



Province of Alberta

The 28th Legislature
Third Session

Alberta Hansard

Thursday, March 26, 2015

Issue 27

The Honourable Gene Zwozdesky, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 28th Legislature

Third Session

Zwozdesky, Hon. Gene, Edmonton-Mill Creek (PC), Speaker
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Jablonski, Mary Anne, Red Deer-North (PC), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Anglin, Joe, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre (Ind)
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)
Bhardwaj, Naresh, Edmonton-Ellerslie (PC)
Bhullar, Hon. Manmeet Singh, Calgary-Greenway (PC)
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Blakeman, Laurie, Edmonton-Centre (AL),
Liberal Opposition House Leader
Brown, Dr. Neil, QC, Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill (PC)
Calahasen, Pearl, Lesser Slave Lake (PC)
Campbell, Hon. Robin, West Yellowhead (PC)
Cao, Wayne C.N., Calgary-Fort (PC)
Casey, Ron, Banff-Cochrane (PC)
Cusanelli, Christine, Calgary-Currie (PC)
Dallas, Cal, Red Deer-South (PC)
DeLong, Alana, Calgary-Bow (PC)
Denis, Hon. Jonathan, QC, Calgary-Acadia (PC),
Government House Leader
Dirks, Hon. Gordon, Calgary-Elbow (PC)
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Dorward, Hon. David C., Edmonton-Gold Bar (PC)
Drysdale, Hon. Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (PC)
Eggen, David, Edmonton-Calder (ND),
New Democrat Opposition House Leader
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Hale, Jason W., Strathmore-Brooks (PC)
Hehr, Kent, Calgary-Buffalo (AL)
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Jeneroux, Matt, Edmonton-South West (PC)
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Johnson, Linda, Calgary-Glenmore (PC)
Kang, Darshan S., Calgary-McCall (AL),
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Leskiw, Genia, Bonnyville-Cold Lake (PC)
Luan, Jason, Calgary-Hawkwood (PC)
Lukaszuk, Thomas A., Edmonton-Castle Downs (PC)
Mandel, Hon. Stephen, Edmonton-Whitemud (PC)
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Quest, Dave, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (PC)
Rodney, Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC)
Rowe, Bruce, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (PC)
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Sarich, Janice, Edmonton-Decore (PC)
Saskiw, Shayne, Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (W),
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Liberal Opposition Whip
Smith, Danielle, Highwood (PC)
Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC)
Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W),
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VanderBurg, George, Whitecourt-St. Anne (PC),
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Weadick, Greg, Lethbridge-West (PC)
Wilson, Jeff, Calgary-Shaw (PC)
Woo-Paw, Hon. Teresa, Calgary-Northern Hills (PC)
Xiao, David H., Edmonton-McClung (PC)
Young, Steve, Edmonton-Riverview (PC)
Vacant, Battle River-Wainwright
Vacant, Spruce Grove-St. Albert

Party standings:

Progressive Conservative: 70 Wildrose: 5 Alberta Liberal: 5 New Democrat: 4 Independent: 1 Vacant: 2

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Donald Scott	Minister of Innovation and Advanced Education
Teresa Woo-Paw	Associate Minister of Asia Pacific Relations

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Fox	Sarich
Hehr	Starke
Kennedy-Glans	Towle
Luan	

Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

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Amery	Mason
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Fenske	Sandhu
Fox	Strankman
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Pedersen	

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Calahasen	Rodney
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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, March 26, 2015

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Let us pray. Dear Lord, may the lessons we learn today help guide and shape our thoughts about tomorrow, and may we transfer the benefits of those thoughts into positive actions to help the people we've been elected to serve. Amen.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Visitors

Mr. Prentice: Mr. Speaker, I rise to introduce to you and through you to the Legislative Assembly on this special budget day the budget director and co-manager of finance in the Prentice family. She has selflessly fulfilled this responsibility for 32 years, my spouse, Karen Prentice. We have been together through thick and thin, good times and bad, some of both. She is the mother of our three beautiful daughters and the attentive grandmother of two grandchildren. She is an extremely successful woman in her own right, professionally and in many charitable causes that she supports and leads. She is the love of my life, Karen Prentice.

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

Mrs. Fritz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a very dear friend of mine, Cindy Ady, who is seated in your gallery. Cindy, as you know, served as the MLA for Calgary-Shaw for eight years, and she was the minister of tourism, parks, and recreation from 2008 to 2012. Cindy is well known for her enthusiasm, especially when she hosted the highly successful Alberta House pavilion at the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympics. She is currently enjoying her new role as chief executive officer for Tourism Calgary. Cindy, please rise so we can give you the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Hon. members, we have about 30 guests to be introduced, so I would ask you to please be as brief as you possibly can so we can get them all in quickly and recognize them.

Let us begin with school groups, starting with the Minister of Seniors, followed by Edmonton-Calder.

Mr. J. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise and introduce to you and through you a very special group of 28 grade 6 students from Guthrie school along with their teacher. This school is located on our military base at Edmonton Garrison. All of these kids have families that serve in the military, so we want to thank them for that. They're seated in the members' gallery. They're accompanied by their fantastic teacher, Colleen Tremblay, and their parent helper, Captain Jennifer Stewart. I'd ask them to please rise, and we'll give them the traditional warm welcome.

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

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly 24 visitors from l'école À la Découverte. There are vingt-quatre visiteurs here

today, and I just had a photograph with them. They are enjoying their visit to the Legislature, and I'd ask that we all give them a very warm welcome.

The Speaker: Are there other school groups or education groups? The hon. Minister of Service Alberta.

Mr. Khan: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. I want to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly nearly 60 students from my constituency in St. Albert. Today we're joined by students from Sir Alexander Mackenzie school. They're with their very talented teachers: Roger Bouthillier, Dawn Brown, and Janet Hurley, and a very able parent helper, Vince Biesinger. We had a group from SAM school, as it's affectionately called, earlier this week, and I let the House know that I am a graduate of SAM school. The kids here today are a tremendous reminder of where I've come from and, I think, a really great reason for why we're all here. I'd like to ask them now to rise – I believe they're in the public gallery behind me – and receive the warm traditional welcome.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Are there other school or education groups?

Seeing none, let us introduce other important guests, starting with Edmonton-Rutherford, followed by the Minister of Service Alberta.

Mr. Horne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very honoured today to introduce to you and through you to all members three very special guests seated in your gallery. These guests are all friends and very close colleagues of the late Dr. Cy Frank, who I will speak about later in the Routine in a member's statement. Today in your gallery we have Ms Judy Crawford, who would have been executive assistant to Dr. Frank for 27 years next month; Dr. Don Dick, senior medical director of the bone and joint health strategic clinical network of Alberta Health Services; and Dr. Pamela Valentine, the interim chief executive officer of Alberta Innovates: Health Solutions. I would ask my colleagues to join me in extending our traditional warm welcome and our condolences to our three guests today.

