeks Albertans have had to listen to the UCP wax poetic about their so-called affordability plan. They spent a lot of taxpayer dollars advertising it online and in the mail, but there's an irony here. The UCP plan is just the UCP reversing some of their own bad decisions, decisions that raised the costs on each and every Albertan and made them pay more. Four years and four big mistakes: let me tell you about them.

The UCP slashed AISH and seniors' benefits, saying that the cuts were, quote, not onerous, but these cuts were onerous. They hurt Albertans. Now the same team that caused the pain wants credit for reindexing them. I don't think so. By deindexing personal income taxes, the government cost Albertans over \$600 million, money that should have stayed in Albertans' pockets. Ironically, the government that took that money away wants credit for giving it back.

Here's another. The UCP took the cap off car insurance premiums at the behest of their lobbyist friends, and you know what, Mr. Speaker? Albertans were side-swiped, driven into the ditch by

double-digit premium hikes of, in some cases, more than 30 per cent. Now this government wants credit for a fake freeze even as insurance premiums are spiking by 16 per cent now. The hypocrisy is astounding.

Here's another example. Our Alberta NDP government put a cap on utilities. One of the first things the UCP did was remove that price protection. Now the RRO price is triple the protected price, and the UCP wants credit for offering payday loans that come due after the election.

Mr. Speaker, on all these matters – benefits, income tax, insurance, utilities – the UCP is the cause of the problem, not the solution. Albertans will have the chance to rectify this on May 29.

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

UCP and NDP Government Records

Mr. Yaseen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Looking back at the 2019 budget address, our government and Albertans had three main priorities: getting back to work, making life better, and standing up for our province. Our government took those priorities seriously. Here is a quick high-level comparison of Alberta then and Alberta now.

In 2019 the unemployment rate was 7.3 per cent, the corporate tax rate was 12 per cent, the budget deficit was over \$12 billion, and the provincial carbon tax was in effect. When the NDP left office, we were coming out of a four-year period with multiple credit downgrades, a shrinking private sector, 97 tax and fee increases, and \$64 billion in debt. In 2019 Albertans were worrying for their future and for their province.

Four years later, Mr. Speaker, and despite two years of a global pandemic, Alberta's unemployment rate now is at 5.8 per cent, with over 200,000 jobs created. The corporate tax rate is the lowest in the country, at 8 per cent, bringing \$400 million more in revenue than at 12 per cent. Last year's venture capital broke records at \$729 million, with more expected in 2023. We don't have a provincial tax. We have a balanced budget with a \$2.5 billion surplus. We are providing an increase of \$100 million over the next three years for the film and television tax credit. Under our government more than 119,000 private-sector jobs have been created. We have the lowest tax of any province, and our Finance minister just paid off all the debt that matured in 2022.

Banks are forecasting that Alberta's economy will lead Canada over the next two years, Mr. Speaker. Alberta is pulling through to become stronger and better than when we first came into office. We are leading the nation with economic growth and endless potential. Thousands of people are moving into Alberta every month from across the country, around the world, including many newcomers. That's why Alberta's best days are ahead under another UCP government. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order.

Budget 2023

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, I was honoured to work with this Finance minister to develop the largest capital plan in Alberta's history. Together we invested about \$30 billion over four years to stimulate and diversify Alberta's economy. This year's budget is a testament to the strong fiscal management the UCP has brought to our great province. Budget '23 is investing over half a billion dollars in Calgary LRT projects, nearly half a billion dollars to upgrade Deerfoot Trail, over a quarter billion dollars to protect communities on the Elbow River, and \$166 million towards the cancer centre.

Additionally, the Alberta government is increasing health care spending by nearly \$3 billion, the Education budget by nearly half a billion, and the Advanced Education budget by nearly \$200 million compared to last year. Hundreds of millions of dollars in new investment will create 3,400 more health care training spots in postsecondaries, 100 new residency spots for doctors, and 120 new spots for physician training at Alberta universities, a 34 per cent increase.

Budget 2023 represents a monumental investment in Alberta's future and only exists because of the strong fiscal management this UCP government has produced over these past years despite COVID-19. This budget will continue to provide affordability relief to all Albertans. Mr. Speaker, facts matter. Numbers don't lie. I would encourage all Albertans to look at all the good investments in this new Budget 2023. Don't fall for fearmongering. The NDP would have borrowed and spent and mortgaged our children's future while the UCP has created wealth, prosperity, and jobs for future generations.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The Leader of His Majesty's Loyal Opposition has the call.

Canada Pension Plan

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, all Albertans deserve a secure retirement with strong pensions they can count on, but repeatedly the UCP has meddled in pensions, and now this Premier is threatening their CPP. Last year she said, and I quote: when you look at the CPP alone, that is clearly going to pay for a new Alberta provincial police force or collecting our personal income tax. On this side we know that Albertans' retirements should never be used to fund this Premier's bad ideas. Will the Premier stand today and commit to never withdrawing Alberta from the Canada pension plan?

1:50

Ms Smith: I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that a hundred per cent of the premiums that are collected for pension will always, one hundred per cent go to support pensions. What we are looking at on this side is something that we heard from the Fair Deal Panel discussions all over Alberta. Albertans wanted us to look at what would happen if we had our own Alberta pension plan. We have done a report, but it's a couple of years old. The company, LifeWorks, that did the report wanted to update it with new information, so we're awaiting that information. When it's available, it will be released.

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, Albertans didn't ask for this at all. Here's Leah from Edmonton: the Premier's plan is reckless and ill advised; it puts seniors who rely on their CPP in jeopardy. Here's Karen from Calgary: the pension I paid into for 40 years is not something that belongs to the UCP. And Alex from Devon says: this is a ruse for the UCP to get their hands on the personal savings of Albertans; CPP is not being mismanaged; if you want to know what Albertans believe, then have a referendum. I agree with Alex. If the Premier agrees, too, will she agree to hold a referendum during this spring election?

