



Province of Alberta

The 31st Legislature
Second Session

Alberta Hansard

Thursday afternoon, March 12, 2026

Day 31

The Honourable Ric McIver, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 31st Legislature

Second Session

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Party standings:

United Conservative: 47

New Democrat: 38

Progressive Tory: 1

Independent: 1

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, March 12, 2026

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Hon. members, let us pray. Lord, the God of righteousness and truth, grant to our King and his government, to the Members of the Legislative Assembly, and to all in positions of responsibility the guidance of Your spirit. May they never lead the province wrongly through love of power, desire to please, or unworthy ideals but, laying aside all private interests and prejudices, keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all. Amen.

Hon. members, we will now be led in the singing of *God Save the King* by Mr. Sidney Manning. I would invite all to participate.

Hon. Members:

God save our gracious King,
Long live our noble King,
God save the King!
Send him victorious,
Happy and glorious,
Long to reign over us,
God save the King!

The Speaker: Please be seated.

Introduction of Visitors

The Speaker: Members, it brings me great pleasure to introduce to you someone you may already know, a former colleague, Miranda Rosin. As an MLA, Miranda worked tirelessly to promote tourism and hospitality in Alberta, especially in her former riding of Banff-Kananaskis. Today she continues that work as Alberta's director of tourism strategy and policy. Joining Miranda is her colleague Patricia Emblem, senior policy adviser to the Department of Tourism and Sport. I ask that they please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: We start today with Sherwood Park.

Mr. Kasawski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a little known fact that my community, when it first started, was called Campbelltown until they realized there was another Campbelltown, and they needed a new postal code. So it became Sherwood Park. The first school in Sherwood Park was Campbelltown. Later it became l'école Campbelltown. This year the final group of students graduating from l'école Campbelltown are here in the gallery with parents and teachers. I ask that you please give them the warm welcome of the Assembly. Please rise.

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

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you 20 students from the U of A English language school, some of the many immigrants and newcomers helping make our province great. I'd like to ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: The Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you some incredible social work students from MacEwan University that are joining today to celebrate Social Work Week. August Walker is a second-year student. Laigiah Shirt, Salia Huynh, Sarah Nation-Al-Kuzaey, Shayne Doré, and Vivian Osedehi, please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The Minister of Children and Family Services.

Mr. Turton: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and to all members of the Assembly, to the Chamber, co-CEOs Corinne Ofstie and Haley Scott and the rest of their team at the Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services to the Legislature. It's been an absolute honour and pleasure to work with them and just hear about the incredible work that they're doing to help survivors of sexual violence. Please stand and accept the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Edmonton-Riverview.

Ms Sigurdson: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and introduce to you during Social Work Week leaders in the profession. I'd like to introduce Jody-Lee Farrah, MSW, RSW – she's the executive director and registrar for the Alberta College of Social Workers – Arlene Eaton-Erickson, MSW, RSW, president of the Social Workers Association of Alberta also academic program manager at NorQuest College, and Dr. Baiju Pallicka Vareed, PhD, chair of the social work program at MacEwan University. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Mr. McDougall: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce to the Assembly Dr. Yogendra Chaudhry, vice-president of professional services at ECO Canada; Dr. Devant Maharaj, director of ECO Canada professional services; and Francis Aranha. Their work helps advance environmental leadership, professional standards, and sustainable workforce development across Canada. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Sherwood Park.

Mr. Kasawski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There is a program of applied politics for people to learn how to become staffers in our world. There's a student here, Brianna Milgaard, and she has interned in Sherwood Park's constituency office, being mentored by Laura Paquette, my constituency manager. I ask that they both rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Mr. Boitchenko: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to reintroduce to you and through you two wonderful team members from my ministry who worked hard behind the scenes to help me bring forward the Traveller Protection and Destination Development Act. I would like to ask Miranda Rosin and Patricia Emblem to rise and receive the warm welcome from this Assembly.

The Speaker: The Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Ms Gray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm so pleased to introduce to you Farhat Riaz. I first met Farhat during my first year as an MLA. She joined my office as a social work field placement and has served the constituents of Mill Woods with joy, compassion, and heart. Also, Ember Conway, who first came to my team as a social work field placement student and is now a registered social worker who has served hundreds of Mill Woods constituents with empathy,

kindness, and care. I'm grateful for their service. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The Minister of Primary and Preventative Health Services.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to introduce to you and through you my wonderful husband, who made the trek up here. We've been married just about 42 years. He's the love of my life, and I wouldn't be doing what I'm doing if he didn't come up and take me on date nights every once in a while.

The Speaker: Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you my chief of staff, Ashley MacInnis, who is the wind beneath my wings, and seated next to her, Caelen Bubenko, a social work student doing her practicum placement at my Edmonton-McClung constituency office. I ask them to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Calgary-Buffalo.

Member Ceci: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. During Social Work Week I'd like to introduce two professional social workers, Debra Samek, MSW, registered clinical social worker, director of professional practice for ACSW, and Danielle Larocque, MSW, RSW, associate professor at MacEwan. Please rise and accept the welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: I'm just going to politely remind everybody that introductions are 20 seconds. I only say that because if we take too long, somebody who has a guest may not get to introduce them, so please be all aware of that in the future.

Members' Statements

Teacher Recruitment and Retention

Ms Chapman: Who wants to be a teacher in Alberta right now? Not many people, it seems. Teacher hiring targets certainly show that. The UCP couldn't hire 1,045 teachers last year. They missed that target by almost half. The year before they missed the hiring target by 106 teachers. The year before that they fell 336 teachers short, 661 teachers the year before that, Mr. Speaker. I could go on and on because the UCP has failed to hire the number of teachers we need every year. Sure, the minister would love to say that it's school boards who do the hiring, but it's this minister and this government who set the stage for the working conditions and funding for those teachers.

1:40

It's kind of like how this government is setting the stage for separation, falling all over themselves to lower petition thresholds, changing the rules when the courts deemed the separatist referendum question to be unconstitutional, tossing up a huge ole helpin' of word salad about sovereignty and unity as if our Constitution allows for any province to have supreme power and authority.

The Premier might believe that teachers are relieved to be back in the classroom, but the rate at which new teachers flee this profession make it clear that nothing could be further from the truth. What does it do for the morale of teachers to see the government that rolled over their Charter rights roll out the red carpet for separatists?

Support for separatism will only make it harder to attract and retain workers. We already have a problem hiring teachers. We already have a problem keeping teachers. We are losing this valuable workforce to other provinces, Canadian provinces. The UCP is making a bad problem worse. On this side of the House, we support teachers.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

Seniors' Housing

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta seniors built the communities we're proud to call home. They raised families, built businesses, and helped shape the province we enjoy today. As Alberta continues to grow in age, it's more important than ever that our seniors have safe, comfortable, and affordable housing so that they can remain in the communities they helped build. That's why I'm pleased to see our government announce a commitment of more than \$200 million to build and upgrade seniors' housing across the province through the seniors' lodge modernization program.

Mr. Speaker, seniors' lodges play an essential role in communities across Alberta, especially in rural Alberta, like the communities that I represent. These lodges are more than just housing. They are places where neighbours gather, friendships are maintained, and communities stay connected. For many seniors a lodge means being able to remain close to family, friends, and the community they spent a lifetime contributing to. By investing in new lodges and upgrading existing ones, our government is making sure these important community hubs remain strong and ready to meet the needs of Alberta seniors today and well into the future. Across the province, from Spruce Grove to St. Paul and from Taber to Vulcan, these investments will support more than a thousand homes for seniors, ensuring older Albertans have access to the housing and supports they need.

Mr. Speaker, the need for this investment is clear. Alberta's senior population is growing rapidly. Today there are more than 865,000 seniors in the province, and by 2035 that number will exceed 1 million. That's why Budget 2026 invests an unprecedented \$6.6 billion to support seniors this year alone, ensuring Albertans remain in the best place not only to live and work but also to grow old with dignity.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Social Work Week

Ms Sigurdson: March 8 to 14 is Social Work Week in Alberta, and this is a time to acknowledge social workers and recognize the important work we do to serve Albertans. I'm proud to be part of the NDP caucus as our values align very much with the profession. There are five members of our caucus with social work backgrounds, including me.

The profession of social work plays a vital role in supporting the well-being of individuals, families, and communities. Social workers are often on the front lines of complex challenges, including poverty, mental health concerns, family violence, child welfare, addiction, homelessness, and the impacts of systemic inequality. Our work is essential to building a more just, resilient, and inclusive province.

Alberta's social and economic landscape presents unique demands. Rapid population growth, economic cycles tied to resource industries, and the realities of rural and remote communities all shape the needs of Albertans. Social workers help individuals navigate these pressures by providing counselling,

advocacy, crisis intervention and connections to essential services. In doing so, we reduce harm, strengthen families, and promote stability during times of transition or crisis.

Social workers also play a critical role within Alberta's public systems. We help ensure policies and programs respond to real human needs rather than one-size-fits-all solutions. Our ethical commitment to dignity, self-determination, and social justice helps protect vulnerable populations and strengthens public trust in these systems. Equally important is our profession's focus on prevention and community development. Social workers work alongside Indigenous communities, newcomers, seniors, and youth to build capacity, address root causes of social issues, and foster long-term solutions. This approach not only improves quality of life but also reduces long-term social and economic costs for the province.

The social work profession is a cornerstone of our society. By supporting . . .

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

Provincial Pension Plan

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, it's unfortunate that we so rarely hear about the real opportunities Alberta would have if we were allowed to manage our own pension. While there's no active proposal before this Assembly to establish such a thing, it's responsible and prudent to consider what that could look like.

Albertans earn higher wages, and we have the youngest population in the country. Those facts matter. They give us a unique advantage and opportunity to build a stronger, more sustainable system that works for Albertans. At current contribution rates the math is clear. Albertans could either contribute less and receive the same benefits or keep contributions where they're at and receive higher payouts than under the CPP. That is not ideology; that is arithmetic.

However, this issue goes beyond pensions alone. It's also about fairness and opportunity. The federal government continues to concentrate financial and administrative power in Ottawa. The National Capital Region alone has nearly 130,000 federal jobs. This does not include the tens of thousands more that Ontario and Quebec currently have outside the NCR. Alberta has barely 13,000 of these federal jobs. That imbalance is not accidental, and it has real consequences for our economy. All Canadians apparently support Alberta in diversifying her economy, so why not start in the finance sector? With over 2,000 employees and a third of them based outside of Canada, the CPP could reallocate some of those positions to Alberta and appease Albertans.

Allowing Alberta to participate in the CPP would be about more than dollars and cents. It would mean supporting a stronger financial sector in Alberta and helping to wean her off the energy roller coaster, giving her some stability with a diversified economy. It's about repositioning Alberta universities as bastions of financial literacy and providing a highly educated workforce for this sector. It's about decentralizing the governance of this financial institution and ensuring a wider spectrum of thought in investing.

For those that say that they only trust the feds with our pension funds, consider that the Carney government has removed \$2.8 billion from a public service pension surplus and has still not explained what they're doing with that money. It's not just about the money, Mr. Speaker. It is about . . .