The Speaker: The Minister of Service Alberta, followed by the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

Mr. Khan: Thank you so very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a great community leader from St. Albert. We're joined by Lynda Moffat, president and CEO of the St. Albert and District Chamber of Commerce. The St. Albert district chamber now has over 900 hard-working and contributing members working to develop and continue to grow the great city of St. Albert. I'd ask Lynda to now rise and receive the warm traditional welcome of the House.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek, Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, followed by the Minister of Culture and Tourism.

Mrs. Forsyth: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am extremely proud to stand and introduce to you and through you someone who has been very special in my life, who has taken me on some walks when he thinks I need to go for a walk, and that's my assistant, Matt Solberg. I'd ask Matt to stand.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Culture and Tourism, followed by the hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Ms Kubinec: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly mon ami Ken

Baril, the mayor of Legal. Would he please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General, followed by Calgary-Hawkwood.

Mr. Denis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce two friends of mine, which I will do together in the interest of time. First off, a good friend of mine, is Dr. Amina Beecroft. Dr. Beecroft is a native of Edmonton. I had the privilege of meeting her at her door in 2007. She is the president of A2B2 Analytics. She has been on faculty at Mount Royal University as a professor in finance, is a graduate of the University of Western Ontario and the University of Alberta. She is a chartered financial analyst, MBA graduate, doctor of finance, and the list goes on. She's been a great adviser and supporter and friend. Thank you for joining us.

Secondly, a friend of mine from the picturesque constituency of Calgary-Acadia, a native of Salmon Arm, B.C., is Karen Lloyd. She is a resident of Willow Park, and I met Karen while door-knocking in 2012. She is a strong advocate for traffic safety. She is the president of the Calgary Association of Parents and School Councils, and right now she is actually a candidate for wards 11 and 13 public school board, which is an election happening on April 13.

Mr. Speaker, I'd ask that we please give both of these incredible people the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

1:40

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Hawkwood, followed by Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

Mr. Luan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two outstanding community volunteers, Doug Stevens and Lorna Stevens. They both are no strangers to many of my colleagues in the House and are among the best. Doug is serving as the CFO of Calgary-Hawkwood, that I have the honour to represent. I ask my guests to stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, followed by the Associate Minister of Aboriginal Relations.

Mrs. Towle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two introductions today. It is my great pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly two wonderful staff members from my Innisfail-Sylvan Lake constituency office, Charlene Preston and Kelly Larson. Charlene and Kelly are an integral part of my team working in the constituency office, helping everyday Albertans through their concerns. I would ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

My second introduction, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all Members of the Legislative Assembly Sean McIntyre, the mayor of Sylvan Lake. Sean has been an incredible, dedicated, passionate mayor for our community. I have worked with Mayor McIntyre on numerous issues in the community, and I appreciate his hard work and dedication to the residents of Sylvan Lake. I would ask him to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Associate Minister of Aboriginal Relations, followed by Calgary-Bow.

Mr. Dorward: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce Ms Shelley Wegner. Shelley is a tireless advocate on behalf of aboriginal people in the province. As an entrepreneur she's served on numerous boards in the province, including the police foundation,

Northlands, and the Edmonton Chamber of Commerce. Her work on the humanitarian side is equally outstanding. Above all, Shelley is the PC candidate for the constituency of Edmonton-Strathcona. I would ask Ms Wegner to stand and receive the traditional welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow, followed by Lethbridge-East.

Ms DeLong: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Josh Traptow. Josh currently works as an adviser in communications and government relations at The Alex community health centre in Calgary. I've known Josh since he was in Bowness high, and I would like to thank him for his many years as president of my PC board. Josh is seated in the public gallery, and I would ask him to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Ms Pastoor: Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to the Assembly I introduce two super, smart, experienced, accomplished young women leaders of Alberta. Sitting in the public gallery, first, is Tammy Perlich, the PC candidate for Lethbridge-East, who will be a wonderful replacement for me and a dedicated MLA for Alberta; secondly, my daughter, a Lethbridge city councillor, Bridget Mearns, who is here today for me and represents her sisters, to whom I owe everything. Everything. Please rise and give a warm welcome.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks, followed by Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Hale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly my three guests here today: my constituency assistant from Strathmore-Brooks, Lana Hale; Joanne Sieben, a long-time family friend and resident of the Bassano area; and Melissa Cotter, my legislative assistant here in Edmonton. I would ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake, followed by the Associate Minister of Asia Pacific Relations.

Mrs. Leskiw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly three guests, here for question period, from my constituency. I will ask my guests to rise as I call their names. My first guest is Dana Swigart, seated in the visitors' gallery, a first-term councillor for the MD of Bonnyville. I'd like to thank him for the great work he does for the people of his ward.

My second guest is Margaret Borders, seated in the members' gallery, a trustee from Lakeland Catholic school division, who also does a wonderful job serving the children of our community.

The third guest is the mayor from Cold Lake, Craig Copeland, no stranger to this Chamber. Craig is also the PC candidate for the Bonnyville-Cold Lake constituency, so I'm leaving my community in very good hands.

I would ask all of you to give them the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Associate Minister of Asia Pacific Relations, followed by Leduc-Beaumont.

Ms Woo-Paw: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Mr. Norman Poon, an HR professional with the Bethany care centres in Calgary, that have a facility for seniors with dementia

in my riding. He has also been a PC member for more than half his life and is a very long-time friend of mine. I would like to ask him to rise and receive the warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont, followed by Red Deer-North.

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly two visitors from my constituency of Leduc-Beaumont who have come today for question period and to witness our Finance minister deliver the budget this afternoon. They are Bruce Lecren, a retiree from Nav Canada and a councillor for the town of Beaumont; and Alana Gueutal, a native of Leduc and local entrepreneur and president of the Leduc Regional Chamber of Commerce. They're seated in the public gallery. I'd ask them to rise and receive the warm traditional welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-North, followed by Calgary-Currie.

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly a very good friend of mine who has just won the PC nomination for Red Deer-North. Christine Moore has a wealth of experience and is excited about the next great provincial event. With her today is her husband, David Moore, who is now busy taking lessons from my husband about signs. They are in the public gallery. I would ask them to rise and accept the warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie, followed by the Minister of Innovation and Advanced Education.

Ms Cusanelli: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all the members of the Assembly Paul Pryce, who is the political adviser to the consulate general of Japan. He is here joining me today for the budget. I want to say thank you to him for all of his help to me now and in my future endeavours here. I would like to ask him, therefore, to rise and receive the traditional welcome of our Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Innovation and Advanced Education, followed by Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Mr. Scott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to introduce to you and through you two very close friends of mine and tremendous leaders from the region of the municipality of Wood Buffalo, Mayor Melissa Blake and Jeff Thompson, who is the chair of the public school board of trustees. Please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, followed by Calgary-Lougheed.

