



Province of Alberta

The 31st Legislature
Second Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, March 18, 2026

Day 34

The Honourable Ric McIver, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 31st Legislature

Second Session

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Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie-East (UC), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UC), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Arcand-Paul, Brooks, Edmonton-West Henday (NDP)
Armstrong-Homeniuk, Hon. Jackie, ECA,
Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UC)
Batten, Diana M.B., Calgary-Acadia (NDP)
Boitchenko, Hon. Andrew, ECA, Drayton Valley-Devon (UC)
Boparai, Parmeet Singh, Calgary-Falconridge (NDP)
Bouchard, Eric, Calgary-Lougheed (UC)
Brar, Gurinder, Calgary-North East (NDP)
Brar, Gurtej Singh, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)
Calahoo Stonehouse, Jodi, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP)
Ceci, Hon. Joe, ECA, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)
Chapman, Amanda, Calgary-Beddington (NDP),
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Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)
de Jonge, Chantelle, Chestermere-Strathmore (UC)
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Dyck, Nolan B., Grande Prairie (UC)
Eggen, Hon. David, ECA, Edmonton-North West (NDP)
Ellingson, Court, Calgary-Foothills (NDP)
Ellis, Hon. Mike, ECA, Calgary-West (UC),
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Eremenko, Janet, Calgary-Currie (NDP)
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(UC)
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Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UC),
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Yaseen, Hon. Muhammad, ECA, Calgary-North (UC)

Party standings:

United Conservative: 47

New Democrat: 38

Progressive Tory: 1

Independent: 1

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Nate Glubish	Minister of Technology and Innovation
Nate Horner	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
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Dan Williams	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Rick Wilson	Minister of Mental Health and Addiction
Muhammad Yaseen	Associate Minister of Multiculturalism

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Shane Getson	Parliamentary Secretary for Economic Corridor Development
Chelsae Petrovic	Parliamentary Secretary for Health Workforce Engagement
Jason Stephan	Parliamentary Secretary for Constitutional Affairs
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Justin Wright	Parliamentary Secretary for Rural Health (South)
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Ip
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Yao

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, March 18, 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 to his government, to Members of the Legislative Assembly, and to all in positions of responsibility the guidance of Your spirit. May they never lead the province wrongly through love of power, desire to please, or unworthy ideals but, laying aside all private interests and prejudices, keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all. Amen.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Visitors

The Speaker: Members, I am pleased to introduce Arnold Viersen, Member of Parliament for Peace River-Westlock. MP Viersen has served in Parliament since 2015, being re-elected by his constituents three times since. As an elected official Arnold has worked tirelessly to end human trafficking and protect children in online spaces as well as advocating for rural communities and concerns across Canada. I would ask that he please rise and accept the warm welcome of this Assembly.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Starting with the hon. Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my privilege to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly 24 individuals from the Covenant Canadian Reformed School in Neerlandia. This is a grade 6 class, and I was fortunate to be able to visit the school a couple of weeks ago. I would ask that they please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to introduce students from the Lakeview Christian School near Stettler. Thank you so much for making the drive. Please stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Next up we have the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Services.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to introduce to you and through you a grade 6 class from Menno Simons Christian school, located in the wonderful constituency of Calgary-West. I ask them to please rise and ask you all to extend the warm welcome of this House.

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

Ms Gray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to introduce to you and through you to all members 70 students plus teachers and guests from Meyonohk school. "Meyonohk" is translated from the Cree language. It means a nice place to be. Their school certainly is, and their Lunar New Year performance is stellar. I would ask all

those students on both sides of the gallery to please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Hon. members, joining us in the Speaker's gallery today are Josie Fir and Tony Fir, parents of the Minister of Arts, Culture and Status of Women. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Williams: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce through you and to you a number of stalwart advocates for the dignity of life from conception to natural death who have joined us today. We have Alana LaPerle, Jordan Stewart, Cam Wilson, Father Dean Dowle, Alissa Jones, and many others. Please rise and receive the very warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Chestermere-Strathmore.

Ms de Jonge: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to introduce Joel Persaud and Paul Lawton from the Association for Reformed Political Action. ARPA is a grassroots Christian political advocacy organization that is here today to show their support for the important work our government is doing. I ask that they please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The Minister of Mental Health and Addiction.

Mr. Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and to all members of the Assembly Mr. Neil Belanger, CEO of Indigenous Disability Canada, and secondly, Mr. John Williams and Stuart Gale, who are advocates of an Alberta recovery model. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Mr. Sigurdson: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you a large group of industry leaders representing Alberta's incredible canola industry. I had the pleasure of meeting with them at their leaders' banquet last night. I'd also like to introduce my reeve, Rob Siewert, and his incredible councillors from Foothills county. I'd ask that they all please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

Mrs. Petrovic: Well, Mr. Speaker, I too would also like to introduce some reeves from Foothills county. There's Reeve Siewert, Councillor Callister, Councillor Estes, and CAO Payne. They seem to be in better condition than the rest of my councillors that have been up here for RMA. I ask that they please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mrs. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Catharine Kavanagh, who's joining us in the gallery. She is the western stakeholder director for Cardus. Based in Calgary, she works to advance greater diversity and pluralism in provincial education and child care systems. Please rise and receive the warm and traditional welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The Minister of Justice.

Mr. Amery: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you Philip Ney, Trish Bowman, Billie Jack, Charmaine McIntyre, Monica Sawchyn, and Robin Acton with Inclusion Alberta and Inclusion Canada. They're here today to show support for some of the great work that this government is doing and

the important work that is happening in this Legislature. I ask them to 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. It's my great honour to rise today to introduce to you and through you the recognized author and family physician Dr. Ramona Coelho as well as the ethics director for Canada Physicians for Life, Amanda Achtman, who are both here today to show the support for the incredible work our government is doing. I'd like them to rise and receive the warm welcome.

The Speaker: The Minister of Tourism and Sport.

Mr. Boitchenko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour today to rise to introduce to you and through you Natasha Kozak. Natasha is a women's powerlifting athlete who recently came back from Newfoundland, where she competed in the Canadian women's nationals. I would like to ask Natasha to please stand up and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The Minister of Technology and Innovation.

Mr. Glubish: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and the whole House my friend and my Member of Parliament for Sherwood Park-Fort Saskatchewan, Garnett Genuis, who is currently the shadow minister of employment. He recently tabled Bill C-260, the care not coercion act, in the House of Commons, and he's eager to learn about what we're working on here in the government of Alberta. Please rise to receive the warm welcome to the Assembly.

Members' Statements

The Speaker: First, we have the Member for Grande Prairie.

Northwestern Polytechnic Skilled Trades Training Centre

Mr. Dyck: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have exciting news about the future of Grande Prairie and our province. This September Northwestern Polytechnic will open a new state-of-the-art skilled trade centre, a major win for students, industry, and Grande Prairie. This 40,000-square-foot expansion will support more than 700 additional skilled trade seats across 12 programs, training the next generation of carpenters, of plumbers, of heavy-duty technicians, of pipefitters, of welders, and automotive service techs, all in Grande Prairie. This is great news.

These are not just jobs; these are the people who are keeping the lights on, the heating running, and the economy going strong. This kind of progress does not happen by accident because the reality is this. In Grande Prairie our energy, our forestry, our agriculture, and construction sectors are all growing and needing skilled trades workers, not someday, not eventually; right now, Mr. Speaker.

For far too long the skilled trades were treated as a second choice. While others focused on theory, Alberta is focused on results. When it comes to building pipelines, building homes, building communities, Albertans know the job is best done by Albertans. We are getting people trained, getting them working, and getting projects built.

This investment is about more than a building. It happens because of strong leadership, and Northwestern Polytechnic leadership has stepped up in a big way. President and CEO Dr. Vanessa Sheane and board chair Shawna Miller along with the entire board have worked hand in hand with industry, myself, MLA Wiebe, along with our government to align training with strong workforce needs.