Ms Smith: I agree with Alex, too. There should be a referendum if there is going to be any change to the pension, and we have committed that there would be. But it's a little premature to be talking about that since we don't have the report and we haven't done the public consultation and we haven't heard from Albertans

whether they want us to proceed to a referendum. I don't know why the members opposite didn't participate in the province-wide hearings that took place with the Fair Deal Panel, because we did hear from Albertans that we should look into it, and that's what we're doing.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, we actually know that the UCP has already received part 1 of the report on gambling with Alberta's CPP, and the real thing is that they're just scared to release it before the election. It's a deeply unpopular idea. They know it, so they're hiding it. In contrast, Alberta's NDP will release our own report tomorrow, a real commitment that we will stay in CPP and other good ideas as well. Now, while we want Albertans to see our proposals, this Premier can't say the same. If she believes in her plan, why is she so scared to show it to Albertans before the election?

Ms Smith: You know, Mr. Speaker, as I've said before, the initial report looks very promising. It looks like not only would we be able to substantially decrease the premiums that Albertans pay, but we would also be able to substantially increase the amount that we give to each senior in benefits. We want to just make sure that we've got the right information based on updated figures because things have changed on the rates and the contributions and the overcontribution of Albertans. That report, we've been told, by LifeWorks won't be available till May, so as soon as it's available, we'll release it and have a discussion.

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

Ms Notley: What the Premier wants is to hide this issue from Albertans.

Prescription Contraception Coverage Policy

Ms Notley: Now, on a different issue, quote: I don't see the need; I won't prejudge what drugs need to be covered. And another quote: we let private insurance take the lead. For a week now this Premier has been asked repeatedly about a good health care policy that would help tens of thousands of Alberta women, universal contraceptive coverage at no cost. Instead of supporting women's health care, this Premier has come up with every excuse in the book. I can't wait to hear today's. Once again, why won't this Premier help Alberta women afford the cost of birth control?

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, we just have a different approach. We know that there is coverage that is available in private insurance plans as well as public insurance plans. Alberta Blue Cross is available not only for low-income individuals through the various programs that we offer; our seniors also have access to these programs. We have a nongroup program that's available for anybody to be able to sign up so that they can get the full range of pharmaceuticals that they might need as opposed to just singling out this one particular one. So anybody who lacks coverage should call Alberta Blue Cross.

Ms Notley: Well, once again, Mr. Speaker, the Premier continues her full-throated defence of the idea that people should pay for their health care out of pocket. We did look at what Blue Cross costs and what the coverage costs. A 28-year-old woman with no health conditions and no dependants will pay \$60 a month, and even then she will only get 70 per cent coverage. On what planet does the Premier think the choice to pay more is one that any Alberta woman is remotely interested in accepting?

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, as I said, we've got support in our system to have both private insurance and public insurance when it comes to pharmaceuticals. The reason we do that, quite frankly, is so that we can get a broader range of drugs covered, because the private formularies often accept the new drugs faster than public formularies when you look at places where they don't have private insurance. We want to make sure that the full range of coverage for all pharmaceuticals is available in Alberta, and that's the reason why we want to continue to support choice.

Ms Notley: Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, the Premier's answers have even been more ridiculous. On Monday the Premier said, "The . . . things that we hear should be covered are things like the diabetes pumps." Now, while I'm glad the UCP finally figured out that diabetes pumps should be covered, those pumps do not prevent pregnancies. The Premier says that she's going to let private insurance take the lead, the total opposite of leadership. Why should Albertans elect a Premier who lets private insurance companies, who have a profit motive, decide the kind of health care that people will have universal access to? Why?

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, we support women's health in a number of different ways. We provide grant funding to community-based organizations in Grande Prairie, Edmonton, Red Deer, Calgary, Medicine Hat to support vulnerable women, including those who are pregnant, postpartum, and want contraception. We also have a funding commitment for current projects under \$2 million annually to support 350 women and infants that are supported each year. We've got a number of programs offering culturally sensitive maternity care, including Indigenous Births of Alberta and Juniper Midwives, which provide services that support Indigenous women and families. We support women's health.

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

Public Safety and 2SLGBTQQIA-plus Rights

Member Irwin: Calgary public library has partnered with Calgary Pride for the past five years to host reading with royalty. These are family-friendly events that celebrate diversity, promote inclusion, and spark the imagination by telling stories and singing songs. But this year the library was forced to postpone reading with royalty because a small number of people chose to harass children and families and spew hate against fabulous Alberta drag queens. My question is a simple one: will the Premier join me in condemning these acts of bigotry?

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, Alberta is committed to the protection of children, diversity, parental choice, and the right to peaceful protest. Any event where children are present should be age appropriate. My understanding of the reading time events, like the one in Calgary, is that they are kept age appropriate and minors attending them have the consent of their parents. We respect parental choice being exercised by minors that are in attendance. We also believe in the right to peaceful protest as long as people are doing it within the bounds of the law.

Member Irwin: While this Premier and this UCP did nothing, the city of Calgary took action. Yesterday council passed a bylaw aimed at preventing harassment of people entering or leaving public libraries or recreation centres by setting up a bubble zone of 100 metres. It's so sad that they even needed to do this, but here we are. The last time we talked about bubble zones in this building, that time in relation to abortion clinics, the UCP actually went and hid

in the bathrooms. Does the Premier support the new city of Calgary bylaws?

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, we are just hearing about the new bylaw in the city of Calgary, and we know that municipalities are responsible for creating bylaws. I would encourage anyone who is concerned about this to reach out to their councillor and to the mayor's office to express their view.

In the meantime I do want to tell the members opposite what we have done to support the city of Calgary, because what we hear from the city of Calgary is that citizens are worried about public safety. It's why we have our sheriffs embedded with Calgary police officers, addressing the issue of public disorder and making sure that the streets are safe.

Member Irwin: When someone shows you who they are, believe them. This is the same UCP government that's the first and only government in Canada to remove protections for the 2SLGBTQ-plus community. That's right. This is the first provincial government in Canada to actually roll back rights, when they removed legal privacy protections and they limited the right for Alberta students to form GSAs in schools. This was a clear demonstration that the UCP is willing to put 2SLGBTQ-plus youth in danger. Does the Premier regret her predecessor's attack on young Albertans, and if so, what tangible steps is she going to take to fix that terrible relationship she has with the . . .

