



Province of Alberta

The 31st Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, March 12, 2024

Day 23

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

# Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 31st Legislature

First Session

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UC), Speaker  
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van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UC), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UC)  
Batten, Diana M.B., Calgary-Acadia (NDP)  
Boitchenko, Andrew, Drayton Valley-Devon (UC)  
Boparai, Parmeet Singh, Calgary-Falconridge (NDP)  
Bouchard, Eric, Calgary-Lougheed (UC)  
Brar, Gurinder, Calgary-North East (NDP)  
Calahoo Stonehouse, Jodi, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP)  
Ceci, Hon. Joe, ECA, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)  
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Cyr, Scott J., Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul (UC)  
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)  
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(UC)  
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(UC)  
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Sinclair, Scott, Lesser Slave Lake (UC)  
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Wright, Peggy K., Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UC),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Yaseen, Hon. Muhammad, ECA, Calgary-North (UC)

## Party standings:

United Conservative: 28

New Democrat: 38

Independent: 1

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Hunter  
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Sinclair  
Sweet

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, March 12, 2024

[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 interests and prejudices, keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all. Amen.

Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday has an introduction.

**Member Arcand-Paul:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, I'm honoured to introduce the amazing students and teachers of Winterburn elementary school from Edmonton-West Henday. Please stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**Member Boparai:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to introduce to you and through you to all the members of the Assembly Shammi Heer-Athwal and Sherry Ubhi, the dynamic duo behind the Mom Ladies, social media influencers that passionately support moms, local businesses, and aspiring entrepreneurs, fostering a vibrant online community dedicated to empowering, uplifting, and inspiring everyone. I ask them to please rise and receive the welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Are there others? Holy smoke. Somebody circle the calendar.

### Members' Statements

#### School Construction and Modernization

**Member Batten:** Well, well, well. Mr. Speaker, the UCP may need to brush up on those elementary school math skills. Perhaps they can do so at one of the schools the NDP proudly funded and built, because contrary to what the Premier has claimed, the NDP government built schools like no government before. Construction workers put up scaffolding, laid the cement, built the foundations for children to succeed. They installed the desks, the libraries, and the science labs that students use every day. And do you know how many schools the construction crews worked on? In four years the Alberta NDP built and modernized 244 school projects. Two hundred and forty-four: that's a big difference to what the previous Conservatives ever did. The Auditor General said in 2016 that the previous PC claims on schools didn't match reality. They were good at announcing them and terrible at building.

After five years of the UCP let's check on where things are at. Student enrolment is up; school construction is not keeping pace. Calgary expects another 6,000 students this year alone. And what did Calgary get in the UCP budget? Just one new school. Six thousand students cannot fit in one school, Mr. Speaker. Even though the Premier admitted yesterday that her budget does not

deliver the schools the province needs and she's unwilling to build and staff up the education system our growing province deserves, parents remind me all the time that their kids' classrooms are exploding, teachers are struggling to keep up, and students arriving as refugees who speak English as an alternative language need support now.

It's about time the UCP stops the social media misinformation and starts actually building and staffing up the schools our students need.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Camrose is next.

### Budget 2024

**Ms Lovely:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week our government tabled Budget 2024: A Responsible Plan for a Growing Province. It's a budget that meets the needs of Albertans today while ensuring a better future for tomorrow. This is the third balanced budget put forward since we've been elected. This is amazing and shows our dedication to spending but in a sustainable way.

People from across Canada and the world choose to call Alberta home because of our low taxes and favourable cost of living. Our responsible plan builds safe and supportive communities, manages our resources wisely, and promotes job creation to build Alberta's competitive advantage. Budget '24 spends wisely to continue strengthening health care and education, with record spending on health and 35,000 new and modernized student classroom spaces. We increased the contingency fund by \$500 million – that brings it to \$2 billion – and \$418 million in capital funding over three years to expand water supply and storage infrastructure. Mr. Speaker, we're preparing for future expenses like those related to potential drought, wildfires, and flooding by investing \$251 million in capital funding over three years for flood and drought mitigation projects such as berms, dams, reservoirs, and flood walls.

Budget '24 embodies the need to move forward without repeating the mistakes of yesterday by striking a balance between the need for fiscal sustainability and growing our province substantially. We make responsible choices to pay down debt, save for the future, and keep our promises at the same time. Budget 2024 proves that. We are providing a vision for the future, a future where my children and, hopefully, one day grandchildren can enjoy the same advantages that we do today.

Budget 2024 embodies the need to move forward without repeating the mistakes of yesterday by striking a balance between the need for fiscal stability and growing our province substantially. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Health Care System

**Ms Pancholi:** As I travel across our beautiful province, I'm reminded that Albertans have so much in common. We want a strong, resilient economy and world-class public education and public health care. Unfortunately, Albertans also share profound worry about the current state of health care.

Teri in Red Deer shared with me the heart-wrenching experience of her senior mother, who was in hospital and told there wasn't enough staff to help her to the bathroom, so she would have to face the indignity of soiling her hospital bed. A small-business owner in Grande Prairie told me that three of the family physicians he knew have left the community even as the city continues to grow. A constituent wrote to me about her husband, who was recently diagnosed with stage 3 cancer but was told it would take three months before he could get the surgery he needs. This family has

two young children the same age as mine. These are not just stories; they are the lived realities of Albertans.

Recently the UCP announced they will pause again any work on the desperately needed south Edmonton hospital because, in their view of Alberta, we aren't capable of rising to the challenge of building it. When did building hospitals become too big for Albertans to accomplish? The story of Alberta that the government is telling us of what we can't do and won't do and what we have to settle for is too small for this province. Albertans aren't the kind of people to accept the status quo. We think big, and we deliver. It's time to restore public health care to the world-class care we deserve.

Let's value and respect all health care workers, and we can start by giving nurses the raises they deserve. Let's set concrete benchmarks for health care to show Albertans what we're going to do and how we're going to do it. Let's build a team-based model of family medicine so more Albertans can get the care they need from the right provider. Let's focus on delivering community-based, culturally appropriate care to meet the diverse needs of all Albertans. Let's re-establish the Lougheed model of investing in medical research to track the world's best minds and to deliver the world's best care. We are bold, innovative, charismatic, and optimistic. We work together, and we achieve great things. Let's tell that . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Airdrie-East is next.

#### **New School Construction**

**Ms Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For four long years my constituency of Airdrie-East was met with negligence and indifference under the NDP government. Airdrie, the fastest growing municipality in all of Canada, was completely ignored when it came to essential infrastructure, particularly in education. While my constituency rapidly grew in size, only one single school was built during the NDP's tenure. One. This inadequate response left Airdrie grappling with severe overcrowding in our schools, depriving our children of the beneficial learning environments they rightfully deserve.