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

Budget 2026

Mr. Deol: Mr. Speaker, last week the UCP government tabled a budget projecting a \$9.4 billion deficit and provincial debt rising to

\$137 billion in the coming years. This deficit budget comes at a time when Alberta has been collecting near record revenues from our natural resources. Albertans might reasonably expect that such revenue would be used to strengthen the public services people rely on every day. Instead, the UCP budget spends so much with so little to show for it.

Key services like health care and public education, failing to invest in our postsecondary, and cuts that impact road safety, seniors care, and municipal funding. This budget does not fix health care and education because they wasted the boom during the boom. This government has failed to make meaningful commitments toward affordable housing while adding more red tape and reducing support programs such as AISH.

These decisions will have real consequences for everyday Albertans. They will deepen the challenges already facing our communities, creating greater pressure in our health care system, increasing complexity in our classrooms, and raising concerns about safety and community well-being. Despite record revenues Albertans who are already facing a serious affordability crisis are seeing additional burdens placed on them through higher utility costs, rising insurance rates, increased education and property taxes, and higher business registration fees.

This budget doesn't invest in the major projects and long-term planning needed to build a resilient, future-ready Alberta. Mr. Speaker, Albertans feel that this government is out of touch with their priorities. They are looking for leadership that invests in people, strengthens public services, and builds a stronger future for our province. Alberta's New Democrats are ready to lead on that front.

1:50

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The first question belongs to the Leader of the Official Opposition.

Primary Health Care Workforce

Mr. Nenshi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government is so bad with money. Historically high resource revenues; a \$9.4 billion deficit. Where is the money going? What is it being spent on? The Premier told us this week that there is nothing to worry about in health care anymore. The health care worker shortage, ladies and gentlemen, has been solved, and we have all the workers we need, except that in Grande Prairie and Lethbridge, in most places in this province, there are no family doctors accepting new patients. Why did the Premier claim that she has solved the health care worker shortage when everyone knows it's not true?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Smith: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The way the budget works is that we project forward on the basis of what the long-term average for WTI is. The long-term average is \$60, and that's the reason why we put forward a very realistic budget about how we would meet the needs of health care, education, and infrastructure if those prices averaged at that level. Of course, things changed a lot, so we'll be monitoring and watching to see whether or not that deficit picture changes.

When it comes to doctors, Mr. Speaker, we have never had more doctors, more nurses, more LPNs, more paramedics, more aides. People want to be in Alberta.

Mr. Nenshi: Of course, even with those low amounts, Mr. Speaker, this government is dealing with royalty revenue seven times what Rachel Notley dealt with, and they still can't get it done.

This week in Hinton the emergency room was without a doctor for seven nights in a row. Edson's mayor says that this is a huge problem for the region. Of course it is. They're calling on the government to take action. But the Premier went on her radio show and said that Albertans should stop complaining; she has solved the health care workforce problem. Does the Premier believe it's okay for the people of Hinton not to have an ER for seven days?

The Speaker: The Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have had 600,000 people come to Alberta in the last five years. I'd ask the member opposite to do some basic math. We pay about \$16,000 in services, whether it's health care, education, postsecondary, supports for seniors, and when you do that math, it's about \$10 billion just in those services alone. That's the reason why we're seeing that our expenses are rising faster than our revenues, and we've got to be working on how we can fix that.

Mr. Speaker, I can just say that nothing succeeds like success. We've got over 800 doctors who are taking new patients. We've got more work to do in certain areas, and we're going to keep doing that.

Mr. Nenshi: Of course, when the Premier says that, she neglects to say that those people pay taxes. They create jobs. There's a revenue portion to this, too, and this government cannot manage it.

Yesterday the health minister, or the primary care minister – there are four of them – admitted that more than half a million Albertans don't have access to primary care. Even if we believe there are 800 doctors accepting patients here and there across the province, 800 doesn't fix 500,000 people without care. Does the Premier understand the scale of this crisis that her government has created and how badly it's hurting Albertans?

The Speaker: The Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes. It's the reason why we were the first jurisdiction in Canada to allow for nurse practitioners to take on their own clients and to bill the province directly. We're almost up to a hundred nurse practitioners, and if they average a thousand patients each or more, that's 100,000 additional citizens that are going to be served by nurse practitioners. We've seen a constant increase now in the number of family doctors. We'll be training more doctors in Grande Prairie and Lethbridge. We're moving in the right direction, and the minister is going to have more to demonstrate how we're attaching patients to doctors.

The Speaker: The second set of questions belongs to the Leader of the Official Opposition.

Mr. Nenshi: Nearly a hundred nurse practitioners, nearly a million people without service. That math ain't mathing, Mr. Speaker.

Seniors' Benefits

Mr. Nenshi: Never has a budget spent so much with so little to show for it. This government is also cutting benefits for low-income seniors. The Premier says that it's because our benefits are overly generous to seniors in this province. To be clear, the maximum a senior can get under this program is \$328 a month, roughly what we'll pay for one night in a hotel room for an MLA. Why does the Premier believe that seniors should not be part of this Alberta advantage and that we're overly generous?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can tell you that in NDP British Columbia our threshold is \$20,740 higher than them. In

NDP Manitoba our threshold is \$13,274 higher than them. What we have said is that we need to make sure that we're supporting those who are most in need and to make sure that we're targeting that support. We don't want to have programs that are overly generous. We've got to make sure that we've got programs that are consistent with what we see in the rest of the country, and that's what we're doing. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Nenshi: Well, I am thrilled that the Premier wants to be governed like an NDP province like British Columbia or Manitoba, but let's be real here. Overly generous. Seniors on fixed incomes: their groceries are up, their utilities are up, their medication costs are through the roof. The budget increases property taxes in a way no mayor ever could on people who've worked hard to build their homes. These people are struggling, and all we get from the Premier is: overly generous. I'll tell you what's overly generous, increasing parliamentary secretary salaries by \$3,000 a year. Why do seniors bear the brunt?

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite increased property taxes in Calgary 81 per cent. He increased the mayor's salary so much – it's certainly more than I have ever gotten paid – and he's receiving three pensions because of the exceptional benefit at the municipal level. So he can spare us the lectures on this side of the Chamber.

What I can tell you is that our monthly benefit is \$276 per month more than New Brunswick, \$270 per month more than Manitoba, and \$228 more than British Columbia.

Mr. Nenshi: Ah, the Premier needs updated talking points. Someone needs to tell her that in only two years this government has increased property taxes by more than I did in three terms.

Here's what the Premier is actually saying. She thinks that the Alberta advantage applies only to her friends, people who get padded contracts, to wealthy people. Meanwhile seniors, people with disabilities are overly generously treated by this government. It's offensive and it's wrong. Will the Premier admit it, reverse her cuts to the seniors' benefit, and show that the Alberta advantage applies to everyone?

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, Budget 2026 allocates \$553 million to the Alberta seniors' benefit. It's an increase of approximately \$13 million from Budget 2025. We continue, as I mentioned, to have the most generous support for seniors in the entire country. Not only do we have a higher threshold so that they can receive it, but it's also by a long shot the highest amount on a per-month basis. I think seniors know that they're well supported in Alberta, and we're going to continue to support them.

The Speaker: The third set of questions belongs to the Leader of the Official Opposition.

Alberta Separatism

Mr. Nenshi: This week we've heard from the Premier that the price of gas is low, the cost of living is no problem, and seniors are living high on the hog. What Alberta does she live in? Well, she lives in an Alberta that she wants to separate from Canada, it seems. Business leader after business leader is telling us that investment is frozen, jobs aren't being created, but she is welcoming a referendum question on separatism even though it's unconstitutional, even though it destroys our economy, even though it breaks our relationships with First

Nations people. Why did the Premier make it easier for the separatists to get this question on the ballot?

Ms Smith: No, Mr. Speaker. I said the member opposite is living high off the hog with his three pensions in addition to double-dipping now that he's back in public service again.

I will tell you, Mr. Speaker, that affordability has been the number one goal of this government from the beginning. It's why we continue to make sure that we were building more houses and making sure that more rental housing was built so that we have some of the lowest rents and the lowest cost of buying housing in the entire country. It's why we worked with the federal government to implement the child support for those with daycare. It's \$1,000 per month. We've brought down utilities. We're bringing down insurance. We got rid of the carbon tax.

Mr. Nenshi: If affordability is her number one priority and health care is her number two priority, I'd hate to see what she does to things that aren't a priority.

Even former Conservative minister and Edmonton Chamber of Commerce CEO Doug Griffiths says, quote: people are not investing over what happened in the last 10 years; investor uncertainty is about where you're going, not where you've been. This is not just a waste of time and money. It's damaging investor confidence. It's destroying jobs. It's drying up job creation. Why is the Premier so focused on pandering to the separatists to save her own political skin?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can tell you that the agreement that we signed with the federal government is, once again, finally restoring investor confidence after 10 bad years of NDP-Liberal coalition government that damaged our investment sector. We have Avik Dey from Capital Power who said: we continue to be excited about it and, frankly, more excited today than I've ever been at any other point in time. Adam Legge, president of Business Council of Alberta, has said that our changes that we announced Friday will help approval timelines, create greater certainty, and improve conditions for investment in the province.

2:00

Mr. Nenshi: But, of course, Nancy Southern, the CEO of one of Alberta's largest companies, says that investor certainty is gone and investment has dried up.

Meanwhile the Premier is pushing an unconstitutional question on separatism. We know this question is unconstitutional, but the Premier said: don't worry about it; my Justice minister will make it constitutional. Now, his record does not inspire confidence here, but can the Premier please tell us exactly how we take a question that a judge has ruled unconstitutional and somehow magically make it constitutional?

The Speaker: The Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure exactly what the member opposite is talking about. There are only nine questions that we have brought forward for a referendum. There are only nine questions at the moment that are being brought forward. We have one, the Forever Canadian petition, that is going to be going to a parliamentary committee, and they'll decide whether or not that should be on the ballot in the fall. We're waiting to see the results of the others. But I can tell you that we have a number of questions around immigration, which, incidentally, is not only popular here but is darn popular across the entire country, for the provinces to

take more control over immigration. I wish they'd support us in that.

Budget 2026

Ms Pancholi: It must be hard to pretend you're a fiscal conservative and still be a UCP MLA. Let's talk about Budget 2026, a \$9.4 billion deficit with the largest spending in Alberta history, 41 per cent higher spending than the Alberta NDP. The \$62 billion debt that the UCP had when they became government? Well, that will more than double to \$137 billion in just two years. And now three years of deficits projected in a row, four if you count this year. Ouch. Is the Finance minister proud it took just two years to break his own fiscal laws by presenting a budget with no path to balance?

The Speaker: Just a reminder that when your time is up, you've got to stop talking.