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

2:00

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, I really object to the way the members opposite try to divide people when we are united on the issue of protecting our students and protecting members of the LGBTQ-plus community. Our government has the most comprehensive . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Ms Smith: Our government has the most comprehensive statutory protections for LGBTQ-plus students in Canada. Membership in any student organization, including GSAs, is protected under Alberta's robust privacy legislation. I would ask for an apology from the members opposite for suggesting otherwise. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

Publicly Funded Health Care

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The current Premier wants Albertans to pay out of pocket for the health care they need. We know this because she keeps saying so. She's on the record saying she wants Albertans to get used to paying for health care, even for taking their kids to the family doctor. Why, as recently as yesterday she told this House that she wants insurance companies to take the lead on what prescriptions and treatments are covered. That sounds like American-style health care. Why does the Premier want to hand over Albertans' health care to her friends in big insurance?

Ms Smith: I don't know, Mr. Speaker. They had four years to institute a public insurance plan like the one they're asking us to do. Why didn't they do it? There's a reason they didn't do it; it's because we end up with better coverage when you have a mix of public and private. Well, again, I mean, the members had the opportunity to do it. They chose not to, so I don't know why

anybody would believe, now that they're campaigning, that they would do something different than what they did in government. They're trying to make that point on a number of different cases. Any time I have spoken about people paying out of pocket, what I have said is health spending accounts, which is what every member in this Legislature enjoys.

Mr. Shepherd: Mr. Speaker, what the Premier said was: seeing a family doctor; is that something government really has to pay for? That's on the record. Alberta New Democrats believe that Albertans should take the lead on their health care in consultation with their family doctor. That's why an Alberta NDP government will provide universal coverage for prescription contraception, so that every single Albertan who needs that medication can get it. Now, the Premier has heard story after story from Albertans telling her how life changing that policy would be. Each time she says that Albertans should pay out of pocket instead, which means many people simply cannot get the care they need. Why is this Premier working for big insurance instead of Albertans?

Ms Smith: I just don't know how the members opposite can sit here, having taxpayers pay \$950 every year, year after year, for their health spending account to cover the things that are not covered by insurance and then deny that to taxpayers. Why do they think that taxpayers should pay for their benefit and for us not to extend that benefit to all taxpayers? That's what the health spending account is all about. That's part of the reason why I've asked our Minister of Technology and Innovation to scope it out, so that we can create a little bit of parity. I personally think that taxpayers deserve to have the same benefits as the politicians they're paying for.

Mr. Shepherd: Mr. Speaker, I don't know how this Premier can sit here and say that she should give \$20 billion dollars away to her friends and donors in profitable oil and gas companies when Albertans are having to pay out of pocket for contraception.

I'm so proud that Alberta NDP plan to connect a million Albertans with a family doctor and a family health team. After the UCP chased family doctors out of the province, we will welcome them back in. We will get Albertans the care they need when they need it, where they need it: close to home. We will take the pressure off our ambulances and hospitals and end the UCP's chaos in health care because that's what happens when Albertans lead and not the Premier's friends in insurance.

Ms Smith: I didn't hear a question in that, Mr. Speaker.

Agrifood Industry in Southern Alberta

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, two years ago our UCP government embarked on an ambitious project to build a supercluster of agrifood processors in the corridor between Lethbridge and Medicine Hat. We recognize the need for our government to invest in the infrastructure to make this happen, so we announced the twinning of highway 3. This will open more farmland to feed these agrifood companies as they grow. To the Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors: how valuable will these investments be to Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, and all the communities in between?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors.

Mr. Dreeshen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for that very important question and all the work that he's done to advocate for southern Alberta, whether it be irrigation or the twinning of highway 3. Budget '23 actually has \$94 million in

it committed to twin highway 3 between Taber and Burdett. In addition to that, in southern Alberta there are 65 projects totalling over \$200 million that's going to not only help families in southern Alberta get home and get to work safely but also unleash economic development in southern Alberta, whether that's food manufacturing or oil and gas and so many more industries.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Monday McCain Foods announced that they would be making the largest investment in their 65 years of operation, and given that this investment will amount to \$600 million and create 260 new jobs in my riding, can the minister let the Assembly know if McCain's decision had anything to do with the government's business-friendly approach and our ability to renew the Alberta advantage?

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

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. I have to say, too: thank you to that member for his advocacy. This is an important file to that member. Work well done.

From McCain Foods' president and CEO: "The development in Alberta marks our largest global investment in our 65-year history," creating 260 jobs, two new production lines, one for french fries, one for potato specialty products. What I can assure you is that this investment, in conversations with McCain over the last year, would not have been possible without our investment in the irrigation system in the south. They needed the land. They needed the . . .

The Speaker: The hon. the Member for Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that Alberta boasts 70 per cent of Canada's irrigated land, making southern Alberta internationally recognized as a leader in the production of high-quality food, and given that under this government the quarter between Lethbridge and Medicine Hat will see an increase of another 230,000 irrigated acres and given that growing our agrifood processing sector creates more opportunities for primary producers while supporting job creation in rural communities, again to the same minister: what else is this government doing to keep Alberta feeding our families, Canada, and the world?

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

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is diversification of the economy, folks. This is playing to our strengths. AIDA, Alberta Irrigation Districts Association, studies show that \$3.56 comes back to the province for every dollar invested in irrigation. This is just a piece of that. Many of you are familiar now with our agriprocessing tax credit, which hopefully will be passed by the House here very shortly. We brought in \$1.4 billion in investment and 2,000 jobs last term; next term, 9,000 jobs and \$5 billion.