Mr. Quadri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly two very devoted community volunteers, Bilal Khan and Nusrat Akhtar. Mr. Khan is the publisher of *Community Times Canada*, western Canada's first and only multilanguage newspaper, and they are celebrating their second anniversary. I would request them to please rise and receive the warm traditional welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed, followed by the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Rodney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure to introduce Ahmed Sawaf, a fine constituent of Calgary-Lougheed who is doing great things in the realm of marketing Alberta innovations in industry internationally. I ask our good friend to stand and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs, followed by Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Mrs. McQueen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. If you'll bear with me, I'll go quickly, but I have five introductions that I'd like to make. Today we're joined by a number of great guests: the president of the AAMD and C, Mr. Al Kemmere; the president of the AUMA, Ms Helen Rice; newly elected just this week, on Monday, our reeve for Brazeau county, Reeve-elect Bart Guyon – welcome, Bart, and congratulations on your election – the mayor of Drayton Valley, Mr. Glenn McLean; and a good friend and former minister, an MLA of this House, a great friend to this House, Mr. Ron Liepert. If you could all please stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Mr. Bhardwaj: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour for me to rise today to introduce to you and through you a very good friend of mine and yours, Kal Toor, who is an accomplished businessman who is sitting in the public gallery. I ask him to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Thank you.

1:50

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: Hon. members, a reminder that you have 35 seconds for each question and 35 seconds maximum for each response. I will cut you off at that point if I have to.

Let us start with the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition for the first set of questions.

Government Telephone Town Hall Meetings

Mrs. Forsyth: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last night the Premier conducted a telephone town hall to talk about the budget. Hundreds of thousands of Albertans received phone calls, and they were asked to provide their e-mail addresses to the government. The Privacy Commissioner recommends that privacy impact assessments be conducted before major projects that involve the collection, use, or disclosure of personal information to ensure the safety of Albertans' private information. To the Minister of Service Alberta: will you table the thorough privacy impact assessment that was conducted in advance of last night's telephone town hall?

Mr. Prentice: Mr. Speaker, these are serious times for our province. There is not a person in this Chamber or amongst our distinguished guests here today that is not affected by what they're seeing in our province, job losses that we hear about from people that we know and love. The town halls are an important part of continuing a dialogue with Albertans, speaking about the circumstances that we're in, what we're doing, and the plan to move forward. No budget has ever received this amount of consultation with Albertans, and we intend to carry forward on that basis.

Mrs. Forsyth: Mr. Premier, you didn't answer the question, so let's try it again. This morning we reached out to the office of the Privacy Commissioner just to ask if they had been made aware in advance of last night's large-scale data collection project. Unfortunately, the

commissioner was not consulted. Now, we're talking about the private information of hundreds of thousands of Albertans, Mr. Speaker. To the minister: if privacy impact assessments were not conducted and the Privacy Commissioner was not consulted, how can Albertans be assured that this large-scale data collection project has not compromised their private, personal information?

Mr. Prentice: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is incorrect in her assertions. These conversations are part of the process of laying out for Albertans the 10-year vision that's being put forward of setting things right in this province, a vision of moving the province forward, a continued process of consulting with Albertans in every corner of the province about the steps that their government is taking. I encourage the hon. member to stay tuned for the budget of the Minister of Finance.

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, obviously, you haven't, again, followed the rules and the laws of the land, Mr. Premier.

The telephone town halls and the large-scale data collection by this government are happening. Now, I would like to know: will the Premier call the Privacy Commissioner to review the data collection from last night and ensure that the proper protections are in place before conducting any more of these large-scale telephone town halls? It's about people's privacy, Premier.

Mr. Prentice: Mr. Speaker, I'm certainly pleased to speak with the Privacy Commissioner at any time. More than 36,000 people participated in these calls last evening, and I would point out that the hon. member opposite and her party have had the opportunity to speak with Albertans directly to convey what their plan is to deal with the circumstance that we face as Albertans. They haven't taken us up on that offer because they don't have a plan and can't speak to our goals.

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition. Second main set of questions.

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, Mr. Speaker, let's just straighten it out. Our plans are the ones that you've all taken, Premier.

Tax Policy

Mrs. Forsyth: Two years ago the former Leader of the Official Opposition asked the following question before the last once-in-a-generation budget:

Given that we know that the Premier wants to keep overspending ... because she keeps on insisting that all of this debt that she is racking up is the result of a revenue problem, what is it going to be: personal and corporate income taxes, health care premiums, liquor taxes, fuel taxes, or some other taxes?

The leaders have changed, but it's a good question. To the Premier: how often can this government claim to deliver a once-in-a-generation budget?

Mr. Prentice: Well, Mr. Speaker, the question seems to have been written for a different Premier. I'd like to reassure the hon. member opposite that I am, in fact, the Premier. I take a great deal of pride in the work of this government. We are Alberta under new management. The Minister of Finance will be in this Chamber momentarily introducing one of the most important budget documents that we've seen in modern times in this province. I'd encourage the hon. member and her party to be supportive.

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, Mr. Speaker, old management, new management: they're all the same, okay?

I'd like to provide this House with another quote, and it's a very good quote, in my opinion. "The key to smart fiscal policy is lower taxes. Taxes must be kept determinedly low to encourage expansion." Now, that's a great line, Mr. Speaker, and it definitely reflects the opinion of the Wildrose. To the Premier. This quote came from you as you fought rampant spending by the Liberal government. Do you still agree that higher taxes discourage economic expansion?

Mr. Prentice: Mr. Speaker, smart fiscal policy is obviously the essence of any government. In terms of this province and the critical issues that we face right now, the job losses that we see in this province: these are challenging times. This budget that the House will hear momentarily is one that will reflect balance. It will reflect good stewardship. I would assure the hon. member and her party, to the extent that they're interested, that this budget will be in the interests of Albertans and their children and their grandchildren.

The Speaker: Final supplemental, hon. member.

Mrs. Forsyth: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think we should make something very clear. We're in the fiscal situation because of your government spending like drunken sailors, Premier.

A final quote from the former Member of Parliament for Calgary Centre-North during his time in Ottawa. "Mr. Speaker, I will say what is morally wrong. It was 13 years of Liberal ineptitude, mismanagement, incompetence, ducking, dodging, delaying, and cut and run tax and spend liberalism. Our government will not do that." It's an interesting quote, Mr. Speaker. Does the Premier agree that years of mismanagement and incompetence followed by tax and spend liberalism is morally wrong?

Mr. Prentice: Well, Mr. Speaker, I encourage the hon. member to remain seated and to hear the budget that the Minister of Finance brings forward. You know, I don't think there's anyone in the province that doesn't understand that the challenges that we face relate to a collapse of oil prices and the fiscal circumstance that the government finds itself in, facing deficits of close to \$20 billion over the next three years. These are challenging circumstances, but one thing that separates the government from that side is an optimism and a hopefulness and a belief in Albertans and our ability to get through this together.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod, followed by Calgary-Mountain View.