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker, I was just at a chamber event here in Edmonton, went through some of the population growth numbers that impacted the economy in historical years in Alberta. It's always interesting to hear the NDP talk about their time in government, when it seemed they had a policy to drive people out of the province. There's no doubt there are challenges that come with the population surge that we've seen. We're still the government that's paid off \$15 billion in debt. We've doubled the size of the heritage fund. We've stayed below population growth plus inflation on our spending, and we have a plan for the future for, really, the first time ever. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Ms Pancholi: What's baffling about all the debt and deficit the UCP is racking up is that it isn't because of a massive drop in oil prices like in 2014. No. Since this Premier was elected, Alberta has brought in record-high resource revenues: this year \$16 billion, last year \$22 billion, the year before a record high of \$25 billion. That's six to eight times what Rachel Notley had. Much of this is thanks to TMX coming online, and in case the UCP forgot, that's the pipeline that the Alberta NDP built. You're welcome. Why is the Premier pleading poverty when the only people paying more and getting less are Albertans?

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker, I heard them say earlier that the math wasn't mathing, and I'm glad that the member opposite went through some of those numbers. They've been saying that we have record revenue. As the member just stated, we're at just over half of record revenue, 13 and a half billion dollars, in this year. The difference correlates very closely with the size of the deficit. This was largely a revenue story while we're keeping spending at population growth plus inflation while building the schools while building the health care facilities that I hear from you all every day. [interjections]

The Speaker: I hear quite a bit from people not recognized, but now we're only going to hear from the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Ms Pancholi: The UCP is flush with resource revenue, and the spending and debt is increasing at an unbelievable rate, but the UCP has nothing to show for it. In seven years no new hospital or urgent care has been completed in Red Deer, Airdrie, or Edmonton. The promised hospital towers: they are years away from being built, if at all. The cancelled south Edmonton hospital should have opened this year, the same year that Albertans are dying in crowded

emergency rooms. Classrooms across the province are overflowing, and new schools are years away, and not one tangible thing to help Albertans with the cost of living. How has the UCP spent so much and delivered so little? [interjections]

The Speaker: Hopefully, we'll only hear now from the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker, like I said, I just came from an Edmonton Chamber event. They seem to understand very well that capital of that size takes a while to build. They were excited. I've heard them mock that there's \$7 million in the budget for the Stollery. Design/plan/build: go through the stage and gated approach. We have a \$28 billion capital plan. I also explained to the chamber that you have to get things in and out of the plan in the most efficient way possible or you end up with a fake plan. Schools take four to six years to build, and your cities are getting many of them.

Indigenous Relations Minister's Travel to India

Member Arcand-Paul: Mr. Speaker, the UCP has ministers tasked to travel internationally to advance the province's trade relations, so Indigenous people in Alberta are wondering why the Minister of Indigenous Relations travelled to India on the public dime while sovereign nations have been left ignored by the minister, who admitted yesterday that she has not visited all of the First Nations and Métis communities in this province, yet there was time for a three-week trip to India. Will the minister explain if this trip was to assuage concerns over Alberta being a risky investment because this government will not denounce separatism, or was it about their failures with Indigenous consultation? [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order. You get to decide who asks the questions. Somebody else gets to decide who answers them, and what's been decided is the Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the member opposite for the question in addressing international travel. It's something that many members in the front bench and the private members in the government caucus do to advance the interests of the government of Alberta and the province of Alberta. I myself just returned from Barcelona, from Mobile World Congress, where we met with businesses, the defence sector, aerospace, who are very interested in setting up shop here in Alberta because they know we're an investment-friendly environment with a well-educated workforce and a place with low regulation and low taxes. This is the place to set up shop and to work.

Member Arcand-Paul: Mr. Speaker, given that I didn't know that minister had Indigenous Relations under his purview and given that the purpose of this trip with Indigenous Relations was, quote, a trade mission to strengthen strategic partnerships and foster long-term economic opportunities, end quote, and given that those three weeks could have been better spent here at home strengthening ties with Indigenous communities that this government keeps breaking, will the Minister of Indigenous Relations share how the ministry was engaged in India while the government-to-government partners in treaty were asking the UCP to step up, as demonstrated by the treaty chiefs' recent vote of nonconfidence?

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again I thank the member for the question, for bringing up travel, something our government does

on a regular basis to ensure that Alberta's best interests are advanced. We go and we sell this province because it's a low regulatory environment, low taxes, unlike the members opposite. When Bill C-69 was introduced, it took Rachel Notley nine months to make her way across the country, let alone make it anywhere else to sell Alberta, because at the time she had nothing to sell besides debt, deficits, and dumb decisions.

Member Arcand-Paul: Given that that minister is able to accrue a vacation on the taxpayers' dime and debt and given that all except three people in this Chamber are or come from a family of immigrants, with three of us being the First Peoples of this land, and further given that this government has a minister whose portfolio is to work with the First Peoples of this land, the very land that we get the privilege of living on because of treaty, and given how First Nations stand firmly against separatism, will the Minister of Indigenous Relations finally denounce separatism today right here in this Assembly and truly honour the treaty relationship as is intended?

The Speaker: The hon. the Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, it's important to address the importance of these trips. The minister had gone to India to talk about energy, an important export for our province, something the NDP knows nothing about. We're working very hard to get an MOU finished up with the federal government so we can build a pipeline to the west coast. On the opposite side they're talking about who came first to this province and who deserves to be here. We all deserve to be here because – guess what? – we're here to build the province, we're here to attract investment, and we're here, most importantly, to serve Albertans and their best interests, and that is making sure they have jobs and investment here in the province.

2:10

Supports for Seniors

Mrs. Petrovic: Mr. Speaker, seniors across Alberta are pillars of their communities. In many communities senior lodges provide an important option for supportive living, helping older Albertans stay connected and maintaining their independence or receiving the assistance they need. However, some lodges were built decades ago and require significant upgrades, and growing communities are seeing increased demand for additional units. To the Minister of Assisted Living and Social Services: can you update this House on how the government is working to increase the number of lodge units available across Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Assisted Living and Social Services.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was excited to announce today another \$200 million to go to a lodge modernization program in our province. It's going to create another 1,000 units to come back online inside our existing lodge program to be able to make sure more seniors have places to live inside the communities that they built, all part of the Alberta government's plan to be able to create houses all across this province, including 82,000 more affordable households all across Alberta and 15,000 more continuing care spaces, continuing to fix the mess that the NDP left in this province when they built no houses when they were in power.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Petrovic: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister for his response. Given that many seniors require additional medical and

personal supports as they age and given that demand for continuing care will continue to grow as Alberta's population ages and families seek appropriate care options for their loved ones, to the same minister: could you please share with the House what additional steps this government is taking to expand continuing care capacity and ensure Albertans have access to the care and supports they will need both now and into the future?

Mr. Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, I was excited to announce with the Premier just before Christmas the largest continuing care capital program in the history of the province. Right now we have over 3,000 new units under construction in Alberta in continuing care. The NDP didn't build any new continuing care units when they were in power. We have committed to 15,000 more units over the next 10 years, making sure that we can rise to the challenge of our aging population and make sure Alberta is not only the best place to live and raise a family in but that it's the best place to retire in. We're excited about that work, and we're seeing projects pop up all over our great province.

Mrs. Petrovic: Thank you again to the minister. Given that I frequently hear from seniors in my constituency about their strong desire to remain close to home as they age and given that we know seniors are best supported when they can stay in the communities where they lived, worked, and raised their families and given that every senior has unique needs and circumstances, to the same minister: could he please outline for this House the additional ways this government is supporting seniors to age with dignity and access the care and supports they need as close to home as possible?

Mr. Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, we're spending \$6.6 billion on supports for seniors inside Budget 2026, assuming it passes this Legislature, and one of the big things we've been focused on in the last several years is making sure that we have lodges and senior spaces coming up all over the province. Unfortunately, underneath the NDP government we saw hospitals and lodges being closed inside rural communities. We went a different way. I'm proud to report to this House that now, underneath the leadership of the United Conservative government since 2019, we're almost at 100,000 subsidized units across the province, and we're going to be adding tens of thousands more in the next couple of years.

Budget 2026 (continued)

Member Irwin: Instead of using this budget as the opportunity it could have been, the UCP are focused on the wrong priorities. Huge resource revenue should result in stable supports for Albertans, yet this government fumbled the ball, and now it's Albertans who pay the price. Budget 2026 makes life more expensive. Groceries, housing, utilities, insurance, and property taxes are all going up with no relief in sight. I ask this Premier: why isn't affordability a priority? Why is it that the only thing she's offering is a \$9.4 billion deficit?

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

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, the schizophrenic nature of the NDP comes out in full force. When we balanced the budget, they accused us of cruel cuts to programs . . .

Mr. Sabir: Point of order.

Mr. Neudorf: . . . and when we continue stable funding to make sure that these programs are sustained through a large population

growth, they say: oh, we blew the budget. Which is it? Should we spend more, or should we spend less? The NDP doesn't know. All they ever did was spend more, spend more, spend more, and fix nothing. Very happy to be part of a government that sets things right, provides stability, and puts Albertans first.

The Speaker: A point of order was noted at 2:14 p.m.

Member Irwin: Shameful.

Given that there are so many Albertans who lose in this UCP government's budget but hit the hardest are those who are low income, with the government wasting so much on bad deals while delivering so little when it comes to homelessness supports, helping seniors afford their retirements, helping disabled Albertans trying to get by or homeowners who are facing big hikes to their property taxes, what do Albertans get in return? A whopping \$9.4 billion deficit. Why won't this government act to make lives more affordable now?

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, it's pretty rich coming from the other side, who has a leader who raised taxes by 81 per cent, couldn't be bothered to even fix the pipes, and left our largest city short on water for months. I'm proud to be part of a party that is under the leadership of a strong Premier who is leading the way all across the country with the most affordable housing in the country, the lowest rent in the country, the best housing construction in the country, the most generous senior benefits in the country because we care about our seniors, the best social services benefits. We're leading in each and every category, which is why Alberta is the best.

Member Irwin: Given that these aren't just line items in budgets – these are real people who are impacted by seven years of the UCP that have made life more expensive, real people like the front-line housing workers losing their jobs or the 5,000 Edmontonians who are on the streets and without a home or the parents worried about how they will afford new shoes for their growing kids – how on earth can this government continue to ignore the struggles that Albertans are facing? Make it make sense.

The Speaker: I'll thank the hon. minister to finish on time this time. Go ahead.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, an hon. member and her party who proposed to this Chamber that we have people live in temporary structures instead of in homeless shelters . . .

Member Irwin: Point of order.

Mr. Nixon: . . . an hon. member who has proposed that we bring in things, communist policies like rent control, where every other jurisdiction in North America that has done this has seen housing go down. This side of the House rejects that and instead has gone with concrete plans, betting on Albertans every time. It's why we have the most affordable jurisdiction anywhere in this country. We're proud of that. We continue to hear what the NDP want to do, and we do the opposite, which is why Alberta continues to succeed.

The Speaker: A point of order was noted at 2:17.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Children's Pain Medication Purchase

Mr. Haji: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government paid \$70 million up front in a sole-source contract for the procurement of Turkish Tylenol. They only received \$20 million worth of medication, which was never even used. Fifty million of taxpayers'

money is still in the hands of MHCare. When asked, the Premier claimed, and I quote, AHS is working to get their money back. Does the Premier believe AHS is somehow an independent, sovereign entity within this United Conservative Party government, or will she bring the money back and take responsibility?