Morinville Clinic X-ray Machine

Ms Renaud: Mr. Speaker, All Albertans should have access to health care where and when they need it, but the Morinville clinic has been without a functional X-ray machine since February of 2020, when it broke down. Instead of doing the right thing and replacing it, AHS announced last January that X-ray services in Morinville would be permanently closed. Alberta's NDP is now promising to restore this important service if elected. To the Health minister: why did he let the health care needs of thousands of

Albertans fall through the cracks because of one broken X-ray machine?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Mr. Copping: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. The health and well-being of all Albertans and Albertans outside of our big cities is important to us. In fact, that's why we are investing record numbers of dollars in terms of the budget and record amounts in terms of the capital. We recognize that in being able to provide the services, not only do you need the equipment, but you need all of the supports, including the people, to do that. We are continuing to assess the viability of maintaining that service and making sure that we have all the wraparound resources to be able to do that before we actually make the decision to spend the capital.

Ms Renaud: Mr. Speaker, given that when this X-ray machine broke down, the mayors of Morinville and Bon Accord wrote to the Minister of Health and given that they wrote how the machine was, and I quote, a valuable asset for residents in Morinville, Sturgeon county as well as members of Alexander First Nation and given that the Health minister's totally inadequate response was that the machine had reached the end of its life and that's that, will the Minister of Health admit that it's his government at the end of its life and also needs to be replaced ASAP?

2:10

Mr. Copping: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated before, we are investing record amounts of capital infrastructure as part of Budget 2023 on top of the record amounts that we actually invested last year. This includes not only infrastructure for new buildings, but this includes infrastructure for new equipment across the entire province, in rural areas. We understand that we need the technology, but it's not just about the technology; it's about also ensuring that all the supports around that technology show we can continue to provide the service. We are continuing to do our analysis on this, and I look forward to sharing more soon.

Ms Renaud: Given that Morinville-St. Albert is represented by a UCP MLA who clearly can't get the job done and given that the minister ignored the mayors, ignored the health needs of Albertans and given the minister goes on TV every day and claims the health care crisis is over and we're making great progress, how does the minister expect Albertans to believe the government can fix all of health care if he can't fix one broken X-ray machine?

Mr. Copping: Mr. Speaker, as the hon. members across the way know, there are challenges in our health care system. This is not only affecting Alberta, but it's affecting the entire country, all of the First World. We are taking action and responsible action to invest to expand the capacity in our health care system, not only investing in people, in terms of hiring more people, but investing more money on the expense side and on the capital side. We know that when you actually invest in a piece of equipment, you need to have all of the support services around that to be able to provide the services. We continue to provide the services for people in Edmonton and the Morinville area, and we'll keep doing that.

Child Care Cost-control Framework

Ms Pancholi: The UCP's new plan for child care means parents won't ever be paying only \$10 a day for child care; they'll have to pay extra fees for things that should be part of all quality child care programs, and the parents who can't afford those extra fees will see

their children left out. The for-profit and nonprofit operators that I've spoken to are worried that the UCP will keep underfunding them so they won't be able to provide the things that this government doesn't think are essential for quality child care, like food or activities. Does the minister really think that denying children food and activities in their child care program will actually enhance the quality of child care in Alberta?

Mr. Amery: Mr. Speaker, it's astonishing that the member opposite continues with this narrative, but on this side of the House we prefer to reject the notions of distraction and misinformation. We are engaging in a province-wide engagement session with all operators in this province to ensure that we receive their input on the implementation details of the cost-control framework. We're engaging with parents as well and will continue to do so so that we get the information to get this right.

Ms Pancholi: Given that to date the minister hasn't made any effort to tell parents about his plans to make them pay more and they're excluded from consultations impacting their own children's care and early learning opportunities and given that the minister is probably desperate not to let parents know that they will be paying way more for child care than he promised, especially during an affordability crisis and right before an election, does the minister want to use this opportunity now to come clean to parents about his plans to increase their fees for child care and tell them how much more he expects they'll be paying?

Mr. Amery: Mr. Speaker, unlike the members opposite, we are listening to our operators in this province, and we are listening to parents in this province. While the NDP prefers to fearmonger about child care in this province, we are working diligently to engage with all of the relevant stakeholders to receive their input. We will implement a system that is affordable and accessible and safe for all parents and all children in this province.

Ms Pancholi: Given that the UCP is talking about expanding school nutrition programs but at the same time they want to force child care operators to charge extra fees to feed their children in their care and given that for too many families a nutritious meal at their daycare or their day home may be the only healthy meal they get in a day and given that the minister could commit right now that operators will receive the funding they need to avoid charging fees for essentials, like meals and snacks, will the minister stand up right now and tell parents that they won't have to pay more for food and that the UCP will fund operators to provide it at no extra cost to parents? The Alberta NDP understands that nutrition is a part of quality child care.

Mr. Amery: Mr. Speaker, I want to make it absolutely clear to the members opposite but more importantly to all Albertans in this province that we will develop a framework that is equitable. It will assist and it will provide affordable and equal child care to all of the children in this province. I want to make it absolutely clear that we reject the idea of a tiered system, and the only tiered system that we know about is the failed NDP pilot project, the \$25-a-day program that failed children and parents all across this province. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain is next.

Federal-provincial Relations

Mr. Turton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta has always been and continues to be a proud member of the Canadian Confederation. As

the leader in entrepreneurship, technology, energy, and so much more, our province has a strong and prosperous future within Canada. Now, despite Alberta's role as a major economic driver, job creator, and innovator, our strong resource sectors, energy sectors, and entrepreneurs have been under attack by the federal government. Given that many Albertans are eager to remain a part of Canada while growing and promoting our leading industries, to the Premier: how can Alberta continue to assert its own interests while remaining a proud member of Canada?

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier has risen.

Ms Smith: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the things, I think, about drawing boundaries with the federal government is that it allowed for us to have collaboration in other areas. There are some things we're going to fight – that's for sure – but we were able to get a health care deal with the federal government that brings \$518 million more to be able to support primary care and to be able to support mental health and addiction and be able to support some more reporting to the Canadian Institute for Health Information. I noticed that the minister of seniors, community, and social supports scored a bit of a victory as well in getting – I'm going to have to answer that on the next one.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain.