Disaster Recovery Program Payments

Mr. Stier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. After the devastating floods of 2013 water was pumped into the Hampton Hills and Sunrise districts in High River, and the homes in these communities were sacrificed as a result of the emergency strategy. Some communities that flooded like Beachwood, however, were bought out and compensated at full market value, but the Hamptons and Sunrise districts were only compensated for partial home damage. To the minister: will you ensure that the residents of Hampton Hills and Sunrise, who have now lost their homes again as a result of inappropriate remedial work, now receive full market value for their homes and the lots?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mrs. McQueen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government cares deeply about the people that were affected by the 2013 floods. It was a devastating event for all of them, and we care deeply. We're working with the families in Hampton Hills and in all of the areas

of High River and in southern Alberta on the flood mitigation work and on the flood recovery program. That's very important for us. We've added additional staff to do that. We will be there till every one of those cases is resolved.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Stier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, the residents of these communities, though, need a voice in the Legislature, and your government's DRP response just hasn't been good enough so far. There are still hundreds of files left to close from these communities of Hampton Hills and Sunrise. They deserve compensation for both their homes and the lots, like Beachwood. It's been two years, and these residents really need help. Will you admit that the current program to only cover partial values is flawed and reverse this decision and fully compensate these poor residents?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. McQueen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'm so proud to stand and say that the community does have a member of the Legislature in government. The Member for Highwood is in government. I'm very proud to say that. They do have their MLA sitting on this side of the House and doing a fantastic job. [interjections]

Mr. Speaker, they were replaced at assessed value, and we will continue to be there for every one of those cases until they're resolved.

An Hon. Member: And so will their MLA.

Mrs. McQueen: And so will their MLA.

We've added additional staffing to make sure that that will happen, to make sure that all of those cases are resolved.

The Speaker: Hon. member, final supplemental. I hope we can all give him the floor and give the answering person the floor as well. Proceed.

2:00

Mr. Stier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, the government's DRP response has been less than stellar. I say once again that when emergency services ordered these two communities to be sacrificed, the residents expected full and proper compensation. They didn't ask for that to be done. Please explain why this government has refused to do a full and complete buyout for their homes. Explain.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. McQueen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me remind this hon. member that there were 10,500 cases from the 2013 floods. We have gotten all of those completed, with just under 2,000 left to complete. There is no other jurisdiction that has been able to react and respond as quickly as Alberta has done with regard to that. You look at the floods in Manitoba. They couldn't respond as quickly as we have. We will be there for every one of those residents. We will be there right till the end. We've increased it from 50 per cent to 90 per cent of the funding, and it's because of this government.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, followed by Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Investigation into Release of Information

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Infrastructure has publicly been accused of pedalling dirt on the Member for

Edmonton-Castle Downs and the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs to the opposition. Calgary Police Services is also investigating an alleged case of fraudulent impersonation to send that same dirt to the media. Yesterday this same minister all but admitted to these claims but saying he often, quote, shoots the breeze. End of quote. When will this Minister of Infrastructure stop hiding behind the Justice or Service Alberta ministers, stand up, show some courage, and admit to Albertans exactly what he's done?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Mr. Denis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Any investigation is inappropriate to comment on in this Chamber. The matter the member raises is in the hands of the Privacy Commissioner. I have no further information. The Privacy Commissioner, Ms Clayton, will deal with this.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Dr. Swann: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Well, media reports that two more opposition staffers have come forward alleging that the Minister of Infrastructure was guiding the opposition on where to look for the telephone bills of the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs and the Minister of Municipal Affairs. The Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs called this, quote, disappointing and unethical that a cabinet minister would in any way try to blemish the reputation of another caucus member. End of quote. We agree, but this minister continues to sit beside the Premier at the cabinet table. To the Premier: is this the standard of behaviour you as Premier and Albertans can expect from your government?

The Speaker: Hon. Minister of Justice, do you wish to comment?

Mr. Denis: The only comment I have is that it appears that the leader of the third party references allegations against another member, which is 23(h) of our Standing Orders.

The Speaker: Final supplemental.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps the most disturbing fact about these cases is that the Minister of Infrastructure was the Premier's leadership campaign co-chair. Obviously, they're great buddies. It is often said that if you tell me who your friends are, I'll tell you who you are. To the Premier: are you the type of person who approves these shady backroom deals? Is this the type of leadership you're offering Albertans for the next 10 years?

The Speaker: Hon. members, this is not really characteristic of the kind of questions we normally would like to hear in the House.

Obviously, hon. Minister of Justice, you've already stated a position. I'll allow you to state one final one, and hopefully we can move on after that.

Seeing no response, let us move on. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Mr. Mason: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. More allegations surfaced today that the Minister of Infrastructure encouraged opposition MLAs and staff to FOIP the long-distance phone records of the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs. At the time the MLA for Edmonton-Castle Downs was a candidate for the PC leadership, and the minister was a key organizer for the Premier's leadership campaign. The phone records were subsequently leaked to the media. To the Minister of Infrastructure: did you or did you not, while a minister of the Crown, encourage opposition MLAs to seek out the phone records of the MLA for Edmonton-Castle Downs?

Mr. Denis: Again, Mr. Speaker, this was answered about 30 seconds ago. We have no further information. I would suggest that this member go talk to the Privacy Commissioner, who is an independent officer of this Legislature.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. When the phone records were leaked, an individual's name apparently was falsely used. Impersonation or fraudulent impersonation is a crime, and the Calgary police began an investigation, which was abruptly terminated. The chief of police at the time was recently appointed as a PC candidate by the Premier. In order to avoid any appearance of political interference, will the Justice minister appoint a special prosecutor to review the evidence to see if further investigation or charges are warranted?

The Speaker: Hon. members, let's be careful when we use names of people who are not in the Assembly and able to defend themselves. You know the long-standing tradition, hon. member, as well as I do.

Is there anyone on the front bench that wishes to comment? I see no one.

Let's see what you have for a final supplemental, hon. member.

Mr. Mason: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wasn't aware I'd named anyone, but this does smell to high heaven.

Several individuals, including the MLA for Edmonton-Meadowlark, apparently told police about the minister's actions, yet the police never interviewed the target of the leak, the MLA for Edmonton-Castle Downs. Again to the Justice Minister: in order to avoid the appearance of political interference, will you appoint a special prosecutor to determine if further investigation or charges are warranted, and if not, why not?

The Speaker: Please have a seat.

Hon. members, as I understand it, the Minister of Justice has clarified this matter. It has gone for investigation by one of our legislative officers. If you wish to reiterate that statement, I'll allow you to do so. If not, we're going to move on.

Let us move on, then. Edmonton-Centre, followed by Calgary-Glenmore.

Maintenance Enforcement

Ms Blakeman: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. It's your day, kiddo. The Justice minister has closed the Calgary maintenance enforcement office. Now, he is quoted as saying that this is a decision about space, but the effect will be about losing staff. Now, given an already crappy collection rate and 27 per cent of cases being noncompliant – it's pretty crappy; no money there – this makes for a pretty dismal outlook for Alberta children expecting a court-ordered payment. To the minister: how does the minister expect to improve this collection rate owed to Alberta children with fewer staff?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Mr. Denis: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. The approach that we've undertaken reflects how clients are accessing maintenance enforcement. The vast majority are through online contacts or through the phone. The member is quite correct, though. The regularity of payment rate is 73 per cent. The total collected on behalf of Alberta families under maintenance enforcement: \$253.3 million.