The Speaker: The hon. minister of hospitals.

Mr. Jones: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government's priority is to ensure that when any products or services are procured, they are received and received in the quantity and quality ordered. We've made that expectation clear to our agencies like Acute Care Alberta and our service delivery organizations like Alberta Health Services, and that is exactly what they're doing. They're going through the processes. Typically there are mechanisms in contracts, arbitration, and then ultimately the courts.

Thank you.

Mr. Haji: Given that the Minister of Hospital and Surgical Health Services told this House, "There's always [an] option to go through the court" and given that more than two years have now passed since the government directed AHS to make a \$70 million payment up front to MHCare and given that Albertans are concerned about the limitation period of filing a statement of claim, when is this government going after MHCare for the \$50 million outstanding before the limitation period lapses?

Mr. Jones: Again, Mr. Speaker, it is a priority of this government to ensure that whenever we order products or services, they are received and received to the quality and quantity that are ordered. When that is not the case, our service providers and agencies go through a process. Typically there are mechanisms in contracts, perhaps arbitration or mediation, and then ultimately the courts are an option. We fully expect our service providers and agencies and everyone across government to go through that process and make sure Albertans' taxpayer dollars are protected and respected.

2:20

Mr. Haji: Given that \$50 million could have paid the salaries of many nurses, many health care workers, as we need, given that families across Alberta are struggling with the cost of living while \$50 million of taxpayers' money still sits with the government's friend, collecting interest for years, to the Minister of Finance: how is that missing \$50 million recorded in the province's books? Is it a liability, or is it an asset with MHCare?

The Speaker: The minister.

Mr. Jones: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In fact, Budget 2026 continues to provide record funding to our health care system. The member opposite talked about nurses. We've added almost 12,000 registered nurses over the last five years. We've added about 2,700 LPNs over the same time period, over 2,200 physicians. We're going to make sure that Albertans receive the health care they need when and where they need it and that health care workers are there to provide it.

Thank you.

Heritage Savings Trust Fund Investment Management

Mr. Guthrie: Mr. Speaker, the Alberta heritage trust fund is a \$32 billion legislative-protected asset managed by AIMCo. This government has created a separate structure, the so-called heritage fund, targeting 15 to 20 per cent returns. The UCP present them as the same thing. They are not. One is protected by law with clear investment safeguards; the other is not. To the Premier: why is your

government blurring the lines between a protected trust and a high-risk scheme chasing hedge fund returns?

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker, that is not accurate. You know, AIMCo as an investment manager on behalf of many of the province's pensions and the heritage fund takes their marching orders from the pensions. They took it from the Treasury Board and Finance department regarding the heritage fund for years. What we've done with HFOC, or Heritage Fund Opportunities Corp: we want to set up a structure where there's truly an asset owner beyond just a bureaucrat – very good bureaucrats – in my shop. That's the vision. We're still working through a lot of the details.

Mr. Guthrie: Mr. Speaker, given that this government has considered borrowing up to \$27 billion, leveraging public money in volatile markets through this high-risk structure, and given that the UCP has explored diverting revenues from other public entities into the same scheme and given that this strategy can magnify gains but also intensify losses, to the Premier: is this government preparing to borrow or transfer billions to invest in volatile markets and gamble with taxpayer dollars as cover for poor spending habits?

Mr. Horner: No, Mr. Speaker, we're not. What we're doing is leaving the retained earnings in the fund so it can grow. Everybody that understands the value of compound interest can get their head around this plan. We've seen the delta in difference between our weighted cost five-year average on our debt at roughly 3.7 per cent to, if you look at a five-year net of returns on the heritage fund, being 8.8 per cent. That's the delta. That's the gap. That's why Albertans need to focus on the net position of the province for this plan to be successful.

Mr. Guthrie: Mr. Speaker, given that higher return targets mean higher volatility, including downside risk, and given that Albertans deserve to know whether their \$32 billion trust will remain protected or exposed to political risk and given that their Premier publicly stated that these funds could be used to derisk projects finding it difficult to obtain financing, with ATB positioned as the vehicle, to the Premier: is your government preparing to use heritage funds to backstop politically preferred investments that private capital has deemed too risky?

Mr. Horner: No, Mr. Speaker. There is no domestic-to-Alberta economic mandate for the HFOC. What you can envision is finding great deals and great investments that have a lot of ancillary value to the province. Here's an example. If the province needs to spend a lot of money on modernizing electrification, if they're doing investments with the best in the world in that space, if it's about grid modernization and stabilization, you can see how that would benefit having those people here, seeing . . .

The Speaker: The next question belongs to the Member for Calgary-North East.

School Construction in Calgary

Member Gurinder Brar: Mr. Speaker, Albertans are struggling with the cost-of-living crisis, yet this year they will see another property tax hike. The provincial education property tax alone is rising by more than 20 per cent. The province will collect over \$1.2 billion from Calgarians alone. Even Calgary's mayor has warned that this increase is making affordability worse. To the minister: why is the government increasing education property taxes during an affordability crisis?

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker, like I mentioned in Budget 2025 very clearly, the province was going back to our position of having 33 per cent of the operating expense of education come from this base. Nobody was hiding anything. We laid it out very clearly. What this has done practically is take the rate from \$2.72 to \$2.84 per \$1,000 of assessed value on residential; on commercial from \$4 to \$4.17. We know there is also an increase in assessment as property values rise, but everyone here knows . . .

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

Member Gurinder Brar: Given that families in Calgary-North East are dealing with overcrowded classrooms and years of promise but no new schools in the fastest growing communities, now that they are asked to pay hundreds of dollars more in education property taxes, this increase means pouring salt on the wounds of my constituents. To the minister of education: how can this government justify charging my constituents more in education taxes while failing to build a single new school in the communities that desperately need?

Mr. Nicolaides: Mr. Speaker, I think the member opposite actually holds the record in this Assembly for the most number of school projects per riding. We have a new K to 9 school in Cornerstone that's under way. We have a new K to 6 school in Redstone. We have a new junior high in Redstone, another junior high in Cornerstone, a high school in Cornerstone, an elementary in Cornerstone, an elementary in Livingston, and another elementary school in Redstone. In addition . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Minister, take another 10 seconds and finish whatever you were going to say.

Mr. Nicolaides: I'll need the extra 10 seconds to go through the complete list here, so thank you for that, Mr. Speaker. In addition, a new francophone elementary school in north Calgary. I would hope that the member opposite is telling his constituents that our government is building the schools they need.

Member Gurinder Brar: Given that the minister loves to count schools on his fingertips but there are no schools to be seen on the ground – our communities need at least eight new schools, but in the past seven years this government did not send a single brick to our communities to build those schools – to the minister: have the schools you mentioned been swallowed by the earth, disappeared into the thin air, or are they invisible schools which can only be seen through UCP glasses?

Mr. Nicolaides: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'll be very happy to be there along with the member – I'm happy to invite him right here right now – when all these schools are ready to be opened, and I'd be happy to invite him to the podium as well so that he can speak very positively about how the new schools will benefit his constituents. I think, as the member legitimately knows, it takes time to plan, design, and build schools. Unfortunately, when the NDP was in office, they did nothing to prioritize schools in the member's riding, but we have. [interjections]

The Speaker: Well, I think we'll just hear from the Member for Red Deer-South now. Let's try that.

Federal Equalization and Transfer Payments

Mr. Stephan: Mr. Speaker, Canada's Constitution is broken and rigged. Every year Quebec gets billions in equalization, this year

over \$13 billion. Every year Alberta gets nothing under this de facto socialist welfare program, but Alberta workers and businesses pay billions into it. Albertans voted in a referendum to get rid of equalization. To the minister: is Ottawa listening to Albertans to get rid of equalization?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance, or the keeper of the Great Seal.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta does continue to make disproportionate contributions to Canada's economy and federal finances. In 2024 Albertans paid \$19 billion more in taxes to the federal government than they received in federal spending. That's over \$3,870 per person, which is \$2,400 more than the example in British Columbia. Albertans, on average, paid 30 per cent more in federal taxes than residents in other provinces but received 18 per cent less in spending. We're not asking for special treatment; just for fairness.

2:30

The Speaker: Everybody knows it's the Justice minister that keeps the Great Seal, and the question goes to Red Deer-South.

Mr. Stephan: Given that each year Alberta businesses and workers pay billions more in CPP premiums than benefits paid to Alberta retirees, given over years these amounts have compounded into a super big number, given one of the biggest actuarial firms in Canada estimated this super big number to be about \$334 billion and given over two years ago Ottawa said they disagree and will provide a number, to the minister: where is the number?

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

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the question, but the demand of that answer will have to come from the federal minister. We've yet to hear back any specifics from the office of the Chief Actuary or federal finance. We did hear from the office of the Chief Actuary a vague description of the methodology that they may use to determine a withdrawal amount, but that's as far as it has gone.

Mr. Stephan: Given that is weak, given every year Alberta businesses and workers pay \$20 billion more to Ottawa than Alberta gets back, given over years these amounts have compounded into a super-duper big number, given this super-duper big number is over half a trillion dollars, over \$10,000 for every man, woman, and child in Alberta, to the minister: if Albertans stopped subsidizing the rest of the country, would there be a deficit? How much could we cut taxes for Albertans?

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker, Albertans have every right to be frustrated. They work hard, pay their taxes, and too much of what they earn goes to Ottawa only for a fraction to return, usually with heavy strings attached. Thanks to our Premier, Ottawa is finally listening. Through her negotiations with the federal government, the Premier has made Alberta's voice impossible to ignore. Our government is focused on keeping Alberta's money here so we can invest directly in health care, education, infrastructure, and communities. Our government will keep holding the feds to account, and we will work collaboratively to help.

Education Property Taxes

Member Kayande: Mr. Speaker, the UCP government disproportionately hiked property taxes in Calgary. Inner-city

Calgary communities, including in Calgary-Elbow, are the most impacted. For the residents of Crescent Heights, Sunnyside, Hillhurst, Briar Hill, Altadore, Elbow Park, Mount Royal, Elboya, Killarney, Bridgeland, Scarboro, Parkdale, and Pump Hill, your taxes are going up by a lot. They're climbing by \$1,000 a year in Elbow Park. Did this government increase Calgary's taxes by over \$1,000 to punish Calgary for voting NDP?

Mr. Horner: No, Mr. Speaker. No punishment here; only schools and increased education spending. That's what we've heard consistently from Albertans across the province. They wanted education spending up, they want more schools. The conversations I have, people seem to understand this. We didn't treat anyone unfairly. The rate went up equally. The difference is in the assessment. Historically, the province has always been at 33 per cent. That space was given up and then used by former mayors. We're taking it back because we need it.

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

Member Kayande: Given that the provincial property tax doesn't flow through to schools; otherwise, the number of Calgary schools funded for construction would be greater than zero, given that the government had numerous alternatives to fund education other than raising taxes on Altadore homeowners, like, maybe, I don't know, taking it from the bottomless pit of the \$70 million Turkish Tylenol budget, why is this government raising Altadore homeowner taxes by hundreds of dollars instead of just ending their corruption, waste, and mismanagement?