They are strategic leaders, and I look forward to continuing seeing their leadership across the trades.

This is about building Grande Prairie. This is about building the north. Mr. Speaker, if you want to grow an economy, you do not bench your best players; you invest in them. Northwestern Polytechnic is leading, our government is supporting, and together we are building the workforce that will power Alberta's future.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, the habit here is to keep it quiet during private members' statements. While no one tried to interfere, there was quite a bit of chatter on both sides. Let's do better.

1:40

Eid al-Fitr

Mr. Haji: Mr. Speaker, Eid Mubarak to you and to the rest of the members in this Assembly. This Friday Muslims in Alberta and across the globe will mark Eid al-Fitr through prayers and joyful celebrations. Eid al-Fitr marks the conclusion of Ramadan, a month devoted to reflection, prayers, generosity, and service to others. It is a joyful occasion that reminds us of the importance of gratitude, compassion, and community. Throughout Ramadan members of this Assembly have joined Muslim Albertans and their neighbours to iftar and meaningful reflections. Iftar gatherings are served as opportunities to learn and better understand the values of patience, charity, and humility.

We are reminded that Alberta's diverse culture has long been and will continue to be one of the greatest strengths and the beauties of our province. This past month has also reminded us that building a strong sense of community among Albertans is more important than it has ever been. Regardless of cultural heritage, faith, or immigration background, the values of hard work, kindness, and care to one another resonate with Albertans across this province. As families gather to celebrate Eid with prayers, meals, and acts of charity, it's also a time to reflect on how we continue to build a welcoming community where everyone feels they belong. Mr. Speaker, I invite members of this Assembly to see the Eid celebration as an opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to building an inclusive community where every Albertan is respected.

To all those celebrating in Alberta and across the province: I wish you and your families peace, joy, and blessings. To fellow Alberta Muslim communities: [Remarks in Arabic].

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Chestermere-Strathmore.

Federal Strychnine Regulation

Ms de Jonge: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a farmer's daughter I learned early that farms don't run on theory; they run on hard work and practical tools. That includes pest control. For generations farmers have used strychnine to control gophers because it works. Gophers don't just nibble at crops. They destroy fields, damage equipment, and cost farmers thousands. But instead of listening to farmers, bureaucrats in the alphabet soup of government agencies, specifically Health Canada's Pest Management Regulatory Agency, decided they knew better, and from offices far removed from rural Alberta they banned a proven effective tool without offering a real alternative.

Now, a farmer in Strathmore told me what this decision actually means on the ground. He spent \$10,000 on alternatives that didn't work. Then he had to hire someone at \$4,000 a month plus a vehicle just to deal with gophers. In six months he shot over 14,000 gophers. That's just one farm. Multiply that across Alberta, and you begin to understand how out of touch this decision really is.

While Ottawa bureaucrats push paper, Alberta farmers are being crushed under the heavy boot of regulation. At a time when input

costs are rising and global food prices are under pressure, the last thing farmers need is government making their jobs harder, but that's exactly what's happening. This is what you get when decisions are made without understanding and without consequences for the people making them.

Mr. Speaker, our government will not stand by while bureaucrats undermine Alberta farmers. I want to thank the Premier and the Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation for fighting back against this reckless decision. This matters not just to farmers but to every Albertan who depends on them. As we head into the 2026 seeding season, farmers need policies that support production, not policies that tie their hands. Let me be clear. We will not accept bad policies from distant bureaucrats, and we will not accept decisions that hurt our producers, and we will not stop fighting until Alberta farmers have the tools they need to do their job. Bureaucrats need to get out of . . .

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Beddington.

Premier's Travel to Saudi Arabia

Ms Chapman: This past fall, after months of fruitless negotiations with the UCP, Alberta's teachers took historic action. They went on strike. They were fighting overcrowded, underfunded classrooms. They were fighting deteriorating conditions for students. They were fighting a government that prefers blaming Ottawa and immigrants instead of taking action on the crisis in our schools. In the face of inaction Alberta teachers were fighting for their students, our children, all Alberta children.

What did they get in return, Mr. Speaker? Back-to-work legislation fortified by the nuclear notwithstanding clause, robbing every teacher in this province of their constitutionally protected rights, slammed through the House with next to no debate, and as it all unfolded, where was the Premier? Was she even in the province to defend her government's actions?

The Speaker: You cannot make comments about the presence or not presence of somebody in the House. Sorry.

Ms Chapman: No. The Premier was off on another one of her fancy trips.

Just yesterday we learned that while on her little junket to the Middle East, which cost Albertans more than \$64,000, the Premier and her seven staff flew on private jets generously gifted them by the Saudi government. I suppose that an order in council issued on the 29th of October, two days after the Premier's private flight, which changed the rules to allow acceptance of these types of gifts is mere coincidence.

Mr. Speaker, this government is so entitled. As the UCP continue to waste money blowing up the deficit and enriching their friends, they're making life harder for teachers and for all Albertans. It's about time we see the end of the UCP's chaos, corruption, and entitlement. It's about time we see an Alberta NDP government.

Don Cherry

Mr. Sinclair: When I was a kid, I used to pray to the Lord to make me a hockey player, but I forgot to mention in the NHL, so I spent 16 years in the minors. A great quote, not from me but Donald S. Cherry, or Grapes.

Mr. Speaker, Don Cherry has always been an unapologetic, proud Canadian. He wasn't perfect and I didn't love everything he said, but no one could ever doubt that he loved hockey, he loved Canada, and he loved honouring veterans or first responders. In fact, he always made time to highlight real-life heroes during *Coach's Corner*. He

always cheered for third- or fourth-line guys who had to take the long road to the NHL. He often mentioned Stan Jonathan, a First Nation from Ontario, as the toughest pound-for-pound fighter in the NHL and one of his favourites. As a kid looking for people who look like me in the NHL, it meant something.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to honouring veterans, Don Cherry is not wrong. I was at an Oilers game recently, and I was frustrated and disappointed with how many people refused to stand or clap when they showed a veteran in his 80s on the big screen during the break. You can be an advocate for peace, you can disagree with governments on wars, you can protest – that's your right – but that's the very freedoms that veterans fought and gave their lives for. We're so privileged that it feels like we've forgotten how lucky we are not to have to fight or die in a war for those rights.

I know hockey and the NHL has changed and the world has, too. I just hope society and Canadians can have the grace to judge people by their entire body of work, not their worst moments. I have no idea if Don Cherry will get the Order of Canada, but I consider him hockey royalty and as Canadian as it gets. If I had a vote, he would get in.

This is what I hear when I close my eyes and think of Don Cherry. Keep your head up. Stay out of the trolley tracks. Bawango. Top corner. Who can dangle? Who can score? Who else? Bobby Orr. Let's go. What a beauty.

The Speaker: The Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

School Construction Needs in Southeast Edmonton

Mr. Gurtej Brar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Picture a child steps from a school, staring at a playground, but no, he cannot go to that school. He must travel an hour because he lost the lottery. How do we tell that to a six-year-old?

In my constituency, Edmonton-Ellerslie, classrooms are packed tighter than ever. It's worse here than almost anywhere in Alberta. The lottery turns a spot in the school into a cruel game of chance. Parents hold their breath, hoping to win. Lose, and it's a long bus drive every day. Kids come home exhausted, families get stressed, and learning suffers.

This budget once again has no new school for Edmonton-Ellerslie. Again no relief on the way. As my colleague from northeast Calgary said: the UCP is good at counting schools on their fingers, but if anyone wants to see those schools on the ground, they need UCP goggles, special goggles that turn hot air into headlines and empty promises into progress.