The NDP's urban-centric policies left everyone outside of Edmonton in the dark, overlooked, and unappreciated. However, I stand here today with new-found hope for my constituents. Under this visionary leadership of our great Premier and the UCP government we are witnessing a transformative shift in priorities, a shift that includes all Albertans, bringing our heartland to the table. It brings me immense pride to announce that our government is currently doubling the size of St. Martin De Porres high school and building a brand new francophone high school and, Mr. Speaker, two more new schools in Windsong and Bayview and design funding for another new high school.

And, Mr. Speaker, we're not done yet. Unlike the NDP, the UCP government remains steadfast in our commitment to emerging communities. We refuse to abandon those that have entrusted us with their well-being. Alberta's hard-working communities deserve to be heard.

As we forge ahead, let us remember the lessons of the past and the promise of the future. Let us stand united in our resolve to build a brighter tomorrow for all Albertans regardless of their postal code. Together we ensure that no community is left behind, no child is denied access to quality education, and no dream is out of reach. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

**1:40**

#### **Social Workers**

**Ms Sigurdson:** March is Social Work Month in Alberta, and it's time to recognize and acknowledge social workers in our province. Social workers are regulated professionals who hold high standards of ethics. I'm proud to count myself among the approximately 9,000 registered social workers in Alberta. In fact, I've been a registered social worker for more than 30 years, and I've watched my profession grow. When I first registered, there were less than a thousand social workers in our province.

Today we're a profession that fulfills the hallmarks of a profession. We have mandatory registration, which means all social workers are accountable for the work they do. We adhere to a code of ethics with seven core values: "Respecting the Dignity and Worth of All People, Promoting Social Justice, Valuing Human Relationships, Pursuing Truth and Reconciliation, Preserving Integrity in Professional Practice, Maintaining Privacy and Confidentiality, and Providing Competent Professional Services." We are self-regulating, which means we ensure our members provide competent service. Members who are found to not provide proper service may be disciplined, practice restrictions may be enacted, and in extreme cases practice permits may be withdrawn. Protection of the public is extremely important. The Alberta College of Social Workers is responsible for the regulation of social workers in our province.

The purpose of social work is to both support individuals and create systems of support. It is not one or the other but, rather, both. This is a fundamental strength of social workers. We look at what is missing in the larger systems whereas most professions work only on the individual basis. The newly formed Social Work Association of Alberta is supporting that larger-system work. Our value of social justice means we work collectively to create a fair and equitable society.

Throughout the month of March remember to acknowledge social workers. Say thank you.

#### **Co-operative Housing**

**Member Eremenko:** I am so pleased to stand in the Chamber today and sing the praises of Sarcee Meadows Housing Co-operative, located in Calgary-Currie, Mr. Speaker. They are one of two co-ops in my constituency, the other being the lovely West Heritage Manor in Rossarrock. At 380 townhomes Sarcee Meadows is one of the largest co-ops in Canada. The average tenancy is a remarkable 22 years, and while door-knocking, I met many residents who grew up there and now hold membership of their own.

Intentional community and volunteerism are baked into the DNA of Sarcee Meadows. Regular membership meetings will have over 150 people attend. Every decision the co-op makes impacts their members' lives. It's why they're made by and for members. Decision-making is inclusive, equitable, and affordable. Unlike individual homeowners, pulling that many units into a pool drives a much cheaper rate for maintenance, and when the journeymen tradespeople are also your neighbours, there is a greater level of support, accountability, and service.

When it comes to both housing affordability and affordable housing, it is high time we take a long, hard look at co-ops. Given the dire need for housing in Alberta, they offer an invaluable third way. Co-ops are an alternative to private profit-maximizing landlords, putting the equity and investment in the hands of members. Plus they relieve governments from holding the upfront and maintenance costs of public subsidized housing.

Built in 1968, Sarcee Meadows has begun to undertake some big renovations and retrofits. In the planning stages for many years, this

project will make it an even more exceptional community for many decades to come. They are a glowing example of what a co-op can offer to its members, to the surrounding communities, and to the local economy. They are a solution to the challenges of affordability, social isolation, and seniors looking to age in place. Co-ops are a community, and Sarcee Meadows is a gem of a spot.

I strongly encourage governments of all orders to consider a revival of co-ops in Alberta and across the country.

### Introduction of Bills

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

#### Bill 10 Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2024

**Mr. Horner:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 10, the Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2024. This being a money bill, Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of this bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

The legislative amendments contained within Bill 10 would allow us to move forward with some of the most important components of Budget 2024. This bill would streamline department efficiency, allow for more flexibility, and provide grants for emerging carbon capture innovators. I am pleased to move first reading of Bill 10, the Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2024.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 10 read a first time]

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** Are there tablings? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, followed by the minister of community and social services.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite number of copies of a number of e-mails that I've received from constituents all across this province. The e-mails that I have today: one is from a constituent of Lacombe-Ponoka and another is from a constituent of High River, both of whom are struggling with skyrocketing rental increases and are asking for their MLAs to support Bill 205.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the minister of community and social services.

**Mr. Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table five copies of Walter Block's study. When it comes to rent control, it shows that the vast majority, almost 100 per cent, of economists disagree with the NDP's plan, and further to that it's also being compared to the equivalent of bombing our cities. I hope everybody reads them and makes sure the NDP can't bomb our cities.

**The Speaker:** Well, hon. members, that would normally bring us to points of order, but since we have not quite yet reached 1:50, we will call the clock 1:50.

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of His Majesty's Loyal Opposition has question 1.

### Red Deer Regional Hospital Expansion

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, last week the people in Red Deer and across central Alberta learned that the government will be turning their long-awaited hospital expansion into a public-private partnership. The UCP keeps trying to defend and use P3s, but we know they cost more to build, they make lawyers and investors rich with public dollars, and they restrict what we're able to do in this space long term. In this case, it will also take longer to build. To the Premier: why does she insist on injecting more privatization into Alberta's public health care?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Premier.

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have a system where we have a public-private partnership across a whole range of services in health care. Every single medical practice is a public-private partnership. We have surgical centres that are public-private partnerships. And I would say that in particular with Red Deer, because it got taken off the list in 2017 under the members opposite, there's an urgency for us to make sure that we're funding it appropriately. We've got over \$800 million put aside in this budget to be able to do that, and I am looking forward to seeing shovels in the ground.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, even most conservative governments avoid P3s when it comes to hospitals, but in Brampton, Ontario, one P3 hospital, originally pitched as costing \$100 million, has now been revealed to be going to cost taxpayers \$3.5 billion over 25 years. That's billion with a "b." So to the Premier: Albertans support investments in health care, so why is she putting public dollars and, frankly, public health at risk just to hide the cost and grow privatization?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Premier.