Mr. Horner: A confusing question, Mr. Speaker, but I'll give it a go; 33 per cent of just operating, a record \$10.8 billion spend in education – do you think that was easy to come to without breaking the population plus inflation ceiling? – 7.2 per cent in education, 6 per cent across the healths. You can imagine how difficult that makes this budget for almost everyone else. The priorities were health and education. That doesn't even include the schools, of which Calgary is getting 14 of the 40.

The Speaker: Hon. minister, with your next answer, keep it within the time, please.

Member Kayande: Given that Sam Mraiche's companies are still holding \$50 million for even more Turkish Tylenol and given that \$50 million could pay for a lot of teachers and educational assistants and given that the government pays for bureaucratic bloat, waste, and mismanagement by raising taxes for Garrison Woods and Marda Loop residents by hundreds of dollars a year forever, does this government regret wasting tens of millions of dollars on health care severances instead of using the money to pay teachers their salaries?

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker, health care severances? We just saw the largest raises in Alberta's public sector. You know, we want to recruit and retain teachers, nurses to meet this growing population surge. We've accomplished that, and it hasn't been free. Fifty-four per cent of the operating budget of this province pays for the public service; \$7.7 billion in physicians alone. You know, we are making a conscious choice here that that represents the values of Alberta right now. We have to catch up to the population.

The Speaker: Minister, that was three times in a row you didn't finish on time. You've got to actually stay within the time limit.

Chartered Surgical Facilities

Dr. Metz: After seven years of the UCP, public health care is worse than it's ever been. Anaesthetists have told me of private surgeries in chartered surgical facilities getting cancelled because there was insufficient oxygen, out of a situation where the failure of cardiac resuscitation equipment meant EMS had to be called. When the UCP government pushes more surgeries to private facilities, they do so without patient safety at the forefront of their decision-making. Why hasn't the minister assured patients that health and safety . . .

The Speaker: The hon. minister for hospitals.

Mr. Jones: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Patient safety is, of course, paramount whenever we're providing surgeries, whether it's in our public hospitals, which are publicly paid for surgeries, or in our chartered surgical facilities, which are also publicly funded surgeries. Last year we did a record 318,000 surgeries. This year we're on pace for 330,000, and I expect that number to increase. We're doing record surgeries, and patient safety is always our number one priority.

Dr. Metz: Given that private surgical facilities do not publicly report on their safety record and instead they only report the number of surgeries they perform, given that I've been told about complications requiring repeat surgery after hip replacements done at private surgical facilities, probably due to infection, what is the minister doing to assure Albertans that private surgery contracts require the same safety reporting as public hospitals? Or have those safety standards been waived for their preferred contractors? [interjections]

Mr. Schow: Point of order.

The Speaker: A point of order is noted at 2:38.
The minister.

Mr. Jones: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think that's a very unfortunate question given that the same health care professionals often work in both the hospital setting and chartered surgical facilities, and of course they are held to extremely high standards. Acute Care Alberta oversees our service deliverers. That includes our hospitals, and it also includes our chartered surgical facilities. We're going to make sure that we have very high standards and that patient safety is always paramount. I don't think that the insinuation by the member opposite that chartered surgical facilities are unsafe is helpful for anyone, including the health care workers that have chosen to work there.

Dr. Metz: Given that the private surgical facilities do not have any requirement for any reporting, there's no reporting of outcomes of any sort. We do know that the safety is not being checked, and these facilities also do not fall under the purview of the provincial Ombudsman. This leaves Albertans with concerns, as the only way they can address those concerns is through legal mechanisms or asking for help.

2:40

The Speaker: The hon. the minister.

Mr. Jones: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If the member opposite has specific concerns about a provider, I would encourage her to provide those to my department so that we can look into them. If we're just speculating for ideological reasons, I don't think that's helpful to the health care workers that work in these facilities or the doctors that have started these facilities or the patients that, really,

come to me on a daily basis to tell me about the incredible care that they have received across Alberta in our chartered surgical facilities. Again, 80 per cent of our surgeries are being provided in hospital and all of them publicly funded.

The Speaker: Hon. members, in 30 seconds we will continue with the daily Routine.

Members' Statements

(continued)

Provincial Fiscal Deficit

Mr. Kasawski: With the UCP you pay more and get less. After seven years of this government and four under this Premier, the UCP is projecting a deficit so large that they have no path ahead in their fiscal plan to a balanced budget. Our province will collect over \$16 billion from resource revenue this year and still run a massive deficit. We must now grapple with a debt over \$109 billion, on the way to \$137 billion by 2029. That will be a debt of more than \$27,600 per Albertan.

I know the residents of Sherwood Park are working hard to pay off their mortgages, pay for postsecondary education, pay for activities, save for retirement, save a little bit of money for a holiday and trying hard just to cover the bills each month. We understand the importance of spending wisely to build for the future. We have planned, and we have saved. Now the UCP government is asking you to spend more, spend more because their poor planning and their bad choices, choices that will cost every single Albertan more than \$27,000 in provincial debt, all so that the UCP can fund their pet projects, projects like the now destroyed Turkish Tylenol, the private lab boondoggle, bloated contracts handed out to their friends, wastefully getting rid of the RCMP, and a very expensive referendum on separatism. These are not things that Albertans asked for, and the good people of Sherwood Park have had enough.

Albertans are reasonable people. We want a reasonable government with reasonable people, with discipline, good ethics, and competence. The Alberta NDP are ready to get to work on helping pay for the things that are important to you so at the end of the day you are not saddled with more debt created by the gifting, the boondoggles, and the wasting of money by the UCP.

Presenting Petitions

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

Mr. Getson: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and present a petition that was presented to me.

We, the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government to:

- (a) Create an independent citizens' assembly to:
 - (i) Review proportional representation electoral systems . . . share of legislature seats held by each party . . .

There is more really good stuff in here, but for expediency I'm very pleased to table this. These folks did a heck of a lot of work to help strengthen our democracy.

The Speaker: Thank you for that.

Notices of Motions

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

Mr. Sinclair: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am providing oral notice of the following motion, Motion 507.

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly (a) recognize that (1) communities in northern Alberta and in rural and urban areas across the rest of Alberta contribute significantly to provincial revenues through oil and gas, forestry, and other natural resource development, and (2) publicly available resource revenue mapping data is not presented in a manner that clearly identifies the contributions of these specific regions, and (b) urge the government to annually publish a report that (1) provides resource revenue data for the previous year disaggregated by geographical region within northern Alberta and rural and urban areas across the remainder of Alberta; (2) outlines the methodology and data sources used to calculate the regional revenue mapping data; and (3) considers utilizing the regional resource revenue mapping data to more equitably allocate infrastructure resources to northern Alberta and rural and urban areas across the rest of Alberta.

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Bill 206

Accessible Alberta Act

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce a bill, that bill being the Accessible Alberta Act, Bill 206.

Disabled Albertans have been calling for this legislation for decades, and this will be a first step towards creating a barrier-free Alberta.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 206 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The Minister of Mental Health and Addiction.

Mr. Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table five requisite copies of the Mental Health Patient Advocate annual report for 2024-25.

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. Amery, Minister of Justice, pursuant to the Statutes Repeal Act report entitled Statutes Repeal Act – 2026 List.

The Speaker: We have now come to the point where we deal with points of order. The first one according to what I have was at 2:14 p.m. The deputy House leader from the Official Opposition.

Point of Order Insulting Language

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Rising under 23(j), abusive language likely to cause disorder. At that time the Minister of Affordability and Utilities was answering a question, and he referred to one of the members on this side of the House as having a schizophrenic nature. This is clearly an insult. This is clearly language that is going to cause disorder, to refer to a member in this House as being mentally ill.

Not only that, Mr. Speaker. Let's be absolutely clear. Schizophrenia has nothing to do with multiple personalities. That's a long-standing myth. Schizophrenia is, in fact, a serious mental health condition that affects how people think, feel, and behave, can result in things like hallucinations, delusions, disorganized thinking

and behaviour, tragic impacts for those who suffer it and those who love them. To be absolutely clear, what the minister was talking about is dissociative identity disorder, which is also a tragic condition, not something to be treated lightly as a joke or an insult.

To suggest that a member in this House is mentally ill is beneath the decorum we should expect. I think there are many other terms the minister could have used to say that he felt the member was of two minds on the issue of the budget that wouldn't have been offensive to members here or people who live with a mental illness. So I would ask that the minister withdraw and apologize.

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the education from the doctor opposite on the definition of schizophrenia. I think at one time or another members on the government side might think that the questions coming from the opposition benches might be somewhat of a hallucination.

What I can say is that this response from the member – the hon. Minister of Affordability and Utilities said, according to my unofficial records, “Again, the schizophrenic nature of the NDP comes out.” There’s a long-standing tradition in this Chamber that we do not directly insult members. We also don’t do indirectly what we can’t do directly. However, in this specific instance, Mr. Speaker, the minister was referring to the nature of the NDP as a cumulative, as a caucus. So I don’t think this is a point of order. If it offends the sensitivities of the opposition deputy House leader, then that is a problem that he may have to deal with internally, but on this side of the House I don’t believe it’s a point of order. [interjections]

The Speaker: Okay. All right. No. We’ve heard the arguments. Thank you.

Listen, the hon. Opposition House Leader was incorrect. It was indeed directed towards the NDP. The Blues say, “The schizophrenic nature of the NDP comes out in full force.” The comment wasn’t directed at a specific person. It is, however, insulting and likely to cause disorder. It’s also inappropriate to use a health condition as an insult. I don’t think we want to get into dealing with health conditions, so I’m going to ask the hon. member to withdraw and apologize for that simply because I don’t think we want to get into discussing other members’ health conditions as part of the back and forth that we do around here.

2:50

Mr. Schow: Thank you for the direction, Mr. Speaker. I withdraw and apologize.

The Speaker: The next point of order: my records say at 2:17 p.m. The hon. Deputy Opposition House Leader, I believe.

Point of Order Language Creating Disorder

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe at that time we had had a question from the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. The Minister of Assisted Living and Social Services was responding. I do not have the benefit of the Blues, but what I heard the minister say was that member and a collective, so that member and the opposition, or that member and her colleagues, want to see people living in temporary structures.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we had an incident dealing with precisely this kind of language just this past Monday in which you ruled in reference to April 30, 2025, when Speaker Cooper ruled “that referring directly to the Premier as a separatist is a point of order,

and I’ll ask the hon. member to apologize and withdraw.” Again, we have indeed had rulings from you, from the Speaker of the House, that referring to a member wanting to see people live in tents is considered to be a point of order. We cannot do indirectly what we cannot do directly, so suggesting that any member wanted someone to live in temporary structures – we know very well what the minister was referring to – would also be a point of order.

Mr. Speaker, you yourself ruled on Monday that suggesting that the Premier is a separatist Premier and government, in fact, constituted a direct insult on the Premier despite the fact that the individual was connected to a collective. I would say based on the fact that we have recognized that the term is unparliamentary, that you cannot do indirectly what you cannot do directly, and that you have ruled that attaching an individual to a collective does not in fact exempt an insult or an unparliamentary term from being out of order, I would ask that the minister rise and apologize and withdraw.