Our families see the truth: overcrowding, lotteries, kids shipped far away. Our kids will remember who gambled with their education. This lottery mess will teach future leaders how not to run a government. Governments that ignore education will be guilty in the eyes of future generations. The UCP failed to deliver on their promises. Our kids and families deserve better. Alberta New Democrats are ready to deliver what's best for our kids: more schools, more teachers, real resources. Better is possible.

1:50

Oral Question Period

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

Provincial Intelligence Service

Mr. Nenshi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Premier dropped a lot of bombs. We're going to go forward with some of those, but one of them is that I asked the Premier what she's going to do about all the

foreign interference that we already know about engaging in her referenda and in separatism. She didn't answer the question, but she told us that Alberta is setting up a supersecret spy agency that we have never talked about before to spy on Albertans. She further said that the RCMP and CSIS won't give her top secret information. Given that she accepts gifts from foreign governments, why would they?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Smith: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. First let me begin by saying that the RCMP did not give us information on the danger of the Lawrence Bishnoi gang. We had to go to the Calgary Police Service and the Edmonton Police Service, at which point, because of the information they gave to us, we were able to support B.C.'s call to make them a terrorist group. That's part of the reason why we have to make sure that we have other avenues to receive intelligence. We have the public security and intelligence office. We also have ALERT, which works together with all of the police service. They're tasked with giving threat assessments, and as we set the sheriffs up to be a police service, of course they're going to have an intelligence arm. All of the police services do.

Mr. Nenshi: The Premier just admitted that she has everything she needs with existing organizations. We know she doesn't like the RCMP. We know she now doesn't like CSIS. We now know she doesn't have a security clearance, just like Pierre Poilievre, but this misadventure with replacing the RCMP has already cost taxpayers hundreds of millions if not billions of dollars. How much more will the Premier's supersecret spy agency cost Albertans, and what benefit are we planning on getting from it?

The Speaker: The Premier.

Ms Smith: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The RCMP does not brief our government. I made that clear, and no, I'm not happy with that fact, which is why we have to go to alternative sources to be able to get intelligence. I am going through the process to be able to get a higher clearance so that I can get CSIS briefings because I would like to know if there is any foreign interference happening in our province. In point of fact, the way CSIS is working right now, they can only brief the Prime Minister. There are federal MPs who had foreign interference in their ridings, and it became very clear that they were not briefed. So yes, we have some deficiencies, and we're going to do everything we can to fill them.

Mr. Nenshi: Thrilled to hear the Premier is going after that security clearance. Perhaps she could tell Pierre Poilievre what forms he needs to fill out.

Yesterday she also said that the Minister of Technology and Innovation was going to look after setting up the secret spy agency, and in estimates he had no idea what she was talking about. She said that the Deputy Premier and minister of public safety would do it. He had no idea what she was talking about, but he made it clear that nothing would happen for at least a year. So who is setting up the supersecret spy agency, and how in the world will this actually help stop foreign interference this fall?

The Speaker: The Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Every single police service has an intelligence arm. When the sheriffs are stood up as a police service, which will happen in June, they will develop their intelligence arm as well. We already have a cybersecurity team which assesses threats on a daily basis and also manages threats and attacks on our cybersecurity systems on a daily basis. We've given them public service

awards year after year for the work that they do, and I would imagine that as this intelligence agency gets set up, we will use some of the internal resources that we already have developed through Tech and Innovation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The second set of questions belongs to the... [interjections] Order. The second set of questions belongs to the Leader of the Official Opposition.

Premier's Acceptance of Gifts and Benefits

Mr. Nenshi: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker, for that. Yesterday among many of the other bombs that she dropped, the Premier admitted to Albertans for the very first time that her trip to the Middle East last year wasn't for a conference or anything in particular that was scheduled, but it was in fact to accept a gift from a foreign government of hundreds of thousands of dollars. Meanwhile her caucus was here defending the least popular bill in this government's history before the budget. Did the Premier tell her caucus that she was accepting hundreds of thousands of dollars from a foreign government?

Mr. Schow: Point of order.

The Speaker: A point of order is noted at 1:55.
The Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very transparent about my travels. I give a press release. I do pictures and postings while I'm there. I do follow-ups when I return. I do interviews. Everyone knew that I was in Saudi Arabia as well as in the United Arab Emirates. I was attending two conferences in the United Arab Emirates, ADIPEC as well as an artificial intelligence conference. Then in Saudi Arabia we were invited, at the invitation of His Royal Highness Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman Al Saud, the energy minister, to tour Aramco sites.

Mr. Nenshi: What I got from that answer is that her caucus didn't know she was accepting hundreds of thousands of dollars in gifts from a foreign government. The Premier said that she had Ethics Commissioner approval. This is so far out of the norm, the biggest gift any Canadian politician has ever accepted and from a foreign government. So surely there is written confirmation from the Ethics Commissioner saying that it's all okey-dokey okay. I asked her for it yesterday twice; she ignored the question. Will she table the advice today, understanding that the rest of us can't accept anything more than \$500 and she took hundreds of thousands of dollars?

The Speaker: Order.
The Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Maybe the member opposite would like to be briefed by his House leader about the number of times that government has had to host international delegates for tours of our oil sands operations. Why do we rent chartered aircraft? You cannot easily fly to Fort McMurray or travel around and look at the sites without that, like the NDP did on June 14, 2016, and the NDP did on August 3, 2017, and the NDP did on September 28, 2017, and September 11, 2018. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order.

Mr. Nenshi: I've been on chartered aircrafts to Fort McMurray. It is not the same as a private jet jetting around the Middle East to places where there is plenty of commercial air travel.

Listen, the Premier has the largest cabinet in history. She spends three times as much as Alison Redford on her office, but despite having all these people around her, are we to believe that not one person said, "Hey, Premier, you can't accept hundreds of thousands of dollars from a foreign government"? And if no one said that, can we believe that someone did say that and the Premier ignored the advice because she's that entitled?

The Speaker: Order. Order. That's twice running overtime.
The hon. Premier.

Mr. Williams: Point of order.

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, I've already established that Alberta also takes chartered aircraft to host foreign dignitaries at our oil sands operations.

Saudi Arabia is a desert, Mr. Speaker. To cover the ground that we did in three different flights to not only a military air base, an oil field, and a refinery, we would have had to drive for three days. That's part of the reason why the energy minister offered to . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Order, folks. I'd like to hear this. You should listen, too.

Ms Smith: It's part of the reason why the energy minister offered to have a chartered plane so that we were able to visit all of the sites, so that we had a full understanding of Aramco's . . .

The Speaker: The hon. member for the third set of questions.

Mr. Nenshi: There's also no seven-star, superluxury hotels in Fort McMurray, which the Premier also took advantage of from the government of Saudi Arabia.

The Premier claims that this was a matter of social protocol. Now, listen, Mr. Speaker, she may not have a lot of international experience. I do. I've worked internationally, including in the Middle East, and here's the thing about social protocol. You're allowed to say no. You can actually say that that's not appropriate; that's not right. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. You don't have to like the answer or the question, but you do need to listen to it.
Go ahead.

Mr. Nenshi: All they have is laughter because they know they're wrong, Mr. Speaker.

Why didn't the Premier just say no?

The Speaker: A point of order was noted at 1:58.

2:00

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, August 3, 2017: the NDP paid for a delegation of U.S. congressional staff to do a site tour of Banff focused on tourism and the Imperial research centre to focus on energy technology. On September 28, 2017, the NDP paid for a U.S. administration think tank group to do an oil sands site visit to Suncor Base plant and MEG Energy Christina Lake. On September 11, the NDP government paid for a Western Governors' Association . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. We need to hear the questions and the answers.

Ms Smith: Lead study to tour the oil sands at Suncor Base plant and MEG Energy Christina Lake as well, Mr. Speaker. This is the kind of thing that we do with international and intergovernmental relations, and we're going to keep on doing it.