Mr. Turton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the Premier for her answer and strong defence of Alberta's interests. Given that the federal government, supported by the NDP, aims to introduce the just transition bill by the summer of 2023 and given that there's a growing concern regarding continued investment attraction and support for entrepreneurship in Alberta and given that there will be strong demand for Alberta energy for decades to come, to the Premier: what exactly is our government fighting for when it comes to defending and supporting Alberta's energy sector within a united Canada?

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know the members opposite supported the just transition, which just transitioned our coal workers completely out of jobs, and they were supportive of the just transition for oil and natural gas workers, too, until we raised a fuss and said: absolutely no way. The federal government has backed down on that, which I think is good, but we still have to fight them on a couple of other things. Number one, we have to make sure that clean electricity regs do not come through that would prevent us from adding natural gas to our power grid. We also have to make sure that the emissions reduction plan does not end up phasing out our energy sector. They want to bring through an emissions cap of 42 per cent on oil and gas by 2030, and that's not on.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Turton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the Premier for her answer. Given that there are many areas in which we are productively working with the federal government and given that Alberta plans on continuing to be a leader under Confederation and given that our government has committed to standing up for Albertan workers and industries, to the Premier: how are you planning to work and negotiate successfully with the federal government to ensure we can support Alberta's interests and industries?

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Ms Smith: All right. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the things I was happy to see in their newly named sustainable jobs plan is the recognition that Alberta is going to be a leader in hydrogen, that Alberta is going to be a leader in carbon capture, and I was pleased to see that our neighbour on the coast, B.C. Premier David Eby, just signed a new deal on LNG development with the Haisla Nation for the expansion of the Cedar LNG export proposal. These are the kinds of things that we can work on collaboratively with our partner in British Columbia. We just have to get the federal government onboard and understanding that the more LNG we export to the world, the more it will reduce global emissions, and that will achieve both of our targets.

Premier's Office Staff

Ms Ganley: Before being elected, the Premier was pushing for a \$20 billion giveaway to a small number of delinquent companies to clean up their wells, something they're already obligated to do. The Premier said that she loved the idea after having a lobbyist named Kris Kinnear on her podcast. Now Mr. Kinnear works in the Premier's office implementing the \$20 billion handout while being listed as a corporate director and lobbyist of the group pushing for the giveaway. Does the Premier fail to understand the appearance of conflict in a lobbyist shovelling Albertans' money to his clients?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Energy.

Mr. Guthrie: Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the Premier said during estimates yesterday when the member asked these questions, Mr. Kinnear resigned his position before accepting his role in the Premier's office. Mr. Kinnear has no personal or financial gain of any kind under any program that is under discussion or engagement. There is nothing to see here.

Ms Ganley: Given that the Premier also claimed that Mr. Kinnear had resigned as a director of the organization SAEN – but the corporate records indicate otherwise – and given that yesterday in estimates the Premier claimed that this was just a paperwork issue and given that we are talking about \$20 billion of Albertans' money, does the Energy minister agree this conflict of interest is okay, or is he just going to plead the just incompetence defence as well?

2:20

Mr. Guthrie: Mr. Speaker, I'll reiterate again since the members across are having difficulty comprehending the facts. Mr. Kinnear had resigned from his previous positions before accepting any role within the Premier's office. There is no conflict of interest.

Ms Ganley: Mr. Speaker, given that filing that paperwork is pretty easy and given that Mr. Kinnear also worked on the Premier's campaign team and given that the other director of SAEN is now running a third-party attack machine and is fund raising off companies who stand to benefit from this \$20 billion handout and given that the Premier refuses to scrap this terrible program despite opposition from across Alberta, will the Energy minister admit this is nothing but a scheme to give a fat payday to a small number of bad actors and insiders at the expense of hard-working Albertans?

Mr. Guthrie: Mr. Speaker, the Premier was clear yesterday about Mr. Kinnear and his position, and he was vetted by the Ethics Commissioner to work inside the Premier's office. This NDP critic herself, who claims to stand for the energy sector, is publicly known as an anti oil and gas activist, one who protested against oil sands producers, protested against pipelines, protested and campaigned in

favour of a tanker ban, which stranded oil and gas assets, to block market access. It's hard to take an opposition like this seriously.

Ms Gray: Point of order.

The Speaker: A point of order is noted at 2:22.

The hon. the Member for Edmonton-Manning and Deputy Opposition House Leader.

Beef Prices

Ms Sweet: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The price of beef has almost doubled at the grocery store over the last two years, but Alberta ranchers aren't seeing the benefit. Last summer I asked the minister why, and he said that he didn't know, but there was going to be a report. Well, it's nine months later, and the beef competitiveness report is in, but the answers aren't. To the minister of agriculture. Albertans are paying almost twice as much for beef. Why aren't Alberta ranchers seeing the benefit? Where is the money?

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

Mr. Horner: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think it's funny that she asked me a question about beef and I said that I didn't know. I think that is kind of humorous.

I would just say that it is very timely. The beef industry competitiveness study just went live yesterday, a joint study that we helped fund – and the federal government – with Alberta Beef Producers, with the Canadian Cattle Association, with the Alberta Cattle Feeders' Association. Check it out on the Alberta Beef Producers' website. I've already called the meeting for April, which I said I would do, with the industry to talk about next steps.

Ms Sweet: Given that, clearly, the minister doesn't know and given that one of the findings in the report was that – and I quote – extension supports for small processors from the government have declined, which acts as a barrier to new entrants into the industry, but given that when I asked the minister about reduced extension services during estimates, he advised that our system was “the most robust . . . in the country” and given that these can't both be true, is the minister wrong, or is the beef report wrong?

Mr. Horner: What I said during estimates was that we had bolstered our extension services through new funding to both the agricultural research associations and our ag service boards, a pretty positive story if you talk to people within the agriculture sector.

I would also point to our processing possibilities in this province, and I would point to the fact that the reason we did that announcement at Harmony Beef is because meat processors will definitely be able to use the agriprocessing tax credit. We know we want more hook space, more processing potential in this province, and this is one way we can get it. This is why Saskatchewan will also be attending that meeting.