The Speaker: The Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I actually couldn’t have argued my disagreement with that point of order better than the member just did himself. He made my points very clear. One is that it one is made against the member versus against the collective. When he suggested the comments about the separatist person versus a collective caucus, one would be ruled out of order; one would not be. In this specific instance it was made very clear. According to my unofficial records: “Mr. Speaker, an hon. member and her party [have] proposed to this Chamber that we have people live in temporary structures.”

Now, the member also suggested that we all know what the member actually meant. If we’re going to continue to use points of order based on what we assume other members are saying, Mr. Speaker, that is a dangerous precedent that we are going to set, a very slippery slope. I can tell you that with what comes out of the mouths of the members opposite, there’s a lot to be assumed, but I have to take what they say at face value.

Mr. Speaker, this is not a point of order. To assume what the hon. minister is saying is absolutely ridiculous. The member said “temporary structures.” What is inferred from that – members can take from that whatever. This is not directed at the specific member. Suggesting that a specific member wants others to live in a tent has been ruled out of order. I have those notes of my own. But this is not that case. In my opinion, not a point of order.

The Speaker: See, this is what makes it hard to deal with things around here. Let’s start out with what the Blues say: “Mr. Speaker, an hon. member and her party who proposed to this Chamber that we have people live in temporary structures instead of in homeless shelters.” So both the member and the party were insulted, jointly and separately, based on what was actually said.

Now, I appreciate that the points of order have been on “tents,” and the phrase today was “temporary structures.” It’s a very short leap from one to the other. Here’s a direction from the Speaker back on April 10, 2024. Yeah. That was before I was here. Just checking whether those are my words I’m going to quote to you right now, but they’re not.

I think that we’ve come to a point where making these sorts of allegations about members wanting Albertans to live in tents has probably come to the – as the then Speaker said: its mileage has been used. I think that the minister is very creative in the language which he can use, and there are many ways that he can do the same thing without creating such disorder.

It could be argued that the minister used creative language by saying “temporary structure.”

At the very least a strong warning, and I'm certainly open to calling this a point of order should this particular line of insult continue. Again, the fact that the member and the party were insulted jointly and separately in the matter. It wasn't the word "tent" said, but I think it's a pretty short leap. While the Government House Leader is not wrong in that we can't be twisting everybody's words every way possible to make them more insulting than they were intended, sometimes it's pretty ordinary. So I'm going to give this a strong caution here. Government House Leader, you might want to let your minister know that today: that close. Next time he may have to stand up and apologize and withdraw. This matter is dealt with.

Next point of order, according to what I have here, is at 2:38 p.m. The Government House Leader.

Point of Order Parliamentary Language

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise under point of order 23(h), (i), and (j). At the time noted, I don't actually remember who was speaking in the Chamber, but I was merely inquiring across the aisle to the Member for Edmonton-North West where many of his caucus members had left given that we were still in session. [interjection] Well, let's put it this way. If I want to make the point of order, I have to note the reason why I was engaging in the conversation. It's not to point out whether someone is or is not but rather to give context for the point of order, which in this instance I believe is in order.

While asking that question, I was told by the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud to, quote: shut it. Mr. Speaker, I just don't think that language is appropriate in this Chamber. It just seems that, like, other members across the aisle: whenever they have things to say when it's not their turn to speak, we don't tell them to, quote, shut it. It is their right to speak as they like to. Now, you may call them to order, and that is, of course, the prerogative of the chair, but in this instance I was not called to order. I was simply making an inquiry across the aisle and was so rudely spoken to by a colleague in this Chamber.

Mr. Speaker, I think this is a point of order under 23(h), (i), and (j). I don't think any member, whether on the record or off the record . . . [interjection]

The Speaker: Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, you're not recognized right now.

Go ahead, Government House Leader.

Member Irwin: I didn't say a word.

The Speaker: Somebody over there said . . .

Member Calahoo Stonehouse: It was me.

The Speaker: Okay. We don't need the help right now.
Go ahead.

Mr. Schow: Whether on the record or off the record, we have the right to speak in this Chamber and not be told to shut it, Mr. Speaker. It's inappropriate. I ask that member apologize and withdraw and refrain from that kind of language in the future.

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Unfortunately, despite the short distance between myself and that member, I did not hear the comment, so I cannot say. The reason I could not hear her comment was the loud, repeated, and prolonged heckling from the Government House Leader, who just admitted on the record that he

was contravening another practice of this House, as in 13.28 in practices and procedures, which in fact states: "Allusions to the presence or absence of a member during proceedings of the House are unacceptable." This was not a single instance; it was repeated, it was prolonged, and it was intended to provoke, and the Government House Leader just stood and admitted on the record that this is, in fact, what he was doing at the time. Of course, now, we did not call a point of order on that because we recognize that the things that are heckled are often not heard by yourself and therefore a point of order is not likely to be sustained.

What I will say is that I did not hear the comment from the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud. If you did, Mr. Speaker, or if it was captured in the Blues, I will await your ruling on that.

The Speaker: Well, hon. Deputy Opposition House Leader, the reference to the presence or nonpresence is based on individuals and no individual was referenced, at least not that I heard.

Anyways, you still can't call a point of order on a point of order argument.

Mr. Shepherd: I was not doing so.

The Speaker: I know you weren't, but I'm just saying. Nonetheless, I'm just responding to your complaint.

Let me say this. I didn't hear it. The Blues don't have the words "shut it" in there. So I will say to the Deputy Opposition House Leader, who's here representing your party, that if indeed the hon. member did say that, I would advise you to counsel the hon. member to not continue that. That is the kind of language that will cause disorder, and it is unparliamentary. Having said that, I didn't hear it. It's not on the record. I'm powerless to do anything, and this matter is dealt with.

3:00

Orders of the Day

Government Motions

Evening Sitting on March 23, 2026

31. Mr. Schow moved:

Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 4(1) the Assembly shall meet in the evening on Monday, March 23, 2026, for consideration of government business unless the Government House Leader notifies the Assembly that there shall be no evening sitting that day by providing notice under Notices of Motions in the daily Routine or at any time prior to 6 p.m.

The Speaker: Okay. This is a nondebtable motion.

[Government Motion 31 carried]

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 16

Traveller Protection and Destination Development Act

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Tourism and Sport.

Mr. Boitchenko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good afternoon, everyone. Once again, thank you for my amazing team present here today for helping me with this Bill 16. I'm proud to rise today to move the second reading of Bill 16, the Traveller Protection and Destination Development Act.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

This legislation represents another step forward in our government's goal to grow visitor spending to \$25 billion in annual visitor spending by 2035 by building consumer trust and supporting local destinations with tools they need to grow and attract visitors from around the world. At its core this legislation is about transparency, fairness, and trust. Over the past several years destination marketing fees have become more common across Alberta, across North America, and internationally. These are voluntary, industry-led fees that many businesses already charge to support local marketing and the destination development in our province.

Alberta has not had a consistent, province-wide framework to guide how these fees are collected and managed or to ensure they are responsibly used for their intended purpose that they were collected for. In some cases visitors have paid fees believing they support destination marketing and development only to see these dollars never leave the businesses that charge them in the first place. That undermines consumers' trust in Alberta as a destination, and it weakens the ability of destination organizations to do their work properly. This bill closes that gap. It sets clear expectations so that travellers know what they are paying for and local tourism partners can rely on stable and predictable funding to promote and develop their local destination.

A key part of this bill focuses on consumer protection. If passed, the act would amend the Consumer Protection Act to require that all mandatory fees related to accommodations or tourism experiences are clearly disclosed at the time of booking. The price people see up front would be the price they can expect to pay as they check out. If a visitor asked about a fee, businesses would need to explain what that fee is for and how it is being used. These are straightforward, common-sense measures that help put an end to unexpected charges at the checkout and reinforces Alberta's reputation as a fair and transparent place to visit.

The bill also establishes a consistent framework that sets clear rules for when and how destination marketing fees can be charged in our province. Fees could only be collected in areas with a designated DMO and, if applicable, designated accommodation association. One destination marketing organization, one accommodation association, and one independent trustee may be designated per geographic area. Industry retains control over destination marketing fees. Municipalities will not have a role in collecting, directing, or spending these fees.

It is important to be clear about what this legislation does not do. It does not introduce a new provincial tax. It does not make destination marketing fees mandatory. Businesses will continue to decide whether to charge the fees or not. Government's role is to provide the framework and the oversight, not to direct how destination marketing and development develop themselves.

To support transparency, the bill sets out clear requirements for how destination marketing fees are handled. The legislation also limits how these fees can be used so that they support destination marketing and development and related activities that drive measurable growth in the visitor economy locally. The act includes compliance and enforcement tools to support a level playing field, including inspection, administrative penalties, and offences in serious cases. These measures are about addressing clear cases of noncompliance and protecting consumers and businesses that follow the rules. Lastly, to give existing organizations and operators time to come into compliance, the bill also includes a transition period ending December 31, 2026.

Madam Speaker, the Traveller Protection and Destination Development Act is about strengthening Alberta's visitor economy and balance the practical way. It protects travellers from misleading fees, supports local destinations with clear and accountable funding tools, and it reinforces trust between visitors, businesses, and communities.

I'm proud to support this legislation and encourage all members of this House to do the same.

With that, Madam Speaker, I hereby move second reading of Bill 16, the Traveller Protection and Destination Development Act, in our province. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there others that wish to join the debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise this afternoon and speak to Bill 16, Traveller Protection and Destination Development Act. Now, you know, I've heard a lot from industry, and they're quite happy with this piece of legislation. I only wish that the speech that the minister just gave applied to his ministry when it came to how the ministry is collecting taxes and spending it. What those following along at home might not know is that this legislation is holding accountable the taxes that hotels and lodging are charging to Albertans. So if an Albertan looks at their bill and says, "What is this tax?" this is what it is for, and this is what it goes to.

There is a complete contradiction with this minister and ministry. There is something called the Alberta tourism levy, which is also a tax on tourists and tourism and specifically Albertans because in Alberta they are the highest population that actually accesses tourism facilities across the province. This government increased the tourism levy by 150 per cent. That is essentially a tax on Albertans and affordability. With that tax increase there's no accountability. That money: instead of doing what this piece of legislation does, which is go into a designated destination organization, the 150 per cent tax levy goes into general revenue. So that minister isn't even responsible for what happens for the taxes that he's taking from Albertans. It goes into general revenue, Treasury Board and Finance, no accountability.

3:10

This piece of legislation is asking hotels and lodging that collect a tax from travellers, Albertans: show your work. Show how you're taking the money, what it's for, how it's distributed. That speech would have been beautiful to hear as part of the budget, Minister, and it would have been beautiful to have it actually applied to the levy, right? While the Alberta Hotel & Lodging Association is really happy to see that there's going to be some transparency and that this government is, you know, creating some transparency, it's not something that we're used to. It's quite concerning that they're making others be accountable for the taxes that they're collecting but not them. Don't ask us to show where we're collecting money.