Mr. Nenshi: So she's going to keep accepting private jets and luxury hotel stays. That's what she just said, Mr. Speaker. Despite bringing up all those receipts, this is not the same thing. Saudi Arabia is not a democracy; it's one of our major competitors in the energy markets. They have a big say in setting the price of oil, which the Premier blames, along with immigrants, on all her problems, yet she thinks that they're best friends and they don't want anything in return. Would the Premier, had she still been the Leader of the Opposition, allow for this level of entitlement from the Premier she . . .

The Speaker: Order. When the time is up, you got to stop talking. That's three times.

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, we have three major delegations coming to Alberta this year. We have a Stampede delegation of 150 individuals who are going to be coming from all over the world. We also are hosting the Western Premiers' Conference in Kananaskis, and we're also hosting the PNWER delegation that is going to be in Edmonton.

Mr. Speaker, this is just a standard practice when you are trying to sell your products to the world. We have energy security that we can offer, food security that we can offer, tourism opportunities, education opportunities. This is what we do in the international and intergovernmental relations department. We're going to keep doing it.

Mr. Nenshi: If this government is paying for suites at fancy hotels and private jets for all those visitors, I want to know about it, Mr. Speaker. The level of entitlement here is off the charts. While she was away, teachers had not been paid for three weeks. The Premier constantly says that poor people in this province are getting overly generous benefits from this government, and she's going to fight global poverty on private jets in seven-star hotels gifted by a foreign government who is not our friend. Alison Redford lost office for far less than this. When will the Premier take responsibility?

The Speaker: Oh, it's still Wednesday. Go ahead, Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The second-largest oil producer in the world and the fourth-largest oil producer in the world, us, have a lot to talk about. We have a number of different service companies that want to do business in Saudi Arabia. That is one of the reasons why we're going to make sure that they have an avenue to be able to do that.

We also have an opportunity to learn from them. They have advanced technology in AI and how they're using it to optimize their resources. I had an opportunity to visit that at Aramco. In addition, they are also doing carbon capture, utilization and storage, nature-based solutions. They're also doing direct air capture. We have a lot to share in terms of information technology, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The next set of questions belongs to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Ms Gray: Mr. Speaker, while teachers were having their bargaining rights torn away by this UCP government, the Premier and seven of her staff were flying around Saudi Arabia on a private jet paid for by a foreign government. They stayed in luxury accommodations, also paid for by a foreign government, and that was kept secret from Albertans. Why did the Premier keep the lavish gifts that she and her staff received from a foreign government secret from Albertans?

The Speaker: The hon. the Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is not uncommon for this government to visit with other governments to talk about areas of particular shared interest, particularly in the oil and gas sector and

development there. This is nothing out of the normal. The members opposite did it. They hosted governments and it was 2016, June 14, they did private flights. This goes back to building relationships, something that members opposite have no idea how to do. It's why they're in opposition. It's why no one wanted to be here between 2015 and 2019, because nobody wanted to be their friends.

Ms Gray: Mr. Speaker, the itinerary release shows the Premier spent three days and nights in Saudi Arabia, but it said nothing about the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia paying for that luxury with private flights and opulent places to stay. From box seats to private jets this government has not learned that accepting lavish gifts is inappropriate and always comes with strings attached. The Premier only disclosed these things when our leader asked her about it in budget estimates. Will the Premier now disclose all other gifts that she has received from foreign governments?

Mr. Schow: Mr. Speaker, the Premier's actions continue to be in compliance with the Ethics Commissioner. This was pre-cleared with the Ethics Commissioner.

If the members opposite want to talk about gifts, let's talk about the former mayor of Calgary who accepted multiple tickets, including box seats, to watch the Calgary Flames in 2015, a single ticket from ATCO to see the Flames in 2014, a ticket to the western final hockey game, and of course, Mr. Speaker, tickets . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. We get to hear the question. We get to hear the answer. That's how it works here.

Mr. Schow: Of course, Mr. Speaker, tickets to see the opera and the ballet, how bougie, and of course Cirque du Soleil and theatre shows. I'm not sure what the members opposite have to say about this. Everything on this end is compliant . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Anybody want to do some work today? Let's hear the question. Let's hear the answer.

Go ahead, please.

Ms Gray: Mr. Speaker, this government is confusing fully disclosed items with something a government hid. These people giving these gifts are not our friends who are here to help us. Saudi Arabia is an oil and gas competitor. Albertans expect their elected officials to avoid even the appearance of corruption, and accepting the gifts of free private flights and free stays at fancy hotels is wildly inappropriate. Ask Albertans about it. I believe the Premier knows this, yet she did it anyway. When will this Premier . . .

The Speaker: Order. Time is up. Hon. member, you don't get to interrupt me.

We heard the question. Let's hear the answer.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned, everything has been compliant and followed and disclosed to the Ethics Commissioner and has been approved.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite fail to understand that as a government it is incumbent upon us to build relationships with other businesses and other governments of shared interests, in particular, Saudi Arabia. We do not sell oil to Saudi Arabia. However, there are companies right here in Alberta who manufacture products that are used for oil production in that country, and it's important for us to continue to open those doors and send the message that Alberta is open for business and that we are a great trading partner, something they failed to do . . .

The Speaker: Order.

The next question belongs to the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre. I'd love to hear the question, I'd love to hear the answer, and I'd like for everybody to quit when the time is up.

Provincial Intelligence Service

(continued)

Mr. Shepherd: Mr. Speaker, yesterday we got a fresh look at just how far this government's megalomania goes. Not only does the Premier want to direct judges, control the municipalities, and do away with the RCMP, now she wants her own intelligence agency. Now, yesterday the Premier said that since CSIS and the RCMP won't do what she wants, the UCP are developing their own intelligence arm at Alberta Sheriffs Police Service. How much is the Premier feeling entitled to spend on this new pet project to play spy?

Mr. Ellis: None of what that member said is accurate, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta sheriffs under the Alberta government has a public security intelligence office that's been going on for years and actually been going on for so many years when they were in government. They do threat assessments and, as I told the member opposite yesterday, they work collaboratively with all organizations, including the RCMP, the Calgary Police Service, the Edmonton Police Service, and all police services because all police services have their own intelligence units . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Shepherd: Given that a government that is doubling our debt and can't even manage basic services like health care and education has no business spending money to play spy and given that Albertans have good reason to question if a Premier who attempted to interfere in a criminal case, who wants to direct and appoint judges, and whose government has a record of unprecedented political interference can be trusted with control over an agency empowered to investigate or conduct surveillance on anyone it deems a threat, why would any Albertan trust this government to waste millions on its own secret spy agency, something no one elected them to do?

2:10

Mr. Ellis: Mr. Speaker, again, nothing about what that member said is accurate. Look, if there is a threat against a member of this House, then guess what? The public security intelligence office is going to conduct that threat, whether it's a UCP member or an NDP member, because that nonpartisan agency takes threats seriously. They've been doing an outstanding job in collaborating with, again, all police services within the province of Alberta and outside of the province of Alberta.

Mr. Shepherd: Given we only have to look south of the border to see what happens when inexperienced partisans and politicians have power over intelligence agencies and given that with the Premier's upcoming fall referendum what we really need is an immediate plan to combat potential foreign interference from the U.S. and particularly given that separatist friends of the Premier have sought support from an administration making partisan use of their own intelligence agencies, why does this government feel entitled to waste money on these expensive plans instead of just collaborating with federal experts in foreign interference to protect Albertans from the mess this Premier created?