Ms Blakeman: Yep, and you left half a billion on the table that's owed to kids.

Back to the same minister. Given that 27 per cent is the noncompliance for monthly collection and out of that there is still a 46 per cent fail rate in collecting arrears on back payments, what are the minister's plans to improve the arrears collection aside from cutting staff by seven positions?

Mr. Denis: Again, Mr. Speaker, we look toward the best efficiency that we can possibly get. There were seven positions in the Calgary office. As I mentioned to the member before, our approach reflects how clients are accessing the service. The Calgary office was never intended to be a drop-in office for in-person service and maintenance enforcement.

Ms Blakeman: Mr. Speaker, why is the minister okay with having 1 out of every 3 kids who are entitled to support payments not get them? So they get second-hand clothes, used sports equipment, living in a less-safe neighbourhood. Why is the minister okay with that for Alberta's kids?

Mr. Denis: Again, Mr. Speaker, I respectfully reject the premise of that question. The reality is, unfortunately, that not every debt that maintenance enforcement incurs is collectible. The reality is that \$253.3 million is what Alberta maintenance enforcement collects for our children.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore, followed by Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

School Construction and Equipment Funding

Ms L. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With the budget almost upon us my constituents would like to know that school boards are going to be properly funded while continuing to provide for Alberta children the tools they need to succeed. Adequate funding is needed not only for the new schools opening across the province; funding is also required to sustain and equip existing schools. My question to the Minister of Education: as new schools continue to open, how is your ministry ensuring that school boards are properly funded with the resources needed to sustain operations and prepare these schools for new students?

Mr. Dirks: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for this important question. We recognize that there is more to building new schools than just bricks and mortar, of course. Each new school is given a furniture and equipment grant in the amount of 9 per cent of the construction budget for that project. Additionally, new schools receive I believe it's \$100,000 to equip each career and technology studies lab in that school.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms L. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My next question is to the same minister. School board trustees have informed me that it can cost them upwards of \$1 million to prepare new schools for students. Is this an accurate figure, and if not, what are the actual costs associated with preparing school boards and new schools for students? Are these figures being met?

Mr. Dirks: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the important question. How much it costs to prepare a school for students depends, of course, on the size of the school. As I mentioned in my previous response, we provide funding in the amount of 9 per cent of a new school's construction budget for furniture and equipment. For example, for an elementary school with 600 capacity, which costs about \$20 million to construct, we would provide \$1.8 million for furniture and equipment. In terms of actual funding for phase 2

school projects currently under construction in Calgary we're providing more than \$25 million, and that would mean \$11 million also to Calgary Catholic to equip new schools.

2:10

The Speaker: Thank you.

Let's hear the final supplemental.

Ms L. Johnson: Thank you. There are schools in my constituency of Calgary-Glenmore that are 20, 30, even 50 years old. My question to the same minister: what measures are being taken to ensure that my students have access to resources that allow school boards to provide modern technologies and equipment in their classrooms?

Mr. Dirks: Mr. Speaker, Alberta students deserve nothing less, of course, than modern, state-of-the-art school facilities. Each modernization project receives a furniture and equipment grant of 4.5 per cent of the total construction budget. Like the new schools, each modernization project receives an additional \$100,000 per modernized CTS lab to equip and refurbish those labs.

Violence against Aboriginal Women

Mr. Bilous: Mr. Speaker, in 2013 the RCMP found that since the 1980s more than 1,200 indigenous women have been murdered or have disappeared. Indigenous women are three and a half times more likely to experience violence than nonindigenous women, and more than half of indigenous women, or 54 per cent, experience some form of spousal violence, and 44 per cent fear for their lives. This is unacceptable. To the Premier: will you stand with indigenous women and support an inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women, and if not, why not?

Mr. Prentice: Well, Mr. Speaker, the circumstances to which the hon. member refers are of concern to all of us. These are deplorable statistics. It's one of the reasons that we have been so focused on achieving results in partnership with First Nations and First Nation women leaders on the ground. It's one of the reasons that the Minister of Education and I have been so focused in our discussions with First Nation leaders on education, on improving the outcomes for educational opportunities for First Nation students. That is what the future is about, and we're working very closely with First Nation women on those outcomes.

Mr. Bilous: I'll take that as a no.

Mr. Speaker, given that a national inquiry would provide possible solutions to address the epidemic level of violence that indigenous women are dealing with while also allowing these communities to tell the stories of the loved ones they have lost, to the associate minister: why does this Premier continue to put the lives of indigenous women at risk by failing to call for an inquiry?

Mr. Prentice: Mr. Speaker, I made it very clear that I have no opposition whatsoever to a national inquiry on the matters that the hon. member refers to, but I make the point again in this Chamber that the future depends on working together with First Nation women, leaders in First Nation communities to improve educational outcomes.

To deal with the other circumstances which the hon. member is referring to, we will only do that through this government exercising leadership, stepping up, dealing with these matters, providing proper support for First Nation communities, and we intend to do that.

Mr. Bilous: Mr. Speaker, given that there was a round-table on missing and murdered indigenous women, that every other Premier

across the country made a priority but the Premier of Alberta couldn't be bothered to attend, and given that indigenous leaders from across the province have been calling for an inquiry, back to the Premier: do you really believe you know better than the indigenous leaders on indigenous issues?

Mr. Prentice: Well, Mr. Speaker, I take exception to that premise to the question. Let's just deal with a couple of facts. Firstly, my support of First Nation communities in this country and First Nation women in particular is well known. It is well known not just in Alberta but in every corner of this country, if not in that corner of this Chamber. Let's be clear about that.

Secondly, in terms of the national round-table that was supported by this government, and we were honourably represented by one of the most distinguished aboriginal women in this country, in fact in the British Commonwealth, and that's the Member for Lesser Slave Lake.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, followed by Edmonton-Centre.

Seniors' Housing

Mr. Rowe: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we all know, seniors' housing is a huge issue in our province. In my constituency a privately funded facility has been planned for Didsbury. This will give the seniors of our area a top-level facility with no construction costs to the provincial government. This question is to the Minister of Seniors. Is your ministry willing to work with municipalities that obtain private funding for facilities such as the one in Didsbury?

Mr. J. Johnson: Mr. Speaker, the short answer is absolutely. But I would add that under the new management of this Premier we've demonstrated that we'll partner with anyone who can help our tax dollars, our public dollars, go further but, more importantly, help our parents and grandparents have a higher quality of life.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Rowe: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My next question is to the Minister of Health. Will your department work with AHS to develop staffing contracts for privately funded facilities that meet the proper standards?

Mr. Mandel: Well, Mr. Speaker, the short answer, as the Minister of Seniors said, is yes. We look forward to partnering with all those that have received the ASLI grants and all those private operators who deliver the kind of service we need for all of Alberta's citizens, and we look forward to working you.

The Speaker: Final supplemental.