Now, the tourism industry in the province has been doing incredibly well. Their target numbers are up. We have all of these great incentives to try and come to Alberta. But we're not talking about the money that we're collecting essentially on the backs of Albertans, a 150 per cent tax increase, and we're not talking about how it's being spent.

With this ministry we're encouraging people to come and travel within the province. It's beautiful here. When asked about contingency plans when it comes to tourism in the province and there's talk of separating, what's the plan for Banff? What's the plan for Jasper? Those are national parks. What do you think hotel use is just going to be like in those spaces? What do you think people are going to do to get to the province of Alberta if we're not part of Canada? Our major airlines are Air Canada and WestJet, which are Canadian airlines.

I think that there have been some huge concerns when it comes to how this ministry has been treating the tourism industry. Prior to the budget tourism was quite excited about this piece of legislation,

Bill 16. They felt that this was a transparent moment from this government that was taking some responsibility and making sure that taxes that are being charged to consumers and tourists are being accountable. However, when they saw the budget, that trust was broken. There were so many people from the industry that said: “You know what? We felt completely sidelined. We are in a time where we are doing an incredible job.” They are the fourth economic output for this province – number four – yet the money that’s being charged to Albertans and other tourists, a 150 per cent tax increase, does not go back into tourism. It goes to general revenue.

There were concerns about the legislation after the budget, about being able to trust the government. So there are pieces of this legislation that put forward – you guessed it – wait for the regulations. That is something that this government traditionally has done when they don’t want to answer how things are going to go. There are questions about who’s going to be consulted with when it comes to the regulations, right? The tourism industry has been very clear about how successful they’ve been and what they need to continue to be successful, and that’s a government that’s continuing to invest in tourism. There is zero information about what those regulations are going to look like.

The tourism industry is worried, Madam Speaker, that they’re not going to be consulted. [interjections] When we talk about what this government does – you know, I hear squawking across the aisle. There’s going to be an opportunity to debate. I would encourage them to speak up when it’s their turn. This is my opportunity to speak in the House and really question what the government is doing with the tourism industry, like Bill 16... [interjections] Would you like to talk?

Member Irwin: You can speak next.

Ms Goehring: Yeah. Interventions aren’t allowed at this point because...

The Deputy Speaker: Sorry. Hon. member, comments through the chair.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I’m just disappointed that we’re trying to talk about a piece of legislation and they are not being respectful in the Chamber.

I think that there are some clear conflicting priorities when it comes to enhancing transparency. While Bill 16 does that, it talks about how the DMOs have to show what they’re spending the taxes on. The government, outside of this piece of legislation, isn’t doing that, specifically this ministry, so it’s a bit – I think the word that a lot of their members use is “rich” when it comes to, you know, being so excited about one bill that talks about transparency. It is a good thing. Don’t get me wrong. This is something that we absolutely would support. We have been calling for more transparency. This is something that I think is important to Albertans, to see where their money that they are giving to the government is going. Yes, Bill 16 is a step in the right direction, but I’m really disappointed that this wasn’t taken across the board when it comes to his entire ministry and the 150 per cent tax increase on tourism. It’s a tax on affordability.

When it comes to being able to enjoy this province, people are struggling, Madam Speaker, and affordability is top of mind for so many Albertans. I was in a grade 6 class last week. There were 75 students, three classes, and when I asked them what, you know, their families talk about the most around dinner, it’s the cost of things: the cost of groceries, the cost of rent, and mortgages. These are kids in grade 6 that are hearing the stress of families. They’re being told: we can’t enrol in sports because we can’t afford the basic

needs. We have a minister that has a successful tourism industry, and they’re being punished. I think that that’s really concerning when we look at the overall approach to how we should be rewarding success. I think I would like to see more transparency across not just this ministry but this government.

With that, Madam Speaker, I’ll close my comments. I encourage others to request transparency, and I look forward to the debate.

Thank you.

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

Member Hoyle: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to also speak to Bill 16, the Traveller Protection and Destination Development Act, which seeks to eliminate hidden fees in Alberta’s tourism sector by requiring mandatory, upfront disclosure of all costs at booking. This legislation creates a clearer framework for destination marketing organizations, ensures destination marketing fees, or DMFs, are handled transparently, and gives consumers clarity about what they’re being charged when they travel in Alberta. This bill is a step in the right direction for visitors, for businesses, and for communities whose economies depend on tourism, and it aligns with priorities that Albertans have continually shared with us: making life more affordable, growing a high-potential sector, and insisting on transparency, accountability in how fees are collected and reinvested.

But it is worth noting that the UCP government broadly continues to show that they’re not trustworthy when it comes to planning for Alberta’s economic future success. I can tell you that the Alberta New Democrats are focused on making life more affordable, and we believe that the tourism industry is a major economic driver. On this side of the House we support growing the tourism industry in Alberta. We want to see a strong and sustainable growth in this sector.

The tourism industry encompasses a range of businesses used by tourists, from hotels to gift shops to bike rentals and much more. Canadians from other provinces as well as Albertans travelling within the province make up the majority of tourism activity in Alberta, accounting for about 75 per cent of spending and about 94 per cent of visits. The Tourism Industry Association of Alberta found there was \$376 million in spending on outdoor equipment and accessories, with outdoor recreation contributing \$2.8 billion to the gross domestic product of our province. This is a huge generator of employment and economic activity, 1.5 per cent of employment, or 36,000 full-time equivalent jobs, in Alberta based on our outdoor recreation. It also leads to \$551 million in tax revenue and comprises .8 per cent of the province’s GDP. So there’s no denying the economic impact of tourism in Alberta and the industry.

Madam Speaker, Alberta is a breathtakingly beautiful province and a place that everyone should experience.

3:20

Mr. Kasawski: Especially Sherwood Park.

Member Hoyle: We want travellers from Canada and abroad to enjoy and share in the beauty of our province, especially Sherwood Park, as my colleague just said, but for years we’ve seen DMFs exist in a kind of grey zone. The fees are voluntary, often inconsistently disclosed, and sometimes pocketed by a minority of bad actors instead of being reinvested to promote destinations or enhance the visitor experience. The hotel organization has long advocated for closing these loopholes and restoring public trust.

I emphasize that word, “public trust.” The UCP government often touts big plans for tourism growth, but Albertans are rightly skeptical when the same government won’t meet a basic standard of transparency on much larger sums, like the tourism levy revenues, or

when new costs are proposed without clear reinvestment plans. It's clear that the UCP government has conflicting priorities when it comes to enhancing transparency, Madam Speaker.

Trust is built by aligning words with actions. Bill 16, if implemented with good-faith consultation and clear regulations, can help bring some of that trust back. If Albertans are going to be charged additional fees or, as my colleague had said earlier, taxes, they should be reassured that the extra revenue goes towards growth of the visitor economy, especially because the UCP continues to fail to deliver a fiscal plan that assures Albertans of a stable economy, good-paying jobs, high-quality public services, and an affordable cost of living in this province.

Bill 16 allows the minister to designate three types of entities – destination marketing organizations, accommodation associations, and trustees – and regulates the collection of the DMFs by these entities. It is still optional for an operator to charge and will be charged to the customer purchasing an accommodation or a tourism experience. It also requires accommodation providers like hotels, Airbnbs, private campgrounds to disclose all fees that are charged to a customer at the time of purchase. DMFs will then be held in trust and used only for permitted tourism-related purposes. With funds held in trust fully remitted and clearly reported, local DMOs can plan marketing and production development responsibly while proving to residents and businesses that the money is used as intended.

Tourism-based economies like Banff, Canmore, Jasper, Drumheller, and some of Canada's most iconic destinations host far more visitors than the population could ever fund through their local taxes. Banff, Jasper, Canmore together represent about .68 per cent of Alberta's population yet host 13 per cent of Alberta's visitors. This mismatch strains local services like waste collection, snow removal, transit, and washrooms, and it complicates capital upgrades for trails, parking, and visitor facilities. Beyond this bill what direct supports are being provided to tourism-based economies facing capacity constraints, particularly those with small residential tax bases and high visitor loads? I would have loved to hear the minister talk about that aspect and answer that question. These communities need predictable, transparent funding streams dedicated to maintaining high-quality visitor experiences.

Overall, industry experts are hopeful with Bill 16, with the TIAA calling this legislation a positive framework for accountability and responsible fund management. But it's worth noting that they along with rural municipalities in Alberta have a fair concern that a centralized framework could limit the flexibility of certain local fee-sharing arrangements.

We still don't have a clear line of sight accounting for hundreds of millions from the tourism levy being reinvested into the sector. The government has also said that Kananaskis conservation pass

revenues, \$11 million to \$12 million annually, will be reinvested in trail maintenance and conservation, yet Budget 2026 doesn't clearly demonstrate this. These are not minor oversights.

More troubling, Budget 2026 proposes to increase the tourism levy by 50 per cent and introduce a new 6 per cent on vehicle rentals. That's effectively a 150 per cent increase in taxes at the point of travel. At a time when approximately 80 per cent of travellers are Albertans, when families are already stretched, these added costs dampen local travel, hurt small operators, and act as a tax on productivity, offering no clear incentive for private investment in new tourism products.

Tourism is already a major engine of growth, with our province visitor economy driving over \$144 billion in visitor spending, and international visitor spending hit a record of \$3.5 billion in 2024 and is Alberta's fourth-largest export revenue. This government says that it wants to grow tourism to \$25 billion by 2025. That's possible but not by taxing more and investing less, not by raising costs on Albertans while refusing to show where public tourism dollars go. We need smart, targeted public investments that unlock private capital and transparent, trusted systems for fees and levies so communities and visitors can see the return on their contribution.

I'm happy to see that Bill 16 attempts to aim to end bad practices, restore consumer confidence, and strengthen destination marketing, but trust runs in both directions, Madam Speaker. We need this government to meet the same standard that they set in this bill by providing clear public accounting for fees and levies and re-examining budget choices that raise travel costs for Albertans without a clear reinvestment path.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there others that would like to speak to Bill 16 in second reading?

Seeing none, would the minister like to close the debate? The hon. Minister of Tourism and Sport.

Mr. Boitchenko: I would like to close debate for second reading of Bill 16.

The Deputy Speaker: That's how it's done.

[Motion carried; Bill 16 read a second time]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to move that the Assembly be adjourned until Monday, March 16, at 1:30 p.m. Drive safe.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 3:28 p.m.]

Bill Status Report for the 31th Legislature - 2nd Session (2025-2026)

Activity to Thursday, March 12, 2026

The Bill sponsor's name is in brackets following the Bill title. If it is a money Bill, (\$) will appear between the title and the sponsor's name. Numbers following each Reading refer to Hansard pages where the text of debates is found; dates for each Reading are in brackets following the page numbers. Bills numbered 1 to 200 are Government Bills. Bills numbered 201 or higher are Private Members' Public Bills. Bills numbered with a "Pr" prefix are Private Bills.

* An asterisk beside a Bill number indicates an amendment was passed to that Bill; the Committee line shows the precise date of the amendment.