Mr. Ellis: Mr. Speaker, for the third time, what that member said is just not accurate. Again I will talk about the public security intelligence office and the outstanding work that those members do within there in

collaborating and working with all police services in the province of Alberta. I also want to talk about the Alberta law enforcement response teams who do joint forces operations, who also have an intelligence component within them, again, to work with all law enforcement agencies to go after whether it be domestic or foreign interference or whatever the case may be. This is what law enforcement does, and I want to thank them for their service. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

The next question belongs to the hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

Economic Development and Job Creation

Mr. Lundy: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Investment in Alberta just keeps on coming. What a great-news story. Despite the NDP's best efforts to scare business away, companies know Alberta is the best place to set up shop. Just today in my own riding Nisku landed a \$16.1 million investment from Exceed Canada Oilfield Equipment, which grows our manufacturing sector and brings jobs previously done overseas back to Alberta. To the Minister of Jobs, Economy, Trade and Immigration, why are companies like Exceed choosing to do business here?

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta continues to stack wins because we are the best place to do business, and there is no doubt about that. We have the lowest corporate taxes, we have the best workforce, and we've proven commitment to cutting red tape. This investment from Exceed landed in Alberta because of the investment and growth fund through the Ministry of Jobs, Economy, Trade and Immigration. We are competing with other jurisdictions and, again, we continue to win. Growing our manufacturing sector is a win. It brings jobs and makes Alberta a place that everybody wants to do business. Thanks to our government, companies like Exceed have the confidence to come here and stay here.

The Speaker: Leduc-Beaumont.

Mr. Lundy: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister. Given there are many benefits that come from major investments such as job creation and provincial revenue and given this creates opportunities that lower the tax burden on Alberta families and further given it is the UCP government that has a proven ability to create jobs, unlike the NDP whose legacy is one of broken water pipes, low investment, and driving people away from Alberta to find work, to the same minister: what is the current government's reputation when it comes to creating jobs and attracting businesses to Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The numbers are clear. Alberta is singlehandedly carrying job growth for the rest of the country. Other provinces were losing tens of thousands of jobs year over year; Alberta gained 85,000 jobs. In fact, without Alberta's job growth, Canada would have lost 33,000 jobs. That is a staggering number. Canada needs Alberta's job growth. As for the NDP, they have no plan to grow the economy. They have no plan to create jobs. They have no plan to attract investment. That's why they have failed in multiple elections. It's why they're going to stay in opposition in perpetuity.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Lundy: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker and again to the minister. Given the UCP government has a proven track record of job

creation with over 300,000 jobs added since 2019 and given that, on the other hand, the NDP spent their time in office creating carbon taxes and driving investment away and given it is the NDP who want to hike the corporate tax rate by 38 per cent, making clear they are still the same bad-for-business party they've always been, leaning into their socialist rebrand, can the same minister please tell the House: how do the current government policies differ from the NDP's?

The Speaker: The minister.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To quote the Member for Red Deer-South: when it comes to business, the NDP is bad. Now, we saw it when they were in government, and we see it again today. No plan on the opposite benches, and over their time in government job growth was a complete nonstarter. Perhaps their leader could have pitched a few new jobs with something like – I don't know – reviewing and fixing water pipes. Again, major failure on the opposition benches. No; they were focused on carbon taxes, they were focused on blue rings, they were focused on attacking rural Albertans and the family farm, and as a result costs went up and people left the province.

All-season Resort Development

Dr. Elmeligi: In estimates the Minister of Forestry and Parks said that parks are for the people, and I agree. They're an essential and affordable way for Albertans to enjoy our natural spaces. Legislatively they're also to conserve our water, wildlife, and land. The first all-season resort designated areas undermined both those purposes when over a thousand hectares were removed from Kananaskis parks for large-scale commercial development. Why did the minister approve these boundary changes, thereby taking away lands from the public and leasing them to a commercial operator?

The Speaker: The hon. minister of parks. Well, somebody has got to get up. Okay. The minister of parks.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the question. Yes, we do believe parks are for people, which is, I guess, something the other side doesn't believe. We believe every Albertan should be able to see themselves being able to recreate in our parks and enjoying Alberta parks. Now, I guess the NDP want to tell Albertans what they want to enjoy and what they don't want to enjoy, but we believe in listening to the people. We believe there's opportunity in our parks for everybody to be able to see themselves recreating and for us to be able to compete with tourism to British Columbia. This is part of our plan to create more opportunity in this province for tourism and generate that income.

Dr. Elmeligi: Given Albertans weren't consulted on these boundary changes – they weren't asked – and also given that the designation of Nakiska all-season resort area removed random segments of some of the most popular family-friendly trails in Kananaskis, including Troll Falls, given these trail segments no longer fall under the Provincial Parks Act, they're not in a park, so they no longer belong to the people. Conservation officers aren't responsible for enforcing regulations, and trail crews aren't responsible for trail maintenance. Is the minister of tourism expecting the proponent to take on the responsibility of maintaining these trails and enforcing regulations?

Mr. Loewen: Mr. Speaker, since 2019 this government has increased provincial parks and recreation areas by over 300,000 hectares. When we look at the area that we planned for the all-season resorts, we want to make sure that Albertans still have access

to those special places. We'll make sure that they have access to the parking areas to the most special places and the trails to get there. We think there's a great opportunity for Albertans to be able to enjoy these places and enjoy the opportunity to have the all-season resorts right here in this province.

Dr. Elmeligi: Given the minister seems confused, Mr. Speaker, because they're not parks anymore – the boundaries were erased – given public consultation just started on another all-season resort area, a gondola up Mount Lady Macdonald in Canmore, given this would require another park boundary change and amendments to the South Saskatchewan regional plan and this is exactly why this proposed project has already been rejected twice by the government, will the minister of tourism commit to honouring existing and legislated park boundaries when designating all-season resort areas?

Mr. Boitchenko: Mr. Speaker, the changes to park boundaries impact less than .03 per cent of the provincial park system, including increasing the size of Castle wild provincial park by 54 hectares. Again, since 2019 we have added 300,000 hectares to provincial parks. This is adding, not deducting.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Recovery Community Contracts

Member Eremenko: Mr. Speaker, with the UCP Alberta is in a perpetual game of corruption Whac-a-Mole. Whenever there's a conversation about this government and its shady procurement practices Sam Mraiche's name just pops up. Look no further than the front page of the *Globe and Mail* this morning. Mr. Mraiche keeps coming up again and again in deals involving this government. I'm positive there are countless other qualified businesses in Alberta to work with. Is Mr. Mraiche just that prophetic a businessman, or is he getting first dibs on government contracts from his friends at the top of the UCP government?

2:20

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member should go back and read the *Globe and Mail* article. These are not government contracts. These were contracts to First Nation communities. I very much disagree with that member, her party, who seem to be saying that they want to step into First Nation councils' business and tell them who they should procure. Some of the things that are said in that article are concerning. That's why it's a matter for the courts at the moment. To be very, very clear, these were not government contracts. We work very closely with our First Nation partners. This member should not stand up in this House and put disparaging comments on the floor on those chiefs and councils without all the information.

Member Eremenko: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that it's a lot quicker to shake on an agreement at a hockey game rather than go through those pesky RFPs and conflict of interest sign-offs and given that the only thing more troubling than the corruption is the impact it has on Albertans – Turkish Tylenol puts sick babies at risk; faulty PPE exposed the front line to COVID-19. We better believe that those were government contracts. Now three recovery communities on First Nations are mired in lawsuits, delaying access to treatment services. Why can't this government stop making bad deals with Sam Mraiche?

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, why does the Official Opposition in Alberta continue to attack chiefs' and councils' ability to make decisions for their own projects? This is actually old news in this Legislature. It's been discussed many times. As a result of the last set of questions the minister made a decision to ask every First

Nation involved in these projects to put on the floor of this House, to table it, how the procurement process took place on other nations. Any member can look at it.