Mr. Rowe: Thank you for that, Minister. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question is back to the Minister of Seniors. Many seniors are still capable of living full lives in their own homes. For those seniors that own their homes, there can often be a struggle with financial issues. Is your ministry willing to provide incentives for seniors to live unassisted in their own homes?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. J. Johnson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know that many seniors who do own their own homes live on fixed incomes, and we're aggressively looking for ways to help those seniors stay in their homes as long as possible. We've got a number of programs, including the special-needs assistance, but in particular one of those

is the seniors' property tax deferral program. That was brought in by the hon. Member for Whitecourt-St. Anne when he was in this chair, and it's a great program that's seen nearly 1,900 seniors access more than 3,100 low-interest loans to stay in their homes longer.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, followed by Calgary-Lougheed.

Caribou Habitat Protection

Ms Blakeman: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. To stay stable or even thrive, caribou need undisturbed habitat: no roads, pipelines, utility corridors, seismic or cutlines, no trucks, no snowmobiles, no ATVs. Now, currently the government is advertising 900 hectares of leases in the Redrock-Prairie Creek caribou range and another 500 hectares in the Naraway range. To the Minister of Energy: is it absolutely necessary to lease for oil and gas development every square inch of public land, especially the square inches that are also used by caribou?

Mr. Oberle: Mr. Speaker, the province of Alberta has got a number of well-protected landscapes, and we believe that in combination with the protected landscapes that we have in the province and a working landscape that takes into consideration the issues of habitat and species such as caribou, we can move forward.

Ms Blakeman: Hmm. Well, maybe the Energy minister can explain why that department is auctioning oil and gas leases on land where endangered caribou live, particularly when it violates the Department of ESRD's policy on caribou habitat.

Mr. Oberle: It does no such thing, Mr. Speaker. We believe that development and species management can co-exist on this landscape. The hon. member, I'm sure, knows that the issuance of a disposition does not guarantee surface access. There are a number of approvals that have to be gone through, including working with ESRD and considering species management criteria. Perhaps the member doesn't know that we're doing a play-based regulation pilot right now, where we're looking at how we can merge activity and species management on the landscape.

Ms Blakeman: Undisturbed habitat, Minister.

Well, let me go to the Premier, then. Who gets top billing here? That is to say, which minister gets their way, the Minister of Energy to sell oil and gas leases or the Minister of ESRD to protect caribou habitat? Who's higher on the totem pole?

Mr. Oberle: Actually, Mr. Speaker, that's not how it works at all. In fact, the minister of environment and myself and our staff are working together on the caribou management scheme right now. Stay tuned. You're going to be impressed.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed, followed by Drumheller-Stettler.

2:20 School Infrastructure Maintenance and Renewal

Mr. Rodney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Calgary-Lougheed constituents have expressed concern to me regarding infrastructure maintenance and renewal. Taking care of what we have is crucial to the success of all Albertans in the past, present, and future, and my first question is to the Minister of Education. Can he assure the residents of Woodbine, Woodlands, Evergreen, and Bridlewood that this government is committed to increasing IMR funding for school boards on a go-forward basis?

Mr. Dirks: I thank the member for the very important question, and the answer is: yes, I certainly can make that commitment, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's students and teachers deserve well-maintained schools. That's why last fall the Premier and I announced the doubling of the infrastructure maintenance, or IMR, funding that we provide to school boards, from \$100 million last school year to \$200 million, I believe. At that time we also committed to help school boards plan and modernize 90 schools, which will also reduce maintenance issues.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Rodney: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe that my constituents may be somewhat satisfied at least with the theme of that answer, but I know that they're looking for specific details beyond just the numbers since this has a direct effect on the personal and professional success of our students, Alberta's leaders of tomorrow. So can the minister tell us what exactly are the real-life actions this government is taking where the rubber meets the road with respect to IMR funding in southwest Calgary and, indeed, across this fine province.

Mr. Dirks: Well, Mr. Speaker, where the rubber meets the road when it comes to schools are things like roofs, boilers, windows, floors. The additional \$100 million in IMR funding was introduced to help school districts address some of these pressing maintenance needs. It's also important to note that we provided an additional \$476 million in plant operations and maintenance funding to school boards in this fiscal year, and the source of that funding is used for day-to-day maintenance needs.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler, followed by Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Investigation into Release of Information (continued)

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Ever since the government was under investigation for privacy breaches, leaking the cellphone bill for the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs, the Infrastructure Minister has been silent. Several staff members have alleged that this minister was shopping around to sell the phone bills of his colleagues during his party's leadership race. His fingerprints are all over this, so I want to give the minister a chance. Will he tell this House whether or not he was the one who leaked the information last summer?

The Speaker: Well, hon. members, we've had several questions on this already.

Hon. Justice minister, if you want to comment on this, please do.

Mr. Denis: Mr. Speaker, I've said it once; I've said it again; I'll say it yet again for this member. I'll say it slower this time even. This is in the Privacy Commissioner's hands. She is an independent body of the Legislature. I suggest that the Member for Drumheller-Stettler give her a call.

Mr. Strankman: Mr. Speaker, I'll rejig it somewhat. The details and payments of this bill came directly from Executive Council. I'm sure the Premier is as concerned as we are that this department was involved in what looks like a massive privacy breach. Will the Premier, then, conduct an internal investigation into the conduct and integrity of his office?

The Speaker: Hon. Minister of Justice, I mean, we're fishing here a little bit is my sense of it, but if you wish to make a comment quickly, please do.

Mr. Denis: Again the same answer and again 23(h), "makes allegations against another Member," Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Well, my concern is that pretty soon we're going to get into the realm of points of order and there'll probably be no end to it all.

But let's see what you have rejigged for your final supplemental.

Mr. Strankman: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to continue. Given that the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie recently removed himself from cabinet for serious allegations, will the Infrastructure minister be removing himself from cabinet given the serious nature of the allegations against him in this ongoing investigation?

The Speaker: The Minister of Justice. The same answer?

Mr. Denis: Once again, Mr. Speaker, nothing has been proven.

The Speaker: Let's move on. We're going to have to have a talk about allegations and motives at some point.

Let's move on to Cardston-Taber-Warner, followed again by Drumheller-Stettler. I put you down twice.

Milk River Watershed Management

Mr. Bikman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Water remains a valuable and often scarce resource in our province, especially in the southern part of my riding, the Milk River area. According to studies Alberta annually donates enough water to Montana in excess of the 1909 and 1921 international treaties to irrigate 26,000 acres. That water could be put to good use by farmers in my area. Can the Minister of ESRD explain why your department is giving away this much water to the U.S.A.?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Sustainable Resource Development.

Mr. Fawcett: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the hon. member for actually asking an appropriate question. I want to let the Assembly know that water does not know any political borders, and I'll make it very clear that Alberta does not transfer any water to Montana. The Milk River runs through both Alberta and Montana, meaning each jurisdiction has rights to its water through an allocation. Alberta is working with all partners, including the U.S., to ensure watersheds are managed in a way that meets our economic, societal, and environmental needs.

Mr. Bikman: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to ask relevant questions for my riding.