The date a Bill comes into force is indicated in square brackets after the date of Royal Assent. If a Bill comes into force "on proclamation," "with exceptions," or "on various dates," please contact Legislative Counsel, Alberta Justice, for details at 780.427.2217. The chapter number assigned to the Bill is entered immediately following the date the Bill comes into force. SA indicates Statutes of Alberta; this is followed by the year in which it is included in the statutes, and its chapter number. Please note, Private Bills are not assigned chapter number until the conclusion of the Fall Sittings.

Bill 1 — International Agreements Act (Smith)

First Reading — 6 (*Oct. 23, 2025 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 77-85 (*Oct. 28, 2025 aft., adjourned*), 109-18 (*Oct. 29, 2025 aft., adjourned*), 133-35 (*Oct. 30, 2025 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 184-87 (*Nov. 4, 2025 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 250-52 (*Nov. 6, 2025 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Nov. 26, 2025 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force November 26, 2025; SA 2025, cI-3.8]

Bill 2 — Back to School Act (Horner)

First Reading — 26 (*Oct. 27, 2025 aft., passed on division*)

Second Reading — 27-28 (*Oct. 27, 2025 eve.*), 29-35 (*Oct. 27, 2025 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 35-36 (*Oct. 27, 2025 eve.*), 37-45 (*Oct. 27, 2025 eve., passed on division*)

Third Reading — 45-46 (*Oct. 27, 2025 eve.*), 47-54 (*Oct. 27, 2025 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Oct. 28, 2025 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on October 28, 2025; SA 2025 cB-0.5]

Bill 3 — Private Vocational Training Amendment Act, 2025 (McDougall)

First Reading — 65 (*Oct. 28, 2025 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 135-37 (*Oct. 30, 2025 aft., adjourned*), 187-93 (*Nov. 4, 2025 aft., adjourned*), 215-16 (*Nov. 5, 2025 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 334-37 (*Nov. 18, 2025 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 371-73 (*Nov. 19, 2025 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Nov. 26, 2025 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2025 c17]

Bill 4 — Public Safety and Emergency Services Statutes Amendment Act, 2025 (No. 2) (Ellis)

First Reading — 121 (*Oct. 30, 2025, passed*)

Second Reading — 193-201 (*Nov. 4, 2025 aft., adjourned*), 216-24 (*Nov. 5, 2025 aft., adjourned*), 289 (*Nov. 17, 2025 eve., adjourned*), 323-34 (*Nov. 18, 2025 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 408-13 (*Nov. 20, 2025 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 447-55 (*Nov. 24, 2025 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Nov. 26, 2025 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force November 26, 2025, with exceptions; SA 2025 c18]

Bill 5 — Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2025 (Schow)

First Reading — 271 (*Nov. 17, 2025 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 322-23 (*Nov. 18, 2025 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 407-08 (*Nov. 20, 2025 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 589-90 (*Nov. 27, 2025 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Dec. 11, 2025 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force December 11, 2025; SA 2025 c23]

Bill 6 — Education (Prioritizing Literacy and Numeracy) Amendment Act, 2025 (No. 2) (Nicolaidis)

First Reading — 150 (Nov. 3, 2025 aft., passed)

Second Reading — 252-60 (Nov. 6, 2025 aft., adjourned), 289-98 (Nov. 17, 2025 eve., adjourned), 337-39 (Nov. 18, 2025 aft., adjourned), 341-51 (Nov. 18, 2025 eve., adjourned; amendments introduced), 455-65 (Nov. 24, 2025 eve., adjourned; amendments introduced), 504-14 (Nov. 25, 2025 eve., passed on division)

Committee of the Whole — 681-86 (Dec. 2, 2025 eve., passed)

Third Reading — 713-21 (Dec. 3, 2025 aft., passed)

Royal Assent — (Dec. 11, 2025 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2025 c19]

Bill 7 — Water Amendment Act, 2025 (Schulz)

First Reading — 121 (Oct. 30, 2025 aft., passed)

Second Reading — 224-35 (Nov. 5, 2025 aft., adjourned), 298-307 (Nov. 17, 2025 eve., adjourned), 351-55 (Nov. 18, 2025 eve., passed)

Committee of the Whole — 480-93 (Nov. 25, 2025 aft., passed)

Third Reading — 536-43 (Nov. 26, 2025 aft., adjourned), 661-63 (Dec. 2, 2025 aft., passed)

Royal Assent — (Dec. 11, 2025 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2025 c27]

Bill 8 — Utilities Statutes Amendment Act, 2025 (Neudorf)

First Reading — 478 (Nov. 25, 2025 aft., passed)

Second Reading — 663-70 (Dec. 2, 2025 aft., passed)

Committee of the Whole — 737-44 (Dec. 3, 2025 eve., passed with amendments)

Third Reading — 766-71 (Dec. 4, 2025 aft., passed)

Royal Assent — (Dec. 11, 2025 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force December 11, 2025, with exceptions; SA 2025 c26]

Bill 9 — Protecting Alberta's Children Statutes Amendment Act, 2025 (Amery)

First Reading — 319-20 (Nov. 18, 2025 aft., passed on division)

Second Reading — 378-91 (Nov. 19, 2025 aft., adjourned), 493-501 (Nov. 25, 2025 aft., adjourned), 549-54 (Nov. 26, 2025 aft., adjourned), 676-79 (Dec. 2, 2025 aft., adjourned), 815-22 (Dec. 8, 2025 eve., passed on division)

Committee of the Whole — 855 (Dec. 9, 2025 aft., adjourned), 873-80 (Dec. 9, 2025 eve., passed on division)

Third Reading — 891 (Dec. 9, 2025 eve., adjourned on division), 892-900 (Dec. 9, 2025 eve., passed on division)

Royal Assent — (Dec. 11, 2025 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force December 11, 2025; SA 2025 c24]

Bill 10 — Red Tape Reduction Statutes Amendment Act, 2025 (No. 2) (Nally)

First Reading — 271 (Nov. 17, 2025 aft., passed)

Second Reading — 374-78 (Nov. 19, 2025 aft., adjourned), 514-21 (Nov. 25, 2025 eve., adjourned), 543-49 (Nov. 26, 2025 aft., adjourned), 670-76 (Dec. 2, 2025 aft., passed)

Committee of the Whole — 728-29 (Dec. 3, 2025 aft., adjourned), 744-45 (Dec. 3, 2025 eve., passed)

Third Reading — 789-94 (Dec. 8, 2025 eve., passed)

Royal Assent — (Dec. 11, 2025 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2025 c25]

Bill 11 — Health Statutes Amendment Act, 2025 (No. 2) (LaGrange)

First Reading — 426 (Nov. 24, 2025, passed)

Second Reading — 555-64 (Nov. 26, 2025 eve., adjourned), 590-96 (Nov. 27, 2025 aft., adjourned), 637-46 (Dec. 1, 2025 eve., adjourned), 808-15 (Dec. 8, 2025 eve., passed on division)

Committee of the Whole — 856 (Dec. 9, 2025 aft., adjourned), 867-73 (Dec. 9, 2025 eve., passed on division with amendments)

Third Reading — 913-14 (Dec. 10, 2025 aft., adjourned on division), 916-22 (Dec. 10, 2025 aft., passed on division)

Royal Assent — (Dec. 11, 2025 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2025 c21]

Bill 12 — Financial Statutes Amendment Act, 2025 (No. 2) (S) (Horner)

First Reading — 478 (Nov. 25, 2025 aft., passed)

Second Reading — 693-98 (Dec. 2, 2025 eve., adjourned), 731-37 (Dec. 3, 2025 eve., passed)

Committee of the Whole — 745-50 (Dec. 3, 2025 eve., adjourned), 850-55 (Dec. 9, 2025 aft., passed with amendments)

Third Reading — 860-67 (Dec. 9, 2025 eve., passed on division)

Royal Assent — (Dec. 11, 2025) [Comes into force on various dates; SA 2025 c20]

Bill 13 — Regulated Professions Neutrality Act (Amery)

First Reading — 404 (Nov. 20, 2025 aft., passed)

Second Reading — 564-73 (Nov. 26, 2025 eve., adjourned), 629-37 (Dec. 1, 2025 eve., passed)

Committee of the Whole — 686-92 (Dec. 2, 2025 eve., adjourned), 801-08 (Dec. 8, 2025 eve., passed)

Third Reading — (Dec. 9, 2025 eve., passed on division)

Royal Assent — (Dec. 11, 2025) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2025 cR-13.3]

Bill 14 — Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2025 (Amery)

First Reading — 763 (Dec. 4, 2025 aft., passed)

Second Reading — 794-801 (Dec. 8, 2025 eve., adjourned), 844-50 (Dec. 9, 2025 aft., passed on division)

Committee of the Whole — 856 (Dec. 9, 2025 aft., adjourned), 880-87 (Dec. 9, 2025 eve., passed on division with amendments)

Third Reading — 922-23 (Dec. 10, 2025 aft., adjourned on division), 924-31 (Dec. 10, 2025 aft., passed on division)

Royal Assent — (Dec. 11, 2025 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force December 11, 2025, with exceptions; SA 2025 c22]

Bill 15 — Public Safety and Emergency Services Statutes Amendment Act, 2026 (Ellis)

First Reading — 943 (Feb. 24, 2026 aft., passed)

Second Reading — 972-83 (Feb. 25, 2026 aft., passed)

Bill 16 — Traveller Protection and Destination Development Act (Boitchenko)

First Reading — 963 (Feb. 25, 2026 aft., passed)

Second Reading — 1065-68 (Mar. 12, 2026 aft., passed)

Bill 17 — Fiscal Measures Statutes Amendment Act, 2026 (Horner)

First Reading — 1039 (Mar. 10, 2026)

Bill 201 — Employment Standards (Protecting Workers' Pay) Amendment Act, 2025 (Ganley)

First Reading — 121 (Oct. 30, 2025 aft., passed)

Second Reading — 154-65 (Nov. 3, 2025 aft., adjourned), 274-76 (Nov. 17, 2025 aft., defeated on division)

Bill 202 — Conflicts of Interest (Ethical Governance) Amendment Act, 2025 (Kasawski)

First Reading — 248 (Nov. 6, 2025 aft., passed)

Second Reading — 276-84 (Nov. 17, 2025 aft., adjourned), 427-31 (Nov. 24, 2025 aft., defeated on division)

Bill 203 — Energy Storage Planning for Investment Act (Al-Guneid)

First Reading — 319 (Nov. 18, 2025 aft., passed)

Second Reading — 431-39 (Nov. 24, 2025 aft., adjourned), 608-13 (Dec. 1, 2025 aft., defeated on division)

Bill 204 — Public Interest Disclosure (Publicly Funded Health Entity Whistleblower Protection) Act (Sweet)

First Reading — 534 (Nov. 26, 2025 aft., passed)

Second Reading — 613-20 (Dec. 1, 2025 aft., adjourned), 1014-20 (Mar. 9, 2026 aft., defeated on division)

Bill 206 — Accessible Alberta Act (Renaud)

First Reading — 1063 (Mar. 12, 2026 aft., passed)

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For inquiries contact:

Editor

Alberta Hansard

3rd Floor, 9820 – 107 St

EDMONTON, AB T5K 1E7

Telephone: 780.427.1875

E-mail: AlbertaHansard@assembly.ab.ca