Mr. Speaker, again, I think the courts should do their job. At the same time, though, we should not be making up things about people who cannot defend themselves in this Chamber, including chiefs.

Member Eremenko: Given that I had . . .

The Speaker: I will recognize you, I promise. The hon. member.

Member Eremenko: Given that I had no idea First Nations were involved in MHCare deals or Turkish Tylenol and given that of all the landlords Marshall Smith, the Premier's former chief of staff, had to lease from Sam Mraiche's sister and given that of all the leaseholders Marshall Smith's pals at ROSC Solutions Group are leasing their offices from Sam Mraiche and given that of all the land purchases it was Sam Mraiche who turned a profit of \$300,000 selling land to this government 12 weeks after he bought it, does the UCP government believe that this is all purely a coincidence?

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, what I believe is that the Official Opposition should act like an Official Opposition, not come to this Chamber and attack members who aren't in this Chamber to defend themselves and also bring up things that are before the court that are clearly identified as not part of the government. I understand that their poll numbers are bad. I understand that their leader is in trouble. I understand how desperate they feel, but starting to attack First Nation communities in this province to try to make themselves feel better in question period is appalling. The member should apologize. Let's get down to government business.

Ms Gray: Point of order.

The Speaker: A point of order was noted at 2:23.

Economic Development and Investment Attraction

Mr. Bouchard: Mr. Speaker, it seems that the members opposite are the only ones in this Chamber who continue to bring up Alberta independence. They insist that this discussion is inherently anti-Canadian. What about being pro-Albertan? They forget that Alberta independence stems from a desire to protect our province and people from a federal government that continuously fails to do so. Could the Minister of Jobs, Economy, Trade and Immigration please explain what our government is doing to engage in open dialogue on what's best for Alberta in the face of federal overreach?

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Unlike the members opposite, we want to attract investment here to Alberta. We want to see this province grow. Just again today a \$16.1 million investment landed right here in Alberta that almost chose Texas, but they chose Alberta because they love what we're doing. Now, we've created 85,000 jobs over the last 12 months. At the same time, Canada lost 33,000 jobs. Alberta continues to lead the way. Major investments in aviation, aerospace, manufacturing, technology are all choosing Alberta because we're making it the best place to visit, to live, to set up shop.

Mr. Bouchard: Given the opposition's insistence that simply engaging in meaningful discussion about prioritizing Alberta's needs somehow discourages investment and further given that the facts tell a different story, major projects, including hosting the 2028 World Cup of Hockey, which chose Calgary and Edmonton as their locations over 26 other regions world-wide, could the same

minister please highlight how investment opportunities continue to thrive in Alberta despite the opposition's ongoing assertion that Alberta's economic outlook is in danger?

The Speaker: The minister.

Mr. Schow: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I didn't think that listening to Albertans was a bad thing, but apparently, according to the NDP, they must demonize Albertans who disagree with them. That's why they hate direct democracy.

On our side of the House, Mr. Speaker, we continue to see investment despite the NDP's best attempts to drive it away. We just landed the World Cup of Hockey, also the MOU for pipelines and the reversal of several bad laws thanks to the leadership of this Premier, and I can tell you that there's more great news coming because we're going to continue to fight for Alberta and make it an incredible place to invest and to work.

Mr. Bouchard: Given that Quebec has already successfully advocated for greater autonomy within Confederation, proving that such conversations can occur without threatening national unity, and further given that we have never once heard the members opposite tear down the Québécois or paint them as radical anti-Canadians while having no issue referring to fellow Albertans as treasonous, Mr. Speaker, could the same minister highlight how our government will continue to work toward more provincial autonomy that keeps Alberta's best interests at heart? [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Well, yes, Mr. Speaker. Investment is important to us. That's why we're going to continue to send ministers all around the world to sell Alberta's best interests, which I think the Premier has done, myself, and other members in the front bench. The member opposite is right. They never once criticized the radicals in Quebec, and do you want to know why? It takes a radical to know one, and they know what they're looking at. I can tell you that on this side of the House we're going to continue to consult with Albertans to better understand what they want from their government, from their province. That's what governing is about.

Budget 2026

Member Hoyle: After seven years under this UCP government Albertans are staring at a massive \$9.4 billion deficit with no clear path back to balance. Despite being handed some of the strongest resource revenues in a generation, this budget drives up costs while offering little relief. Families are paying more but not getting ahead. The Premier is not helping Albertans struggling with affordability right here in Alberta, and that's deeply concerning. How can this government justify a budget that spends more, drives up debt, and still makes life less affordable for Albertans?

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker, you don't need a super secret spy agency to know what the NDP has been doing postbudget: trying to find a narrative that will stick. Albertans know that if we were currently being governed by the NDP, this deficit would have been much higher. What did we do? We kept spending below population growth plus inflation. We targeted towards health care and education and the capital programming that we need for a growing population. What's our track record? Doubling the heritage fund and paying off \$15 billion in debt. They don't have a leg to stand on, and they're talking out of both sides of their mouths. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order.

Member Hoyle: Given that this UCP government has spent billions with so little to show for it and given that Albertans are paying more for housing, more in fees, more to just get by while this government racks up a \$9.4 billion deficit and given that Albertans have been loud and clear that they want to see real action on affordability and given that growing the economy and creating good-paying jobs should be their priority, not more waste on scandals like Turkish Tylenol, why does this budget lack a clear plan to create more jobs and grow the economy so Albertans can get ahead?

Mr. Schow: Mr. Speaker, it sounds like the members opposite have not been listening to the news. Just recent news says that Alberta has created 85,000 new jobs over the last year. You know, I'll say this. What I'm not hearing from the opposition is a plan: no shadow budget, no suggestions on how to continue to attract investment, no ideas on how to improve education or health care. All they want to do is criticize, like the armchair quarterback yelling at the TV screen. While we're out here in the field getting wins, they're over there taking losses. Enjoy the opposition.

2:30

Member Hoyle: Given that while our health care system is in crisis, classrooms are overcrowded, and Albertans are struggling to get by, this government is choosing to waste hundreds of millions on pulling Alberta out of the CPP and experimenting with the provincial police force and given that Budget 2026 will see Albertans paying more in property tax, vehicle registration, trade certifications, and small-business registration, why is this government burdening future generations with debt, making life more expensive all while gambling billions on priorities Albertans didn't ask for?

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker, you hear the answer and the truth in the question. They don't like where we've limited or decreased expense. They don't like where we've increased revenue. Yet they continue to criticize the deficit. I've said this many times. Affordability is still a major concern in this province, across this country. We thought that we were in a better position to withstand this for Albertans. We have a strong balance sheet. We're still catching up to this wave of population that didn't have an economic cause. They came here because our houses were cheaper. We're going to meet the call. We're going to continue to build.

The Speaker: The next question belongs to the hon. Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock.

Livestock Traceability

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Livestock producers across Alberta have raised serious concerns about the recent proposed livestock traceability amendments brought forward by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, or CFIA. Since these proposed changes were announced, there has been a significant amount of concern as well as misinformation about what these changes really mean and how they affect the livestock industry. To the Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation: can you please update this Assembly on what our government is doing to address the proposed regulation changes?

Mr. Sigurdson: Mr. Speaker, from day one our government has been clear. We will always stand up for Alberta's livestock producers. When the proposed changes from the CFIA were announced, we immediately heard concerns about the cost, timeliness, and clarity. That's why I formally requested to the federal minister that CFIA pause these changes until meaningful engagement can take place, and

I'm proud to say that we've secured that pause. As minister I can assure the livestock industry that their concerns will be heard and they will be addressed.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Alberta's livestock industry is essential to our economy but it also faces risks, particularly from foreign animal diseases like foot-and-mouth disease, and given that a foreign animal disease outbreak is the greatest threat to our livestock sector, to the Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation: how is our government working with industry and federal partners to strengthen traceability systems in a way that protects animal health while being practical for our producers?