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There clearly does need to be a new design and way in which we do hospitals. Part of the reason why we had to rethink the Edmonton south hospital is that through the process it had grown to a \$4.9 billion proposal, which would have made it the most expensive hospital ever built in Canadian history, and that was all an internal process that happened within the government, so we had to take a pause on that. Meanwhile we funded a chartered surgical centre. I'll save that one for a minute.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, members of our caucus have met repeatedly with advocates for the hospital, and let's be clear: this is not a chartered surgical centre. The biggest issue facing this project is how to move forward without disrupting the existing and critically important services the people of Red Deer and central Alberta get from health care and the hospital through construction. The amount of coordination and consultation required is gargantuan. Inviting a private interest into this expansion is unimaginably irresponsible. To the Premier: why won't she reconsider this bad idea?

1:50

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, advanced surgical centres was one of the charter surgical centres that we contracted with: 4,500 surgeries. They took that to the bank, and they were able to build a top-of-the-line, 12-operating-room hospital for \$25 million. When we see those kinds of opportunities to be able to build more special, purpose-built, top-of-the-line surgical centres, I think it's incumbent upon us to make sure that we're building in the best way possible. That includes the private sector; that includes innovation. People need to know that 100 per cent of their surgeries are going to be covered by the

publicly funded system. I don't think they care whether it's privately owned or not.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition for a second set of questions.

**Ms Notley:** They care if it turns into a boondoggle, and this will.

### Support for Teachers

**Ms Notley:** Now, yesterday I gave the Premier the chance to distance her government and an MLA in her governing caucus from the slanderous comments of one of her former candidates who accused Alberta teachers of exposing children to pornography, but she refused. Instead, she tried to distract by quoting someone who doesn't sit in this House and is not a member of the government. To the Premier. Let's get back to what matters. Why does she think it's okay for an MLA from the government caucus to promote someone who spews hateful slander towards all Alberta teachers?

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, I did answer this question yesterday despite it being unrelated to government business. I would have thought with the budget coming forward, the members opposite might have wanted to ask some questions about government business, like the fact that we're putting \$9.3 billion into our Education budget, like the fact that we're going to be promoting as well more affordable housing with an \$800 million investment, like the fact that we're going to be spending over a billion dollars in building out our primary care system and our continuing care system. I would think those would be more relevant.

**Ms Notley:** We have actually raised the fact that Alberta continues to receive the lowest per capita education funding in the country, but what part of this piece does she not understand? As Premier she has a responsibility to work with and support Alberta teachers. She is the Premier; she is ultimately their boss; she needs to defend them. To the Premier: she kicked this person off her team during the campaign, so why is she letting one of her government caucus MLAs endorse her now? How can Albertans not see this capitulation as anything but her government's support for these slanderous views against all Alberta teachers?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Premier.

**Ms Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm quite happy to stand with our teachers and quite happy to defend the investment that we're making in education. When the members opposite were in, they spent \$8.3 billion in Budget 2018-2019. We're spending \$9.3 billion this year, which is the highest level of funding that Education has ever seen, an all-time high \$393 million increase over last year to address enrolment growth. We have \$1.2 billion of additional teachers and classroom staff that will allow for the hiring of 3,100 more teachers and education assistants and other educational staff and \$1.5 billion to support special learning needs as well.

**Ms Notley:** She's hiding from the question.

It's this Premier's attack on transgender youth that has opened the door to her caucus thinking it's okay to slander Alberta teachers, too. Her empty claims to be putting the needs of kids first are refuted by every expert, Mr. Speaker, and having a government MLA hold a joint event with someone who publicly slanders teachers undermines our entire public education system. To the Premier: why is she so eager to attack public education, and why is she so weak when it comes to holding her MLAs accountable?

**Mr. Schow:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** A point of order is noted at 1:54.

**Ms Smith:** Mr. Speaker, there is no place for hate or intolerance in our province, and our Alberta government stands with the LGBTQ-plus community, and we'll continue to be an ally. That's why I have a minister whose mandate letter directs her to work to support the LGBTQ-plus community and also serve as the community's primary contact with cabinet. This minister has also been on the ground attending Central Alberta Pride, Edmonton Pride, Calgary Pride. We also have consistently recognized crucial milestones of significance for the LGBTQ community, and we're going to continue to. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore is next.

### Renewable Energy Development

**Ms Al-Guneid:** Mr. Speaker, under the UCP Albertans have seen the highest electricity prices ever with a 128 per cent jump last July. Yesterday the minister admitted what we and the Market Surveillance Administrator have been warning him: economic withholding is driving power prices. His latest temporary fix does nothing for the many Albertans still paying off the deferred costs on their electricity bills. How does the minister intend to protect Albertans from further price surges when he's actively dissuading investment in low-cost energy?

**Mr. Neudorf:** I'm very proud to stand with a government that is taking responsibility for energy development and putting out clear rules on how we want to do that with an agricultural-first mandate. On top of that, since last August, when we had the peak price and electricity prices, we're now down to 10.3 cents on our RRO, and that is projected to go even lower over the next three years, all because the market and investment sees a responsible government doing the right things, making rules around the industry for responsible development that protects all Albertans and all consumers of electricity.

**Ms Al-Guneid:** The UCP's vague rules continue to confuse the electricity sector and inject uncertainty in Alberta's renewables at a time when it should be booming. Their proposed new rules and announcements will impact 42 projects valued at over \$11 billion, projects that could double Alberta's renewable capacity. These are projects that would create thousands of jobs, grow the industry, allow lower power bills for Albertans, especially rural Albertans like your constituents, who pay disproportionate fees to get power. Other than ideology, why does the minister oppose this?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Affordability and Utilities.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thanks again, Mr. Speaker, for the question. We are putting forward a responsible path to make sure we have dependable, reliable, dispatchable generation, working with our renewables industry to make sure that we have an agricultural-first and a co-operative path forward. This is already seeing prices come down, and I'll remind the member opposite that since the beginning of our pause, which was lifted on March 1, we saw an increase in investment in projects coming forward under the AUC, an increase under the AESO as more projects, more investment, continue to want to come to Alberta. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order.

**Ms Al-Guneid:** Minister, what you're doing is that you're throwing spaghetti on the wall hoping something will stick, but it's all falling.