Ms Sweet: Well, given, then, that I guess the minister is saying that the report is wrong and given that I'm talking about Alberta beef in the Alberta Legislature with the Alberta minister of agriculture and given that I am hearing concerns both from Alberta ranchers and beef producers about why they aren't seeing a benefit from the higher costs and from Alberta families who can't afford to buy beef, why can't the minister give Albertans a real answer on why they won't be able to afford to have their friends over for a barbecue this summer?

Mr. Horner: Well, I think the carbon tax would be a great place to start, and maybe you could ask your whole team to support Bill C-234, which is currently on third reading. You know, maybe that would be a good place to start, adding extra taxes when there isn't an alternative on the landscape for ag producers. I think that would be great. I would also point to the fact that beef prices currently are at a historic high and trending higher. It's great news. It is great news for ranchers, that have been through such a terrible time. This is how it usually works. It's a 10-year cycle; three years of those definitely benefit the producers and the feeders.

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

Federal Rent Supplement and AISH Recipients

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just a few months ago the federal government announced a plan that would provide \$500 to millions of Canadian households on top of their rent, helping them with today's inflationary crisis. Unfortunately, the plan is leaving out nearly 73,000 Albertans living with disabilities because of the provincial funding provided to these incredible Albertans each month through AISH. To the minister: can you please explain to us what you've done to try and help fix this situation, especially the discriminatory actions from the federal government?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services.

Mr. Jeremy Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for her question as well as her strong advocacy for the disability community here in Alberta. I share her great disappointment for this gross overlook of Albertans with disabilities. Actually, Albertans with disabilities are the only Canadians that were left out of this. Albertans were left out, once again, because of the federal government's failure to consult Albertans, at the end of the day. When I heard about this, I immediately sent a letter to the minister and organized meetings with several federal cabinet ministers to advocate on behalf of Albertans with disabilities, and I'm hoping that they will overturn this gross oversight.

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

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the government has advocated for change of this policy since December of last year and given that the federal program is disproportionately impacting those in the disability community – and I was so grateful that the government reindexed AISH to inflation and increased payments to AISH clients – and given that this federal policy is failing tens of thousands of Albertans who are most in need, can the minister tell the House what he's heard from our partners, from families, the opposition, and those directly impacted by this discriminatory oversight?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services.

Mr. Jeremy Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and again to the member for the question. You know, I've talked to lots of people within the disability community and the broader community who share our great disappointment with this oversight of Albertans. The fact that Alberta was left out once again and that again the federal government failed to consult: I'm going to hope that that's what it was, that it was a failure to consult and just a gross oversight that left 70,000-plus Albertans out of this. We will continue to push back on the federal government to make sure that we are heard, at

the end of the day. Again, I've had some productive meetings with federal ministers, who I hope will join me in advocating for the disability community here.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the federal government has refused to support Alberta's disability community – and this is 73,000 individuals in Alberta without supports that they deserve – and given our government's new budget commitments to those living with disabilities, can the minister please explain to the House why the federal government didn't consult to align along with our programs?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Jeremy Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, it's a question I don't know the answer to. I will continue to press the federal ministers to figure out why Albertans weren't included in this, at the end of the day, and to push to make sure that Albertans get a fair share.

But there's an important question to be asked here as well about the members opposite and why they have failed to stand up on this issue, especially when the leader, Jagmeet Singh, is spiking the ball right now, claiming to be the architect for this program. Did he know that Albertans were going to be left out, and why has he not advocated and why have they not made a stronger voice, a louder voice for Albertans with disability on this file?

Innisfail Hospital Ambulance Bay

Mr. Dach: Last October the Innisfail health centre auxiliary celebrated its 50th anniversary. The auxiliary's president and vice-president appeared before the town council to appeal for help to widen an undersized ambulance bay door that forces patients to be off-loaded outside in all weather conditions. It costs \$45,000 to widen the door, and the auxiliary has already raised \$25,000, including, of all things, \$10,000 from a 50/50 raffle. Why is the Minister of Infrastructure forcing the people of Innisfail to fund raise to address basic safety issues at their hospital?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Mr. Copping: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. As I already noted, we are investing significant dollars in terms of the improvement of capital. Now, in terms of many of these capital projects, you know, first it was identified in terms of highest needs within a particular region. That actually flows out to the region, they identify the areas up close with AHS, and then it actually comes to our office. We have over \$4 billion as part of Budget 2023 for a variety of projects. In regard to this Innisfail project I'm happy to get back to the hon. member in terms of the . . .

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

2:30

Mr. Dach: Given that the people of Innisfail have done the majority of work for the minister, raising \$25,000 of the \$45,000 needed to replace this undersized door, and given that even though the Premier was sent a letter on this by council, the UCP are now trying to pass the buck to AHS, further delaying the process, and given that while the Premier may support the idea of people fund raising for their health care, this side of the House will never support that, can the minister say today that the people of Innisfail will get the

money to fix the door, to widen the door for ambulances to fit in, or does he expect them to do the job themselves?

Mr. Copping: Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, we are very thankful for the work that local communities do in terms of raising funds for additional items at their local hospitals, and this happens across the entire province. There is for a number of hospitals – and this is not a new issue – where the bays are actually too small for the ambulances. That said, sometimes the cost associated with it is not as simple in terms of replacing the door. They actually look at other renovations at the same time, and/or they actually have to rip down that particular building and build a new one. So I'm happy to get back to the hon. member on this particular project.

Mr. Dach: Given that the local UCP MLA has had four years to fix this issue and failed and given that the UCP government has had four years to fix this problem and failed and given that the only people working to fix this problem are the people of Innisfail and they deserve some support, can the minister explain how he can call himself the Minister of Infrastructure when the volunteers of the Innisfail health centre auxiliary have done more work to get their infrastructure fixed in their own community than this government? Cut the cheque for \$45,000, and fix this serious problem so ambulances will actually fit in the ambulance bay door.