Mr. Sigurdson: Well, Mr. Speaker, there is no greater threat to our livestock industry than foreign animal disease. An outbreak could shut down markets, devastate producers, and impact thousands of jobs. That's why traceability is so vital, but it's also important that any changes also have positive impacts that do not cause undue cost on the industry. I recently met with the head of CFIA, expressed that any changes must be producer led, beneficial to prevention, and practical in application. We'll continue to communicate on behalf of our producers.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that beyond commercial operations, Alberta's livestock traceability rules also impact community events such as rodeos, agricultural fairs, and 4-H Alberta and further given that these events are foundational to rural life and youth development across our province, to the same minister: how could the proposed CFIA changes affect our rodeos, fair exhibitions, and 4-H families, and how does Alberta's advocacy help ensure that these important traditions can continue without unnecessary impacts?

Mr. Sigurdson: Mr. Speaker, livestock traceability doesn't just affect commercial ranches; it also touches the lifeblood of rural Alberta. Rodeos, ag fairs, and 4-H families rely on clear and workable rules to continue their traditions. These events build community, develop youth leadership, and support rural economies. That's why CFIA must recognize the unique realities of these events. This government will make sure Alberta's rural traditions can grow and thrive, and I will continue to support an exemption for the 4-H, rodeos, and ag fairs from these changes.

Hospital Emergency Services

Mr. Deol: Mr. Speaker, my constituent Prashant Sreekumar died waiting more than eight hours for treatment in the emergency room. When the Grey Nuns community hospital opened in 1988, Alberta had about 12,000 acute-care beds. Today, even though the population has more than doubled, the number of spaces in our hospitals has dropped by thousands. CIHI reported in November that Alberta today has just over 7,000 beds. When patients like my constituents are dying in emergency rooms because there is no way to treat them, why did this government cancel the construction of . . .

The Speaker: The hon. minister of hospitals.

Mr. Jones: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, we convey our deepest condolences to the family and friends of Mr. Sreekumar.

It's important to highlight that we are making capacity enhancements to the Edmonton area and, really, across Alberta. I would highlight the upcoming bed towers at the Grey Nuns and Misericordia hospitals,

which will double the in-patient capacity at each site with 350-bed towers. We're also making expansions in shelled and vacant space. We're also looking at our top 16 sites, including those two hospitals, to see what services could be performed outside of a hospital so that we can backfill it with even more adult acute-care capacity.

Mr. Deol: Given that there's no funding for the project talked about, given that the UCP promised to fix health care in 90 days but made the conditions worse, given that seven years of this UCP incompetence has created total chaos and crisis in health care, given that patients are dying, the government has failed to have new triage doctors, and new spaces are at best years away because this budget does not build actual hospital beds in the city, why does this government think it's acceptable for Albertans to die in emergency rooms instead of getting the health care they deserve when they are in crisis?

Mr. Jones: Mr. Speaker, that's not accurate. We operationalized over 300 beds last year in anticipation of a busy respiratory virus season, and we can develop shelled and vacant space very quickly depending on the state of the current facility and also what we're turning it into, so that's not accurate. The projects are in the budget. There are planning funds for the Grey Nuns and Misericordia planning. There are even funds in the budget for the South Health Campus, women's and in-patient towers that will also be developed, and there is \$63 million in the budget for the development of that shelled and vacant space. I would encourage the member to read the budget and to not concern Albertans with health care.

Mr. Deol: Given that we need beds today, given that this government collected record sources of revenue and failed to fix health care and tabled a \$9.4 billion deficit budget while projecting historic \$137 billion debt, given that this government is so bad with money that they have wasted the boom during the boom and failed to deliver health care that Albertans need, will the minister today apologize to my constituents and all other Albertans for their mismanagement and for driving health care into chaos while patients are dying in hallways?

The Speaker: The minister.

Mr. Jones: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Health is the single greatest expense of the Alberta government, and one of the largest components of that expense is our workforce. I would highlight that the member opposite was just asking for additional acute-care capacity. That will take money and that will take workforce. We've added over 2,000 doctors over the last five years. That's a 20 per cent increase. We've added over 11,700 registered nurses. That's a significant 32 per cent increase. We've added 484 nurse practitioners, 74 per cent increase; 2,700 LPNs, 16 per cent increase; and 10,000 health care aides. We've got to pay for them. I think we should.

The Speaker: The next question belongs to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Farm Succession Planning

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For Alberta producers looking to transition their farm, they consistently identify financial and legal complexities as their biggest obstacle. Navigating tax implications, valuations, estate planning, and intergenerational transfer structures can be overwhelming, especially for small and medium-sized operators without access to specialized advisers. The province has an opportunity to reduce these barriers and ensure that producers have the tools they need to plan early and plan well. What is the government of Alberta doing to support producers navigating the financial and legal complexities of intergenerational farm transfers?

The Speaker: The hon. minister of agriculture.

Mr. Sigurdson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question because transitioning our farms to the next generation is of a deep concern. When we look at the average age of a farmer and rancher right now, we see a concern, and there are more and more challenges. Of course, one of the biggest challenges that we talk about right now that we continue to advocate to the federal government for is the capital gains tax that's coming down. Moving farmers from families, within families: we want to continue to pave every pathway possible. That's why we have built programs like our next generation loan program. That is highly popular right now.

2:40

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that a major challenge in agricultural succession is ensuring that the next generation can actually enter the industry and given that high land prices, limited access to capital, and the needs for hands-on mentorship create significant barriers for young and upstart farmers and given that provincial programs and partnerships could play a pivotal role in helping new entrants enter with the foothold they need to sustain Alberta's agricultural future, what provincial programs or partnerships could help young and beginning farmers access land, capital, and mentorship to ensure continuity in Alberta's agriculture sector?

The Speaker: The minister.

Mr. Sigurdson: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker and again to the member because this does give an opportunity for me to highlight just that, our next generation loan program. We extended from \$1 million to 1 million and a half. We changed the age limits within that. We have the opportunity for a farm family to get up to \$3 million through this program. With that, they have amortization periods that fit, that allow them more access to be able to enter into the agricultural space. Since these changes this program has seen an uptake. We see a lot of farmers and ranchers shifting from FCC to this. This is a highlight. This is a good success story.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that succession planning is not just a family matter; it's a sector-wide issue that requires co-ordinated action and given that many producers lack access to structural planning tools, advisory services, or long-term management support and given that there's an opportunity for government to work with industry organizations, financial institutions, and educational partners to help build a provincial framework that strengthens transition planning and enhances long-term sector resiliency, what will this government do to collaborate with industry organizations to build a province-wide succession planning framework that includes education, advisory services, and long-term risk management tools?

The Speaker: The minister.

Mr. Sigurdson: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. When we talk about that, a lot of that planning that is happening right now in the industry, it's a good time to highlight the sustainable Canadian agricultural partnership. Within that we have public resiliency and a trust program. A lot of this work is happening. We see a lot of great grants that my department is signing off right now, whether it's through Alberta Beef Producers, Alberta Grains, Alberta pulses.

They're all working on additional strategies to assist when it comes to transition of farming and new entrants into the farming programs. I would advise everybody: if you're looking to get into farming, please reach out to my department; we'll assist.

The Speaker: The Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Mr. Speaker, before moving to Presenting Petitions, I'd like to request unanimous consent of the Assembly to move back to Introduction of Guests.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Introduction of Guests

(continued)

The Speaker: The hon. Minister for Arts, Culture and Status of Women.

Ms Fir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the privilege to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Legislative Assembly Cynthia Moore, Robert Fernandez, Yasmin Jivraj, and Jeff Brinton from the Alberta Foundation for the Arts. They work tirelessly every day to strengthen our creative economies and bring Albertans together through the power of the arts. Please rise and accept the warm welcome of this Assembly.