This government has never supported the renewables industry, and now under this Premier it has transformed into outright hostility to an industry that Alberta is a leader in. It is clear that this government either doesn't understand or doesn't care about the negative consequences of its actions. How does the minister rationalize saying that Alberta is open for business when it's slamming the door in the face of thousands of jobs and \$11 billion in investment?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Neudorf:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd invite the member opposite to look at all the work that we've done. Not only did we have an AUC inquiry; we had an AESO inquiry, an MSA inquiry. We are looking into the regulated rate option. We're doing transmission regulations, all this work that the NDP failed to do, and that's what drove our entire economy under electricity into disarray. We're doing the responsible thing of government, setting out clear rules, with huge support. In fact, some of the latest polls are over 80 per cent support by rural, including in Lethbridge, where we're over 76 per cent of support for an agricultural-first approach.

### Postsecondary Education Funding

**Member Hoyle:** Students are struggling under this government, which sadly has been the case for the entire time of the UCP government. The president of the University of Alberta Students' Union said that this budget, quote, puts the university between a rock and a hard place, and we see that trickle down into students skipping meals because they've chosen between textbooks and groceries. On this side of the House we believe that postsecondary students should be able to learn and eat. Why doesn't the minister?

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

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a reality that affordability issues are affecting Albertans in every realm of society and including students, and that is why we have capped tuition at 2 per cent starting this year. We've provided an additional grace period for student loan payments, and we've increased eligibility for the repayment assistance plan. We have also provided so much funding for the targeted enrolment expansion program, almost \$225 million over three years.

2:00

**Member Hoyle:** Dan O'Donnell from the Confederation of Alberta Faculty Associations warned that the consequence of UCP policies is that universities could be forced to sell off buildings and land, resulting in higher class sizes, the destruction of research capacity and critical thinking needed for Alberta to lead in emerging sectors. Quote: we are decimated; in fact, much worse than decimated. Albertans' world-class postsecondary institutions deserve better. Will the minister see the reality of her decisions and change course?

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Mr. Speaker, in my consultation with postsecondaries they have asked for institutional autonomy, so they are looking for sources to create their own revenue. Considering that this budget, Budget 2024, has included incredible capital investment for a number of institutions, I find those remarks very surprising. In fact, I'm just going to remind everybody that we are providing \$15 million this year for the MacEwan School of Business. Mount Royal University is going to get another \$15 million for repurposing existing facilities, and I could go on.

**Member Hoyle:** Those were not my remarks; those were stakeholder remarks.

The University of Alberta applications are up 8 per cent, but there is no new funding beyond the previously announced targeted enrolment expansion program. This adds pressure to universities, who are already facing intense pressure following five years of UCP management. It's also going to mean a big increase in tuition when students can't afford it. The Premier moved to protect the gifts she can receive from inflation, but nothing for students who are Alberta's future. Why is this government prioritizing their gifts over Alberta's world-class postsecondary institutions?

**Mrs. Sawhney:** Mr. Speaker, Budget 2024 is a very healthy budget for postsecondaries. We have expanded targeted enrolment expansion funds, and again that's \$225 million over three years. It's going to create an additional 12,500 seats. Also, we have in Budget 2024 \$1.4 billion allocated to student aid, and that includes \$68 million for student grants for the most vulnerable and for low-income students. We also have \$182 million in scholarships and loans.

### Airdrie Urgent Care Centre

**Dr. Metz:** One thing that Albertans can count on from this government is broken promises. They've made a complete mess of lab services by contracting them to DynaLife, and now it appears they'll contract out the urgent care centre in Airdrie. Like many other health care projects, the expansion of the Airdrie urgent care centre is now on hold, and Albertans are wondering which third-party contractor stands to profit from this. Can the Health minister clarify: will Albertans own the new facility, or will we be buying it for a private contractor and renting it back?

**Member LaGrange:** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite should get her facts straight. In fact, the urgent care centre is moving forward in this budget. Also, we are exploring other opportunities because we recognize that Airdrie is growing and we need to provide additional service. When the members opposite have left Airdrie behind, we will not do that. We are continuing to make sure that Airdrie has the health care that it requires. We're also exploring north Calgary as well as Airdrie composition. Happy to go on about this.

**Dr. Metz:** Given that the work on the approved expansion was ready to start and switching to a for-profit contractor using nonexisting private facilities will require additional construction time and given that these added delays mean Airdrie residents will continue to lack the health care they need, to the same minister: when will the people of Airdrie have access to the urgent care centre they desperately need, and how much will the minister spend on bailing out another for-profit provider when the standards of care implode like we saw with DynaLife?

**Member LaGrange:** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite needs to listen to what I have just said. We are moving forward with the urgent care centre as proposed and designed. The members opposite just don't want to hear the fact that we are taking care of Airdrie. The members opposite need to get their facts straight. We are moving forward with the urgent care centre, but we're also exploring opportunities for other care facilities within Airdrie because they are a fast-growing population. They need urgent care. The members opposite need to think on their feet.

**Dr. Metz:** Given that the urgent care centre renovation is on pause and the existing urgent care was set to begin and contractors already paid for . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order.

**Dr. Metz:** Given that there was a pause announced on the Airdrie care centre and the work was ready to begin, given that privatizing health care means that private companies can flee Alberta without penalty, leaving Albertans out to dry with no health care and a bill to pay, why does the UCP continue to give away Albertans' money to . . .

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

**Member LaGrange:** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite needs to take yes for an answer. We are in fact going forward with the urgent care centre . . .

**Ms Notley:** We did that in south Edmonton, and it didn't work out very well. Say one thing, do another: that's all we ever get with you guys.

**Member LaGrange:** . . . regardless of the heckling that I continue to get from the members opposite. They like to shout, Mr. Speaker, but then they don't listen to the actual answers.

Mr. Speaker, we are moving forward with the urgent care centre. We are actually exploring other opportunities not only in Airdrie but right across the province, northeast Calgary as well as right across the province. They need to listen to the answers. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

### Affordable Housing

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Home ownership is key to the Alberta advantage and is part of the reason so many people have flocked to our province. With significant immigration causing an increase in housing prices, the need for affordable housing is growing. The need for specialized housing such as Indigenous or seniors housing is also facing significant upward pressure. To the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services: how does your announcement yesterday support Albertans in the dream of home ownership?

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

**Mr. Nixon:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was excited to announce another \$840 million investment by the Alberta government over the next three years in affordable housing, all part of our \$9 billion commitment with our partners to create 80-some thousand more affordable households in our province and to be able to clean up the mess where we saw the NDP increase wait times for affordable housing by 76 per cent and their government only be able to build 1,700 affordable homes. This government is well on its way to being able to build 13,000 at the same time as fixing the damage the NDP did in the housing market.