Mr. Copping: Mr. Speaker, as I already indicated, I'm thankful for all the work that is being done by communities to be able to support infrastructure and support health care within their communities. Quite frankly, cutting a cheque may not be the answer here because it may be actually far more expensive than that particular item. We ask all of the local charities to work with AHS on identifying not only what the highest priorities are but also how best to be able to participate in those. We are investing, as I said, over \$4 billion this year to be able to improve our infrastructure, and we'll keep doing that.

Kearl Oil Sands Project Tailings Leak

Mr. Feehan: I'd like to begin by acknowledging the people of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation, the Mikisew Cree First Nation, and the Fort Chip Métis as they are dealing with the serious impacts of the spill from the Kearl Lake tailings pond. Recent scientific reports show that the leak is harmful to fish, confirming the fears of the ACFN and directly contradicting the claims of the Premier, who rushed to declare that there was no evidence of impact to wildlife or drinking water. Why did the Premier jump to conclusions without consulting First Nations who are living with the impact of this and experiencing it first-hand? Will she apologize to them today?

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

Mrs. Savage: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. To date there's been no evidence whatsoever that drinking water has been impacted nor wildlife. There are multiple layers of monitoring and testing of water up there, including on top of the AER. There are officials from my department up there, officials from fisheries Canada, officials from the oil sands monitoring. We have monitoring stations downstream. There's been no evidence whatsoever that the seepage has entered the waterways.

Mr. Feehan: Given that after the leak was discovered, the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation asked that all fish and wildlife

caught since May 2022 be thrown out but given that the Premier dismissed all claims of impact from the leak, even coming from the First Nations who are dealing with this situation first-hand, and given that these communities rely on the Athabasca to fish and to hunt and knowing the high price of food, especially in northern Alberta, can the Premier please explain what she is doing to support this region with food during this crisis, or does she still think there is no issue?

Mrs. Savage: Mr. Speaker, there's been a lot of disinformation out there. Every information I have suggests that no seepage has entered the waterway. In fact, yesterday I had a very productive conversation with the federal minister of environment to share information, and we have reached an agreement to share and mutually share information that their inspectors have, that our inspectors have. We have three monitoring stations downstream from the Kearl site that have been continuously monitoring since May, and there's no indication whatsoever that seepage has reached the waterways.

Mr. Feehan: Given that the Premier said, in her own words, on March 6, "There were no leaks that went into our tributaries, it did not go into our river system, and people need to know that [our] drinking water is safe" but given that the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo is not using the water from the Athabasca to fill their reservoirs, meaning that they will soon be short of drinking water without a plan to address the shortage of fresh drinking water, why did the Premier make the claim with no evidence to back this up? Does she acknowledge that she's wrong, and will she explain what she is doing to address the concerns about drinking water in First Nations?

Mrs. Savage: Well, Mr. Speaker, I do agree that people need to understand and know that their drinking water is safe. That's why we have enhanced enforcement and water testing. The enforcement and water testing includes the AER, environmental officials, federal fisheries officials, officials from Wood Buffalo region, the oil sands monitoring committee. It includes continuously downstream monitoring. There is no evidence whatsoever to date that anything from the tailings pond, the seepage, has reached any tributaries, water bodies, or waterways. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Federal Energy Transition Plan

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the 1980s the then Liberal government of Pierre Elliott Trudeau passed the national energy program. This program devastated Alberta's economy along with its energy industry. Not only that, but it also transferred billions of dollars to central Canada. This was Trudeau's vision of a just transition. Today our current Prime Minister is determined to repeat his father's mistakes with an ideological plan to eliminate the energy industry. Can the Minister of Energy explain to this Legislature how devastating the federal Trudeau Liberal government's policies will be for the Alberta economy?

Mr. Guthrie: Mr. Speaker, we saw how devastating these policies were in the '80s, and we are seeing similar devastating policies from another federal Trudeau government. On this side of the House we will not allow Ottawa to work around our constitutional right to develop our resource economy. They say that those who ignore history are doomed to repeat it, but we know the story. This

province stood up and fought Pierre Trudeau's brutal policies, and we will do the same again against his son's agenda.

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

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the federal NDP-Liberal coalition have Alberta's energy industry in its crosshairs and given that in 2015 the provincial NDP government of Alberta released a climate leadership report that supported a just transition of workers in the wake of their radical changes towards our energy industry and given that in my constituency the Alberta NDP eliminated coal jobs and devastated the Parkland county taxation base by 25 per cent, do the Minister of Energy and this government support the Alberta NDP's vision of a just transition?

Mr. Guthrie: Mr. Speaker, any plan that will remove workers from jobs that they are experts in is not only a terrible plan, but it is completely unjust. There is no such thing as a just transition. The data is clear, and I would challenge the opposition to accept and understand reality. Oil and gas are going to be in the global marketplace for decades to come. We should be increasing the amount of ethical Alberta energy to world markets, not eliminating it.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the NDP supported the just transition in its 2015 climate leadership report and implemented a carbon tax on middle-class Albertans and given that the opposition leader recently stated, "I believe that there is a path available to us Albertans and as Canadians to significantly reduce our emissions, to even ultimately find a cap which is practical," to the Minister of Energy: how does the NDP vision of lost jobs, relocation, just transition, and caps on energy production differ from the UCP's vision of high-paying jobs in our oil and gas industry?

Mr. Guthrie: While the talking heads in eastern Canada can bleat all they want about the elimination of fossil fuels, our government has a plan to ensure we continue to supply the most responsible, reliable, and sustainable barrel to meet world demand. If opponents of our fossil fuels, including Alberta's NDP, were as progressive and justice seeking as they claim, they would be supporting Alberta oil and gas over dictatorships as we lead the world in environmental metrics, governance, and human and civil rights, things the NDP profess to defend. [interjections]

2:40

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

That concludes the time allotted for Oral Question Period. In 30 seconds or less we will continue to the remainder of the daily Routine.

Introduction of Bills

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

Bill 207

Jobs and Investment Incentives Proposal Act

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise and request leave to introduce Bill 207, the Jobs and Investment Incentives Proposal Act.