Given that the agrifood industry in Alberta is a huge driver of the economy, what is your department doing to manage the Milk River watershed for the benefit of the agricultural community?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Fawcett: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My department is committed to maintaining the environmental and economic integrity of the Milk River watershed for all users in the area. Through the Milk River integrated watershed management plan we are addressing water supply and allocation, enhancing the delivery of water, and promoting the efficient use of water for all sectors. Additionally, Alberta's rural economic development action plan

outlines specific actions in support of rural economic development, which includes enhanced water infrastructure for agricultural development.

The Speaker: Final supplemental.

Mr. Bikman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's clear that perfectly good land remains underutilized along the Milk River because of the inadequate water storage of that landscape. What will your department do to rectify this storage issue?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Fawcett: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Our government is reviewing and considering all storage opportunities to mitigate both flood circumstances as well as provide for the resiliency of water supplies in times of drought. The water conservation action plan reaffirms the need to advance the progress on water storage options in the south for a range of benefits, including rural and agricultural development. Alberta and Montana have been working together on a joint water management initiative, for which the final report is pending, and I can assure the hon. member that storage has been one of the considerations that has been up for discussion in these negotiations.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler, followed by Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

Alberta Motor Vehicle Industry Council

Mr. Strankman: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. At the great risk of repeating myself, I'd like to say that in the last few days we've found out about improper hearings at AMVIC and resignations from a lead investigator and a board member due to their improper connections to the PC Party. Albertans are still waiting for this review to be released to the public. Now we've discovered that the individual in charge of AMVIC has a close relationship with a deputy minister in the government. Can the minister tell Albertans that this report isn't being delayed to smooth over glaring problems of this broken system?

Mr. Khan: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for continuing to raise the profile of Service Alberta's consumer protection agenda. The hon. member is absolutely correct about one thing. He's awfully repetitive. I'll attempt to answer his question one more time. That's correct; we do have a draft report. We tasked the board of AMVIC to address some issues. We're working with the board, and it's always been my intention to make that report public at some time.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. This board has a mandate to promote trust and integrity in Alberta, but none of it gives Albertans confidence or assurances. This minister has said just yesterday, "All appointments . . . are merit based." Clearly, the PC government is not doing its job. Minister, can you tell us how many more board members have to resign due to the obvious patronage and improper conduct of the board?

Mr. Khan: Mr. Speaker, again this member is proving his point in being more than a little repetitive, but again I'll do my best to answer the question. All agency boards and commission appointments follow a process. They are merit-based processes, candidates are vetted, and the members of the AMVIC board have been appointed based

on merit. They're professional people, they're lawyers, and they give their time to Alberta and serve the best that they can.

The Speaker: Final supplemental.

Mr. Strankman: Mr. Speaker, thank you for that. Yesterday the minister said that all appointments are "vetted closely." The record of appointments at this board is damaging. Clearly, the vetting process is not up to snuff. Does the minister agree that the current Infrastructure minister is directly responsible for the chaos surrounding the board at AMVIC?

2:30

Mr. Khan: The hon. member did ask me a good question. He asked me what I thought of the Infrastructure minister. I will tell you and I will tell the House that the Infrastructure minister is one of the finest individuals I've had the pleasure of meeting. It's an honour to work with the Infrastructure minister, and I thank the hon. member for the question.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, followed by Edmonton-Calder.

Blue-green Algae Health Advisories

Mrs. Towle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On July 14 of last year AHS advised of a blue-green algae health advisory for one minor bloom on Pine Lake. AHS could have lifted this advisory as early as August 1. AHS's policy is to keep an advisory on a lake once one bloom has occurred regardless of whether it is warranted. To the Minister of Health: will you modify this policy to ensure that Albertans have an accurate reflection of the health risks on all Alberta lakes?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Mr. Mandel: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know how important the lakes are throughout our province, and the hon. member makes a very good point. We will work with Alberta Health Services to ensure that they take the proper steps to remove the controls that they put in place as a result of their actions.

The Speaker: First supplemental, hon. member.

Mrs. Towle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Pigeon Lake, Pine Lake, and others have been negatively impacted by this policy, will your ministry change the policy from a seasonal ban to a common-sense solution of lifting the ban once the blue-green algae bloom has gone?

Mr. Mandel: Yes, Mr. Speaker. After we've been able to do an inspection to ensure that the lake is safe, we will remove the ban.

The Speaker: Final supplemental.

Mrs. Towle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is very positive. Given that communities around Pine Lake, Pigeon Lake, and others are tourism destinations and that this policy adversely affects landowners and the residents around them, can you also create a chart of lab results showing when a lake was issued the advisory and that the threat no longer exists?

Mr. Mandel: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I think that's a very reasonable approach. We'll see if we can create a chart where the results can be posted to ensure that everybody knows that everybody is safe. We'll do all we can to ensure that access to our beautiful lakes in the province of Alberta is maintained.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder, followed by Stony Plain.

Farm Worker Labour Protection

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government has given more time, money, and effort to golf courses and the Premier's \$100,000 infomercial while the plight of injured farm workers goes on. Almost 500 farm workers have died at work over the last 30 years, without the right to unionize, rest periods, or even a minimum wage. They labour under conditions that are unacceptable. To the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development: how does this government plan to protect farm workers, as they have failed to do so over the last 30 years?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour.

Mr. McIver: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our ministry works closely together with the ministry of agriculture on farm safety issues, and in fact the associate minister and I met with a group of farm and ranch leaders this week and talked about progress that we have made and progress that we can make in the future. But the fact is that the farmers and ranchers of this province are doing a very good job of providing a safe place to work, and we intend to keep working with them.

Mr. Eggen: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that we've managed to find time to debate 12 bills during the session – and we did a very good job – and given that while the minister and the agriculture minister are meeting with farm and ranch leaders without meeting the agriculture workers association, who actually represents these workers who are not being protected, again to the minister of labour: when will the government bring forward actual legislation to protect these vulnerable agricultural workers in the province?

Mr. McIver: Well, Mr. Speaker, under the current legislation any farm or ranch that wants to have, for example, WCB coverage can. We have with the industry a farm safe program. We work together constantly on more farm and ranch safety programs, and the results speak for themselves. We're not satisfied till there's not a single injury or a single death on the farms. Alberta is very comparable with other provinces, that have different legislation. What we're doing is working.

Mr. Eggen: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that if you do not mandate workers' compensation, minimum wage, and safety conditions, certainly you can't expect people to voluntarily just do those things and given that as a result we have an unacceptable rate of injury, death, and then lack of coverage for those families who experience those terrible tragedies, again, finally, how many more people must be killed, maimed, and left destitute before this government moves to have mandatory farm protection for the workers in this industry?

Mr. McIver: Well, I struggled, Mr. Speaker, and I found one area of agreement. One injury, one death is too many, and that's why this government continues to work with farms and ranchers across this province. We won't be done until there are no injuries. We take it seriously, and I will reiterate for the member: our results in Alberta are good. We're not satisfied until the injuries are zero, but I will assure Albertans that our results are good.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Stony Plain, followed by Calgary-South East.