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

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for the welcome news. Given that other jurisdictions across Canada have seriously curtailed the ability for markets to construct housing and given that jurisdictions have imposed socialist rent control and market regulations, hampering the ability of individuals to find permanent housing, what is your message to those in this province

who could want to follow in the footsteps of other jurisdictions and impose socialist rent control measures? [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order.

**Mr. Nixon:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the majority of economists are against the NDP's plan to bring in rent control in our province. In fact, economists have called the NDP's plan to bring in rent control in our province the equivalent to bombing our cities. This government won't do it. Instead, we're focused on making sure we create an environment where industry can build the tens of thousands of homes that we need in this province, and I'm happy to report it's working. We continue to have the highest level of residential construction anywhere in the country, the highest level since statistics were kept in Confederation. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. Given the challenges imposed on all of us by inflation and the national affordability crisis caused by the excessive spending of the Liberal-NDP alliance in Ottawa and given that the only way out of this problem is by having the market build more homes, how is the government working to expand housing supply for all Albertans?

**Mr. Nixon:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we continue to invest in both affordable housing as well as in policy decisions that make sure that we can have the most construction in the history of the province when it comes to residential construction. Most importantly, we continue to fight against the NDP's plan to make people be homeless with their rent control policies and to force them to live in tents and be victimized by drug dealers and others, and as I see in the newspaper today, now the NDP is also calling on them to live in holes that they dig in the side of the river valley in Edmonton. I can assure you this government won't do that. We're going to do everything we can to build tens of thousands of houses in our province. [interjections]

2:10

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Beddington.

### Education Funding

**Ms Chapman:** Thank you. Mr. Speaker, last week the Education minister was at W.H. Croxford high school in Airdrie to pat himself on the back for a school enrolment funding. Interesting choice given Alberta has the lowest funding per student in the country. This government loves to crow about the biggest Education budget in Alberta's history as if spending wouldn't grow with population. Of course, this government doesn't actually believe that we should fund for growth, which is why they have failed to do so. When will the minister wake up to the reality of the crisis we are facing in education in Alberta?

**Mr. Nicolaidis:** Mr. Speaker, our school boards are expecting to see 33,000 additional students join our school divisions, and in Budget '24 we're providing funding to support 33,000 additional students. We are working to ensure that all students receive the funding that they need. I'm quite concerned that the veil has finally been lifted, and we see where the NDP truly stands on choice in education. One of their contending leadership candidates wants to defund charter schools, wants to defund private schools, and now

we know clearly where they stand. I ask the member opposite to let us know what her position is on these choices.

**Ms Chapman:** Given that all three public high schools in Airdrie are currently over capacity and W.H. Croxford, where the minister made his announcement, is actually at more than 120 per cent utilization and given that the minister made his announcement in a school library that is now a classroom due to overcrowding and given that the minister had to displace that classroom and stage a background to make it look like the school library it should be, will the minister please tell families his plan to address the urgent need for more high school spaces in Airdrie?

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. Budget '24 moves a new high school project up in the city of Airdrie to design funding. Once the design is complete, that project will be able to continue to construction funding. What is concerning is that the NDP wants to defund private schools, private schools like Janus Academy, that specifically caters to students with autism; private schools such as Elves Special Needs, that provides supports for students with severe disabilities; private schools like Foothills Academy, that provides services to students with learning disabilities. Why do they want to leave some of the most vulnerable out in the cold?

**Ms Chapman:** Given that Airdrie has only received design funding for a high school in the 2024 budget and that it actually takes anywhere from three to five years to build a high school and given that of the 20 projects that received design funding in 2023, only 10 have moved along in the process to receive full construction funding this year, when will the minister start taking the issue of school space seriously and start funding the high schools that we need in growing communities like Airdrie?

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Mr. Speaker, Budget '24 provides full construction funding for two schools in the city of Airdrie and design funding for a new high school. Again, I wonder why the member hasn't called out her colleagues for wanting to defund independent schools, independent schools such as the Edmonton Islamic Academy, that provides educational opportunities for individuals of the Islamic faith; institutions such as the Edmonton and Calgary Jewish academies, that provide . . . [interjections]

**Mr. Eggen:** Your nose is growing.

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite suggests that I'm lying. I encourage him to look at the tweets of his colleague and leadership candidate. It's clear.

I'm happy that the member was able to do this so we can see what the true position of the NDP is on choice in education. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

### Rent Regulation

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Renters in Alberta have been abandoned by this government. Rent prices are continuing to rise faster in Alberta than in any other province, and this government has refused to do anything to stop it. Just yesterday Albertans learned that rents are up 20 per cent. Twenty per cent. Affordable housing options are scarce, which is why Albertans needed support yesterday. Will the minister of housing commit to supporting my colleague's bill on rent caps?

**Mr. Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, I definitely will not support the NDP's disastrous bill when it comes to rent control in our province, again, which economists have compared to bombing our cities. That's what the NDP wants to continue to focus on. Now, where you do see the largest rents in our country are Toronto and Vancouver. You know what they have? They have rent control. So we're not going to go down that road. Instead, we're going to continue to focus on the work that we're doing, which is creating tens of thousands of homes across the province. Again, we have the highest residential construction rates anywhere in Canada right now. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this government has created an affordability crisis which is forcing Albertans to choose between paying rent and paying for groceries and given that 20 per cent increases in rent prices are a huge burden that the minister could help with today, will the minister commit to providing Albertans with a real solution to get their rent under control?

**Mr. Nixon:** Well, again, Mr. Speaker, we're investing a quarter-billion dollars in rent supplements, \$9 billion with our partners, to make more affordable housing, and fixing all the regulatory red tape created by that party when they were in power to be able to make sure our construction industry can do their job. We're going to continue to do that. Unlike them, who told people just to move away from Alberta, we are going to instead solve our problems. The great news is that they're already being solved. One-third of new construction in the province of Alberta is purpose-built rentals, the most since statistics were kept. That's because of the policies of this Conservative government, and rest assured we will continue to stand up to the NDP's rent control policies.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Alberta is the fastest growing province in the country and given that this requires a plan to provide Albertans . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order.

**Ms Goehring:** Given that this requires a plan to provide Albertans with choices for housing and given that the longer that this government waits, the worse the problem of skyrocketing rent prices becomes, why won't the minister commit to rental increase caps as proposed in my colleague's bill?