If passed, this bill would require the responsible minister to introduce a legislative proposal to develop an incentive for companies for making capital investments in clean tech, carbon

materials, critical mineral processing, and advanced manufacturing. It's targeted towards the fastest growing emerging sectors, where Alberta has the opportunity to compete on a global scale and bring opportunities right here in Alberta. If passed, it would create good-paying jobs, support innovation, and provide training so Albertans can have the necessary skills to work in these new sectors and to ensure that we are competitive with jurisdictions around the world, including the U.S. and the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022, which they have brought forward.

I hope all members in the Assembly do support this bill. Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 207 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

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

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table for the Assembly today a corporate nonprofit search pulled yesterday, March 14, on Sustaining Alberta's Energy Network Ltd. listing Kris Kinnear as a director.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I have the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona on my list. Is there anyone tabling on their behalf, or is it not necessary?

I see the hon. Member for Peace River, and I'm dead set serious that that best not be a prop on your desk.

Mr. Williams: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. This is the requisite number of copies of a petition I wish to table with thousands upon thousands of signatures. As Mackenzie*, a young woman who inspired the petition, said, quote: I wish there had been someone, anyone, standing in the gap who could have asked what we needed and helped me and my baby get on our feet instead of sending us the message that we weren't worth fighting for. In this petition petitioners are seeking to expand Alberta adoption services in the province to help work with pregnant mothers who feel they're unable or not yet ready to be mothers, to promote counselling for unplanned pregnancies, and to consider increasing emergency allowance.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Tablings to the Clerk

The Clerk: I wish to advise the Assembly that the following document was deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of hon. Mr. Toews, President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance, pursuant to the provincial judges and masters in Chambers registered and unregistered pension plans regulation the provincial judges and masters in Chambers registered and unregistered pension plans 2020-21 annual report.

The Speaker: Hon. members, we are at points of order. At 2:22 the Opposition House Leader rose on a point of order.

Point of Order Accepting a Member's Word

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. At 2:22 I called a point of order under 23(h), "makes allegations against another Member;" (i), "imputes false or unavowed motives to another Member;" and (j), "uses abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder." I do not have the benefit of the Blues, but in response to a question from the Member for Calgary-Mountain

*This spelling could not be verified at the time of publication.

View I heard the Minister of Energy specifically accuse that member of being an anti-oil activist protesting against pipelines, protesting against tankers, very specific accusations in telling the Assembly that this member had done those things.

Mr. Speaker, the only protest that the Member for Calgary-Mountain View has attended is protests against tuition hikes. She was part of a government that got the first pipeline to tidewater in decades, and as you would know from *Beauchesne's* paragraph 494, "statements by Members respecting themselves . . . must be accepted." The member has said her support for Alberta's energy sector and has done that throughout her role as critic for Energy.

I think that the minister's comments were out of order. If he had perhaps accused the caucus or the group of us within this House – we've been very clear on the differences between talking to a group of people versus a specific member. Certainly, the Member for Calgary-Mountain View did not deserve those aspersions. They're incorrect, false, and I ask you to rule them out of order.

Mr. Schow: Mr. Speaker, I think this is clearly a matter of debate. There is a case to be made that the members opposite have in their constitution anti-oil sentiments, including not liking the oil and gas sector, supporting the Leap Manifesto. I think that there is really no real point of order here. I'm not really sure how much more I can say on this besides that I disagree with the Opposition House Leader's assertion that this is a point of order, and I suggest we move on.

The Speaker: Hon. members, are there others wishing to add to the point of order?

I am prepared to rule, and I do have the benefit of the Blues. At approximately 2:21 the hon. the Minister of Energy said the following.

This NDP critic herself, who claims to stand for the energy sector, is publicly known as an anti oil and gas activist, one who protested against oil sands producers, protested against pipelines, protested and campaigned in favour of a tanker ban, which stranded oil . . . assets.

And he continued.

I would like to highlight a paragraph in *Beauchesne's* as a reminder, which the Opposition House Leader did reference. Paragraph 494 says:

It has been formally ruled by Speakers that statements by Members respecting themselves and particularly within their own knowledge must be accepted. It is not unparliamentary temperately to criticize statements made by Members as being contrary to the facts; but no imputation of intentional falsehood is permissible. On rare occasions this may result in the House having to accept two contradictory accounts of the same incident.

I will also point you to a ruling made by the Speaker on March 22, 2022, where I also referenced *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, page 619, that states, "Remarks which question a Member's integrity, honesty or character are not in order." I would suggest that these types of direct statements directed at the hon. member may in fact call into question the member's integrity, honesty, or character. With that said, it is also not unparliamentary to temperately criticize the statements. I'd provide caution to the Minister of Energy when he makes such suggestions directed immediately to a member of the Assembly.

This is not a point of order. I consider the matter dealt with and concluded.

Prior to proceeding, let me speak directly to the hon. Member for Peace River. He is a learned and knowledgeable member of this Assembly, and the use of such a prop is absolutely unacceptable, and the Speaker is displeased. He will take the most aggressive approach in the future directed to that member should he choose to use a prop in this Assembly again. I consider that matter dealt with and concluded.

We are at Orders of the Day. Ordres du jour.

Hon. members, pursuant to Standing Order 59.01(5)(b) the Assembly stands adjourned until tomorrow afternoon at 1:30 p.m. The legislative policy committees will convene this afternoon, this evening, and tomorrow morning for consideration of the main estimates.

This afternoon the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship will continue its consideration of the main estimates for the Ministry of Treasury Board and Finance in the Rocky Mountain Room, and the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Forestry, Parks and Tourism in the Grassland Room.

2:50

This evening the Standing Committee on Families and Communities will consider the estimates for Public Safety and Emergency Services in the Grassland Room, and the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Energy in the Rocky Mountain Room.

Tomorrow morning the Standing Committee on Families and Communities will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Children's Services in the Rocky Mountain Room, and Alberta's Economic Future will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Infrastructure in the Grassland Room.

Hon. members, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

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

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