Presenting Petitions

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

Ms Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have an approved petition to present that reads as follows.

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

- (a) Introduce legislation to amend Alberta's Human Tissue and Organ Donation Act that, if enacted, would
 - (i) Require health professionals and institutions to report patients involved in the illicit commercial procurement of human organs abroad to police, and
 - (ii) Align the Act with Criminal Code (Canada) offences related to the illicit commercial procurement of human organs abroad, and
 - (iii) Provide appropriate exceptions to confidentiality provisions in the Act.
- (b) Take all necessary steps to prohibit the use of public funds for joint research, training or institutional partnerships with foreign entities credibly linked to forced organ harvesting and trafficking.
- (c) Take all necessary steps, including the introduction of legislation, to refuse coverage under the Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan for aftercare associated with illicit organ transplants procured abroad.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mrs. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give oral notice of Bill 205, Non-Disclosure Agreements Act, sponsored by myself.
Thank you.

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Justice.

Bill 18

Safeguards for Last Resort Termination of Life Act

Mr. Amery: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and speak to first reading for Bill 18, the Safeguards for Last Resort Termination of Life Act.

Mr. Speaker, if passed, this legislation will ensure that medical assistance in dying is used only as an option of last resort. If passed, Bill 18 will bring in more protections to make sure that no one will ever be pressured or coerced into receiving MAID, that the rights of the patients, physicians, and health care facilities are protected, and that we protect Albertans struggling with mental health, with mental illnesses, or for those who have a disability. It is my hope that, if Bill 18 is passed, it will set an example for the rest of Canada, because hope should always be easier to access than death.

Mr. Speaker, with that, I now move first reading of Bill 18. Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 18 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: Are there tablings? The Minister of Arts, Culture and Status of Women.

Ms Fir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table the requisite copies of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts's Arts Impact Alberta 2025: Ripple Effects from the Arts Sector, a report assessing the impact of our government's record-level investments through AFA, which generated \$185 million in economic output.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Member Irwin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In light of recent developments I'd like to table the requisite number of copies of public commercial flight costs for flights between Riyadh and Abu Dhabi, and I urge the Premier to review these before her next international trip.

The Speaker: You don't urge anything; you just get to make the tabling. That's how it works here. This is not an excuse for debate. Edmonton-West Henday.

Member Arcand-Paul: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the requisite copies of two documents here, a press release regarding well-documented health inequities and a failure to honour prior commitments and collaborative planning efforts for comparable health infrastructure on the Blood Tribe.

Then the second document is a community notice from Blood Tribe about bypassing the relationship between Cardston and Blood Tribe and a missed opportunity for economic and treaty-based reconciliation.

The Speaker: Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on behalf of the Member for Calgary-Buffalo to table yet another letter from one Albertan concerned that funding was cut from the Historical Society of Alberta. Minuscule savings, massive damage.

The Speaker: The Minister of Tourism and Sport. No? Okay. Sorry. When people are up and down, it's hard for me to know.

But it is indeed the Member for Calgary-Edgemont.

Ms Hayter: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today with one tabling referring to my question yesterday. It is from the University of Calgary School of Public Policy. It is the briefing paper It Costs

More to Do Nothing: Preventing Male Perpetration of Domestic Violence by Lana Wells, Casey Boodt, Herb Emery, and Ken Fyie. I encourage everybody to read it.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Any more tablings? Seeing none.

We are now at points of order. The first one, from what I think I see here, happened at or near 1:55 p.m. and was moved by the hon. Government House Leader, I believe.

Point of Order

Referring to the Absence of a Member

Mr. Schow: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I did call this point of order. At the time the Leader of the Opposition was asking a question to the Premier and made a specific point of referencing the Premier's absence in the Chamber at the time when talking about being on a foreign trade mission to another country where she was to drum up business and build relationships. In this Chamber, whether it's in the moment or later, we do not talk about a member's presence or absence. I don't have the official records, but I suspect you do with the Blues. I'll leave it in your hands.

The Speaker: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I don't have the benefit of the Blues, but based on my understanding of what the Leader of the Official Opposition intended to say, we were talking about the Premier travelling in Saudi Arabia and other places. He did talk about the legislation that was happening here in Alberta at the same time. We need to be able to talk about both of these things. There was certainly no intention to refer to the presence or absence of a member in this place, but the circumstances here, I believe, should be a matter of debate. I would hope that the way that the Leader of the Opposition phrased this did not cross any parliamentary rules, but without the Blues it's hard for me to know for sure how the words were used. I look forward to your ruling.

Thank you very much.

2:50

The Speaker: Let's review the Blues, shall we? What was said was: the "trip to the Middle East . . . was in fact to accept a gift from a foreign government of hundreds of thousands of dollars." This is where the member runs into trouble. Then it says, "Meanwhile," in other words at the same time, "her caucus was here defending the least popular bill in this government's history," which does actually refer to business in the House and the absence of a member. That's clearly a point of order and should be apologized for and withdrawn.

Ms Gray: On behalf of the leader I will apologize and withdraw.

The Speaker: Second point of order happened around 1:58. The Deputy Government House Leader.

Point of Order

Parliamentary Language

Mr. Williams: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, for recognizing me. It was at 1:58 when again the Leader of His Majesty's Opposition was speaking, referring to the Premier in the same sentence and referring to an alleged \$100,000 gift. The opposition leader said, "She's that entitled." Now, there are many ways to try and make that point that don't articulate it in the second-person singular, that don't articulate "she," that do not personalize it. A number of times in the past

Speakers' rulings have ruled similar kinds of language out of order. Of course, "Premier whose own arrogance" was out of order on May 13, 2025. "I wish . . . she'd have a backbone," March 13, 2025. "She's got her head you know where," personal attacks referring to the Premier as "she," embezzlement, embezzling being also out of order.

Mr. Speaker, there are many, many ways to make your point. This is not an attack on the ability for members opposite to communicate on important issues of the day. It's an attempt to bring civility back to the House and make sure we're not personalizing these attacks to individuals, referring to them in the second-person singular, referring to her as the Premier, when they go and make those accusations. It is clearly a point of order and out of order. We ask simply that the member opposite, the Leader of the Opposition, now that he's been here for some time, try not to continue to personalize in his answers and refer only to the office or the government as a whole. That way we can have those substantive conversations.

The Speaker: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the Deputy Government House Leader for his arguments. We have talked in this place about the role of the Premier as head of state in this place. In this case, though, I have to agree with some of the Deputy Government House Leader's arguments. In reviewing what's said here, I think perhaps the more parliamentary way would have been to talk about the government's entitlement in this case. On behalf of the Leader of the Official Opposition, as we continue

to raise this matter, we will attempt to be more parliamentary. On his behalf I will apologize and withdraw.

The Speaker: This matter is dealt with and concluded.

That takes us to point of order 3, raised at 2:23 p.m. by the Leader of the Official Opposition.

Ms Gray: Mr. Speaker, the point of order at 2:23 I will withdraw at this time.

Thank you very much.

The Speaker: Thank you. That concludes that matter, and it concludes points of order. That concludes the daily Routine.

Hon. members, the legislative policy committees will convene this afternoon and this evening for consideration of the main estimates. This afternoon the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Environment and Protected Areas in the Grassland Room, and the Standing Committee on Families and Communities will continue consideration of the estimates for Hospital and Surgical Health Services in the Rocky Mountain Room.

This evening the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Jobs, Economy, Trade and Immigration in the Rocky Mountain Room.

Pursuant to Standing Order 59.01(5)(b) the Assembly stands adjourned – and listen carefully – until 10 tomorrow morning.

[The Assembly adjourned at 2:54 p.m.]

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