**Mr. Nixon:** Well, Mr. Speaker, it's pretty clear that rent control won't work, but the main reason why we want to stand up against this is because it will make more people homeless, which seems to be what the NDP's housing plan is, to bring in rent control, make people homeless, and then force them to live in tents. We know that their housing critic spent most of the off-season of this place protesting police officers and social workers trying to . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order.

**Mr. Nixon:** Spent their time protesting police officers and social workers trying to save people's lives inside dangerous encampments. They want to make sure that people are victimized. We want to get them home, Mr. Speaker. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

### Addiction Treatment and Recovery

**Mr. Boitchenko:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Unfortunately, struggles with addiction and substance use is a grim reality that many Albertans are facing every day. The disease of addiction is not only devastating for the individual but also for their family and the entire community. In response, our government is building the Alberta recovery model, a compassionate approach based on the fact that recovery is possible. Can the Minister of Mental Health and Addiction please share how the Alberta model is working to help Albertans who are suffering from the deadly disease of addiction?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Mental Health and Addiction.

**Mr. Williams:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The truth is that Alberta has a choice in front of it when it comes to dealing with this crisis of addiction. There is nothing compassionate about leaving our brothers and our daughters on the street and facilitating addiction. That's why Alberta has done all it can since 2019 under this government to increase new spots. We've increased 10,000 spots for treatment spaces across the province. We've also added same-day access to opioid agonist therapy, which saves thousands of lives every single year, and we've removed the crushing \$1,200-a-month price tag that the NDP put on life-saving treatment. We believe in opportunity for recovery.

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

**Mr. Boitchenko:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that we have addiction disproportionately affect members of Indigenous communities and given that this government is committed to supporting all Albertans who are struggling with addiction in their pursuit of recovery, could the same minister please share how our government is promoting culturally appropriate services to support recovery in partnership with Indigenous communities?

**Mr. Williams:** Mr. Speaker, this government believes not in imposing but proposing solutions with our Indigenous partners, which is why we have decided to go above and beyond the gap left by the federal government and are partnering with five Indigenous communities, four announced, building on-reserve with the community, where we are giving exactly what the Indigenous community is asking for, which is access to treatment and access to recovery. None of them are asking for more harm production in their communities. They know that addiction ends in one of two ways. The Indigenous community tragically knows that it ends either in recovery, a new lease on life, or death, and they're choosing recovery.

2:20

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

**Mr. Boitchenko:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that across North America people have fallen into addiction and given that jurisdictions like Vancouver in NDP British Columbia put in place radical policies like so-called safe supply to facilitate addiction instead of supporting recovery and given that this has resulted in more people, including youth, becoming addicted to deadly opioids, could the same minister please share how our UCP government is working to support recovery and stand up to radical policies like so-called safe supply?

**Mr. Williams:** Mr. Speaker, there is no such thing as a safe supply of high-powered opioids dumped into the community. It doesn't

matter whether that drug came from a drug dealer or Justin Trudeau or a provincial government; the truth is that it causes harm. It produces the harm. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order.

**Mr. Williams:** Mr. Speaker, the opposition is so worked up because the truth is that they're asking for harm reduction on Alberta streets, and that harm reduction has become harm production in the form of safe supply. Eighteen point two five million pills are distributed in the Lower Mainland of Vancouver. Is that what you want to see in the streets of Edmonton and Calgary? They're animated because they believe in . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

### Alberta Advantage Immigration Program

**Mr. Haji:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On February 15 the government suspended the Alberta Opportunity Stream under the Alberta advantage immigration program, again, another government failure to manage key programs without putting people under extreme anxiety and unknown futures. The freeze impacts immigrants who studied in Alberta, had a postgraduate work permit, those who are completing their work permit, Ukrainian evacuees, among others. Will the Minister of Immigration and Multiculturalism apologize to all Albertans who are being impacted by his arbitrary decisions?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Immigration and Multiculturalism.

**Mr. Yaseen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Due to unprecedented interest and a surge in the Alberta advantage immigration program we have temporarily ceased the Alberta Opportunity Stream of the program to assess the applications that are inside that particular stream while we continue to wait on the final number from the federal government.

**Mr. Haji:** Given that the lack of communication and timelines available to the prospective applicants is challenging for those trying to build their lives in Alberta, particularly Ukrainian evacuees with passport or visa expiry issues, and given that the Alberta Opportunity Stream is the only permanent residency pathway for Ukrainian evacuees, which is undermining trust in the immigration system, did the minister at any point consider the impact of his decision to hold applications for the Ukrainian evacuees without any notice?

**Mr. Yaseen:** While we have this temporary pause, Mr. Speaker, on this particular stream, this does not impact any other stream, including our people from Ukraine, which we will continue to help and continue to welcome in this province, and it will have no impact either on that particular community or, for that matter, any other streams that we have.

Thank you. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Haji:** Given that Alberta needs a workforce in various sectors, including health care, where we continue to struggle with retaining health care workers, given that with the freezing of the Alberta Opportunity Stream the government risks increasing labour shortages and tarnishing our province's reputation as a destination for skilled workers, will the minister inform Albertans why his

government said, “Alberta Is Calling” while halting programs that will enable applicants to stay in this province?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Immigration and Multiculturalism.

**Mr. Yaseen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. The temporary pause on the Alberta Opportunity Stream does not, directly or indirectly, affect the health care pathway that we have. The health care pathway along with many other streams that we have continue to remain open for the applications.

Let me give you a background on health care, particularly the health care stream and the pathway that we have. We have processed 150 applications as of February 2, 2024.

### Rural Crime Prevention

**Mr. Sinclair:** Mr. Speaker, northern Alberta is one big small town and used to be known for their close-knit and safe communities. Due to Trudeau’s soft-on-crime Bill C-75, another pretend, well-intentioned-but-with-terrible-results policy, which should be tattooed on the Prime Minister’s back at this point, and given that northern Alberta has instead become a stomping ground for criminals who know they get a free pass because of these ineffective bail reforms, could the Minister of Justice please explain to the House how Bill C-75 has allowed criminals to get away with crime?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Justice and the keeper of the Great Seal of Alberta.

**Mr. Amery:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Rural Albertans and, in fact, Canadians do feel less safe in Canada because of the Liberal-NDP alliance in Ottawa. For far too long our justice system has been struggling due to Ottawa’s ineffective catch-and-release legislation. Radio silence from the NDP on Bill C-75, which directed our courts to find the least intrusive release methods and conditions available. On this side of the House we’ve been demanding a repeal of Bill C-75, and we’ll continue to do so.

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

**Mr. Sinclair:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and the minister for the answer. Given that repeat offenders in Alberta are easily avoiding justice to Bill C-75, given that our country has fallen into lawlessness, where families, small businesses, and seniors are consistently victimized, and given that recently Robert Pickton, arguably Canada’s most prolific serial killer – and given that our future Prime Minister Pierre Poilievre has said that monsters like this should never be released from prison, could the Minister of Justice please elaborate on the measure our government has taken to curb crime and reaffirm our government’s stance on keeping dangerous criminals behind bars?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Justice.

**Mr. Amery:** Thank you once again, Mr. Speaker. The position of our government remains absolutely clear: there is absolutely no safe haven in this province for criminals. To improve public safety, our government is strengthening the Alberta Crown prosecution service to ensure that there is capacity for prosecutors to manage their caseloads while making sure that they prosecute all viable cases. [interjection] In fact, as the NDP Justice critic shouts above me, the ACPS is operating at historically the lowest vacancies that we’ve ever had in this province.

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

**Mr. Sinclair:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and the minister for another great answer. Given our provincial government’s commitment to adequately address rural crime across Alberta and stand up for its citizens, not its criminals, given that the members opposite have a job opening for a new regional manager – I mean, leader – and further given that we know they’ll continue to support their CEO Jagmeet and we’ll most likely have to wait till 2025 in the fall to repeal this failed law, could the same minister please outline some of the measures contained in Budget 2024 that will improve crime prosecution services in rural Alberta?

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Justice.

**Mr. Amery:** Thank you very much, and thank you to the hon. member. This House should know that Alberta’s justice system is the best funded and supported that it’s ever been, Mr. Speaker. Today’s justice system has the lowest number of Alberta Crown prosecutor vacancies ever, the highest number of courtroom staffing and support ever, the highest level of Justice FTEs ever, and the most complete contingent of Court of Justice justices ever. I’m proud of our record here, and I’m incredibly proud to stand in this House and tell the House and this Assembly all of our achievements. [interjections].

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

### Municipal Infrastructure Funding

**Mr. Kasawski:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The budget commits only \$722 million to the local government fiscal framework. Alberta Municipalities said that this program needs to begin at \$1.75 billion to keep up with population growth, inflation, any infrastructure needs and said that the government had an opportunity through this budget to start tackling our infrastructure problems in a more systemic, planned, transparent way but missed the mark. The UCP are downloading costs, underfunding infrastructure, and increasing provincial property taxes. What is the minister’s plan to help close this glaring \$1 billion funding gap that Alberta’s municipalities are facing?

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, the NDP only have one answer to everything: you get a billion, and you get a billion, and you get a billion. But, in fact, our government in this budget is investing \$25 billion over three years in capital funding to build schools, hospitals, roads, and other infrastructures, which directly helps and affects municipalities, Mr. Speaker, also creates 24,000 direct jobs and 13,000 indirect jobs. In Budget 2024 we’re providing \$2.2 million in top-up funding to make sure no municipality receives less than last year. Last year Alberta Municipalities’ Budget 2023 statement expressed support for the LGFF.

2:30

**Mr. Kasawski:** Given that back in 2011 the government of Alberta was investing \$420 per person into municipal infrastructure and given that this number has now decreased to just \$186 per person – that’s a 56 per cent cut – can the minister explain why he’s not properly funding municipalities when cost of living, population, and the cost of municipal projects necessary to maintain services have all gone up?

**Mr. McIver:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the \$722 million is the funding for capital just through the LGFF program. In addition to that, we’ve

added \$60 million in a new program over the next three years to help expanding municipalities and those that have sustainability issues. And with the LGFF program after this year, next year, the municipalities already know they'll get 14 per cent more than they got this year. The Alberta municipalities do as well as any in Canada, and we will be with them every step of the way as they do.

**Mr. Kasawski:** Given that Alberta's municipalities will have to collect \$2.5 billion from Albertans through provincial property taxes – that's a 9.2 per cent increase from last year; I thought the UCP didn't raise taxes without a referendum – and given that this increase will place immense pressure on municipal councils to lower services or raise property taxes just to serve their communities, why is this government not working with municipalities to keep property taxes affordable and ensure there is enough funding for local infrastructure projects?

**Mr. McIver:** Well, Mr. Speaker, this is right on brand for the NDP. They started off complaining about education funding, and now they're complaining about their taxes to pay for education funding. Is it a spending day or a saving day? Should we buy? Should we sell? They don't know which spend is up. They can't even decide whether they want us to spend more or spend less. They should just do some homework before they ask the question, because they weren't prepared for that one. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order. Order. Order.

#### New School Construction in Edmonton

**Member Irwin:** Delton school in my riding of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood is an incredible school with great teachers and students. Delton has experienced flooding, issues with rodents, and on the coldest days they've had no heat in much of their building. That's right: no heat when it was colder than minus 40. Delton has been in need of a new school for a very long time. They've been on the replacement priority list for over 14 years. In this UCP budget they're on the list for planning funding. That's not good enough. Will the minister do the right thing and commit today to a new school for Delton?

**The Speaker:** The hon. the Minister of Education has the call.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. As the member mentioned, the new school at Delton has been in need to move forward for quite some time, and I'm very proud to be able to report that our budget will give that needed school project planning funding so that the school division can start planning and taking the next steps to eventually receive full construction funding and move the project forward. We are committed to the Delton project, and we are the ones who have provided funding to make sure that it moves ahead.

**Member Irwin:** Given that schools like Delton in my riding are bursting at the seams and they need more than just planning funding and in Edmonton alone 60,000 new students are expected over the next decade yet the UCP have only approved one new school for construction for the entire public school board in a new area of the city – I want all students to have access to a school in their community, whether they're in new or mature neighborhoods. This is about ensuring a good education for all students. Will the minister tell me how he can justify only one new school in Edmonton when the need is so much greater?

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Mr. Speaker, the member just said one new school for Edmonton. Let me read you from the list here. Edmonton

Catholic schools: new K to 9 school in Crystallina Nera, new K to 9 school in Heritage Valley, new K to 9 school in Hays Ridge, new school in Rundle, new school in Glenridding Heights. Mr. Speaker, I don't know about you, but that sounds like a lot more than one. We are absolutely committed to making sure that we add spaces to the city of Edmonton. Our three-year capital plan will add over 12,000 spaces to the growing community of Edmonton.

**Member Irwin:** In a province as wealthy as ours we shouldn't have kids freezing in classrooms that don't have heat. Teachers shouldn't have to be dealing with pest control and flood mitigation while managing huge classes and few supports like at Delton school in my riding. I'd really hoped that this minister would take education in a positive direction. I'd hoped he would reset the course and prioritize public education. But how can he be satisfied with Alberta being the lowest per capita funder of education in the entire country? How can he even sleep at night?

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Mr. Speaker, again, I'm very proud of the fact that our government has put a replacement of Delton school in the planning stage. The NDP did not do that. Our government is moving that project forward. We are absolutely committed to expanding schools in our growing communities. That's precisely what we're doing. We'll be spending over \$2.1 billion over the next three years to support needed capital infrastructure from every corner of the province, which includes 19 full construction funding projects, the highest number of new projects in the last seven years.

#### Rural Physician Recruitment and Retention

**Mr. Yao:** From Newfoundland to British Columbia the shortage of family doctors is negatively impacting our nation, especially in northern and rural communities. One tack is to train physicians in these communities with the hope that if they are trained in these remote areas, they're more likely to stay in these remote areas. Ontario built the Northern Ontario School of Medicine, and British Columbia has the northern medical program. Fort McMurray is currently facing a health care crisis where there are no family doctors accepting new patients. Can the government explain what we are doing to address the family doctor shortage, especially in remote and rural Alberta?

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Our government is committed to strengthening Alberta's health care so that all Albertans have access to care when and where they need it. We are taking action by allocating record investments to modernize primary care. This includes securing seat expansions in university medical programs and establishing regional training hubs in Lethbridge and Grande Prairie to help support rural communities. Additionally, if passed, in Budget 2024 we will invest \$164 million towards initiatives to attract, retain, and train health care professionals . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the government of Alberta's budget included \$132 million over three years to expand physician training programs, including a focus on rural family medicine programs, and despite the ongoing physician shortage in Fort McMurray, despite the promise since 2020 by a previous health minister that there would be medical residents working in Fort McMurray, that there are no residents working in our regional

hospital for a region that provides billions to provincial coffers, could the Minister of Health share with the Chamber how the government is planning on reinstating Fort McMurray's family medicine residency program?

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

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's government provided funding in '21 to 2024 to support the re-establishment of the Fort McMurray residency program, and Alberta Health is actively supporting the University of Alberta in this initiative. Work continues to include stabilizing the physician workforce, recruiting preceptors, increasing enrolment in current programs, and supporting efforts to recruit and retain graduates to teach within the program. Through engaging with key stakeholders and listening to community and student feedback, we can ensure that the program remains sustainable and successful. We'll continue to do this.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The University of Alberta was given funding to deliver Fort McMurray's residency program back in 2021 and given that the program still has not returned to Fort McMurray in 2022 nor 2023 and this year university officials inform this member and AHS officials that yet again they cannot deliver this year despite having years to get this going, can the Minister of Health share with the Chamber how the government is working to hold organizations like our postsecondary institutions accountable for promises that they made with taxpayer dollars?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Health.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and again to the member. Alberta Health works to ensure that funding requests from universities align with our government's objectives to address physician workforce challenges. As such, Alberta's medical schools continue to work to establish new teaching sites, develop new programs, increase enrolment in existing rural programs, and encourage more undergraduate medical students to choose family medicine and other needed specialties. Funding to institutions is based on achievement of program objectives, and we have mechanisms in place that ensure institutions follow the grant application policies, procedures, and reporting. This is incredibly important, and we're going to continue to do that work.

2:40

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, that brings us to the conclusion of Oral Question Period. All of the business of the daily Routine has been completed, and that means we are at points of order, and at 1:54 the Government House Leader rose on a point of order.

### Point of Order Language Creating Disorder

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As is usual, I keep this page of the Standing Orders close by as it's usually becoming very handy on a daily basis that I call points of order against the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona. Today I rise on 23(h), (i), and (j). At the time noted by you, the hon. Premier was about to answer a question from the Leader of the Opposition, and in that question it said – there's a number of lines here that I felt create disorder, and I'll read a couple of them that, I believe, would be the unofficial record of the Chamber. "This Premier's attack on transgender youth . . . opened the door to her caucus thinking it's okay to slander Alberta teachers." That is, of course, false and would create disorder. Also,

"Why is [the Premier] eager to attack public education?" Also creating disorder. And, finally, "Why is she so weak when it comes to holding her own MLAs accountable?"

Mr. Speaker, all these are very personal and very directed comments at the Premier. I think that they're all false. It's not a matter of debate. This language certainly creates disorder, and this is the second point of order in as many days. I don't understand why the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona continues to choose this path, creating disorder, when she knows better given that she's been in this Chamber longer than most.

**The Speaker:** The Official Opposition House leader.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I disagree with the Government House Leader that there is a point of order here. I believe this is a matter of debate. During this section the conversation in this House was very important, talking about transgender youth, and we know in Canada that 40 per cent of youth experiencing houselessness are from the 2SLGBTQIA community. Transgender Canadians are seven times more likely to attempt suicide, and they are experiencing increased rates of depression, addiction, and violence towards them. We have seen a vulnerable group of youth, young Albertans, that have a government that have put forward a set of policy changes that not only, according to experts, violate their Charter rights and prevents access to life-saving gender-affirming care but, according to one legal expert, appear to be a systematic attempt to eradicate trans people from existence, at least from public society.

I know, as do all members of this Chamber, based on the correspondence we have received, that youth who are transgender, gender diverse, or two-spirit are feeling a sense of fear, a sense of isolation and abandonment by this government. The UCP government in so many ways has attacked youth in our province. This is not a point of order. It is a matter of debate, and even if you set it to elevator music, Mr. Speaker, it is still an attack.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there others who wish to join in the point of order that have new information to provide with respect to the point of order?

Seeing none, I am prepared to rule. I accept the arguments of both the Government House Leader as well as the Official Opposition House Leader. While I don't believe that the language in today's question raises to the level of a point of order, I would like to remind members of the opposition caucus with respect to questions surrounding government policy, as I did yesterday, that there are lots of very creative ways to ask questions and ensure they are about government policy. With respect to the point of order raised this afternoon, I believe this is a matter of debate although I would caution members when making direct accusations about a potential member of the Assembly. But for today's purposes this is not a point of order. I consider the matter dealt with and concluded.

Hon. members, pursuant to Standing Order 59.01(5)(b) and the 2024-25 main estimates schedule the Assembly will stand adjourned momentarily. The legislative policy committees will convene this afternoon and tomorrow morning for consideration of the main estimates. This afternoon the Standing Committee on Families and Communities will consider the main estimates for the Ministry of Education in the Rocky Mountain Room, and the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Indigenous Relations in the Grassland Room.

Tomorrow morning the Standing Committee on Families and Communities will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction in the Grassland Room, and the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship will consider the

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 Infrastructure.

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

[The Assembly adjourned at 2:45 p.m.]







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