Rural High-speed Internet and Mobile Services

Mr. Lemke: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta continues to grow, and that needs to include our rural communities, but for our rural communities to continue to attract and keep new families, we need to ensure they have access to services such as SuperNet and high-speed Internet. Question to the Minister of Service Alberta: what is being done to ensure rural constituents like mine have access to the high-speed Internet they were promised?

Mr. Khan: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the question. I also thank the hon. member for being such a stalwart leader in his community for so many years. The hon. member raises a very good point. In this global market it's critical that every community across Alberta has access to high-speed Internet. That's why the Premier has tasked Service Alberta in our mandate letter to increase capacity for high-speed broadband around the province, and we are doing just that.

Mr. Lemke: Mr. Speaker, to the same minister: given that rural connectivity was an issue that was raised during the 2015 Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties convention, what is this province doing to ensure we have the appropriate infrastructure in place to connect rural communities?

Mr. Khan: Again, I want to thank the hon. member for the question. Mr. Speaker, one of the pleasures of this ministry is that I have the opportunity to work with our Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development. I also have the added pleasure of working with our new associate minister, and I will tell you that I want to congratulate them on their initiative on the final mile rural community program. Just this last week they announced a few more grants for it to build more towers and some capacity to increase high-speed Internet across this province.

The Speaker: Final supplemental.

Mr. Lemke: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that we have often heard that high-speed Internet for all Albertans is a priority for this government but there are some communities in Alberta that do not even have wireless cellphone connections, what is being done to connect these communities?

Mr. Khan: Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to tell you that we attended the bear-pit session at the AAMD and C conference just last week, and I was very pleased to actually field more questions than the minister of agriculture and the associate minister of agriculture. This is an issue we know that rural Albertans feel passionately about. We are currently working with our private telecoms partners. We will build high-speed Internet, and we will also get mobile access for all rural Albertans. We're working very hard on it, and we'll deliver that to Albertans.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-South East, followed by Whitecourt-St. Anne.

Municipal Government Act Amendments

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Bill 20, the Municipal Government Amendment Act, 2015, proposes several changes to enhance municipal accountability and transparency, enable more efficient municipal operations, enhance municipal viability, strengthen municipal and intermunicipal planning as well as to address emerging issues. My constituents of Calgary-South East have expressed some concerns regarding these amendments. To the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs. Annexation should be a highly

transparent and impartial process that meets the needs of all municipalities involved. How does this revised MGA make sure the process is fair?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mrs. McQueen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the hon. member for the question and for his hard work in this Legislature. I want to start by saying that the Bill 20 amendments that came through with the Municipal Government Act were consensus items that were reached by AUMA, AAMD and C, the mayors of Calgary and Edmonton, and by business and industry, so a great deal of consensus, a great deal of collaboration. The issues of annexation are ways so that there's a process in place so any of those dealing with annexation make sure that they're clear on the process and the process is clear upfront.

Mr. Fraser: To the same minister: since the devastating decline in oil prices has made it nearly impossible to accurately plan for the future, how will municipalities be able to put forward a three-year plan and a five-year plan for capital, as the MGA proposes?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. McQueen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's an excellent question, hon. member. This is something that was brought forward by the municipalities, something that they want to do to ensure that this happens. There were over 54 items that were dealing with the MGA review. We've dealt with some of those consensus items, but these have come right from the municipal leaders themselves, from business, from industry, from Albertans. And we'll continue. We've passed Bill 20, and we're continuing to work on a number of other items for fall legislation.

2:40

Mr. Fraser: Again to the same minister: all municipalities will need to develop a code of conduct that fits the needs of a given municipality, but how will these codes of conduct be enforced?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. McQueen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. This, again, is something that municipalities have asked for. It will be up to them through their bylaw process to develop codes of conduct in their municipalities and then to be able to work through those in their municipalities, again, one of the 11 consensus items that were brought forward with Bill 20.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. members, 108 opportunities for questions and answers were offered today, which is a pretty good record in spite of a few bumps along the way, as one might say.

Before we have the 30-second break, could I have unanimous consent to revert briefly to the Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

Introduction of Guests

(continued)

The Speaker: Let us move, then, to the Minister of Culture and Tourism first.

Ms Kubinec: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to my colleagues in the Legislature here Lisa Holmes, the mayor of Morinville. She is one of the youngest mayors in the province, does an amazing job of keeping her community

active and alive. If you'd rise, please, Mayor Holmes, and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Associate Minister of Asia Pacific Relations.

Ms Woo-Paw: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to introduce Mr. Tim Onyett, who is with the accounting firm of Deloitte and is also the past president of the Hong Kong Canada Business Association. Mr. Onyett is seated in the members' gallery. He's now risen to receive the warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Are there others?

Seeing none, allow me to briefly introduce the Alberta Girls' Parliament. We have 54 visitors from throughout the province who are here today. They are accompanied by their group leaders: Shannen Hoffman, Veronica Hoffman, Victoria Hoffman, Kate Johnson, Kirsten Johnson, Laila McIntosh, Laurie Robertson, and Kathleen Robertson. Ladies who are here – or did they just vacate? Perhaps they just left. We might have just missed them. Let's applaud them anyway for the good work they do.

Thank you.

Thirty seconds from now we will continue with our Routine and hear the first of six private members' statements.

Members' Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, followed by Livingstone-Macleod. Please remember you have two minutes for each of these statements.

Dr. Cy Frank

Mr. Horne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Earlier this month Alberta and Canada lost one of the most remarkable leaders in the history of medicare. I am honoured to rise today and invite all hon. members to join me in commemorating the life and many contributions of Dr. Cy Frank.

I had the privilege of meeting Cy for the first time over a decade ago, and we worked closely together ever since. Like many, I will remember him for his optimism and for always pointing out the possibilities in health care rather than the obstacles, no matter how difficult the issue. In countless displays of quiet and often unseen leadership Cy challenged everyone to raise the bar and truly put patients first. As Minister of Health I relied greatly on his advice, and wherever I went in Alberta or abroad, I never ceased to be amazed at how many others did as well.

Mr. Speaker, we see the results of Dr. Frank's work all around us: in leading research organizations such as the McCaig Institute for Bone and Joint Health and the Alberta Bone and Joint Health Institute; in Alberta's strategic clinical networks – researchers, clinical leaders, administrators, and, thanks to Cy, patients – working together to bring the best in clinical practice and innovation to everyday care; and in countless strategic partnerships in academia and industry around the world. As chief executive officer at Alberta Innovates: Health Solutions he quickly reaffirmed Alberta's reputation as an international leader in health research.

Mr. Speaker, the lessons of Dr. Cy Frank were many. The most important thing he taught me and, I suspect, many others is that achieving better health for current and future generations requires us to do three things: to make decisions first and foremost from the patient's perspective, to know and to follow the evidence, and to build a culture in health care where leadership is shared with patients and front-line providers of care.

Mr. Speaker, to his family and to his colleagues, on behalf of all members our condolences and, most importantly, our thanks for the gift of Dr. Cy Frank and for a legacy that will endure for years to come.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod, followed by Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Official Opposition

Mr. Stier: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. For the past three years this PC government has done just about everything in its power to break the will of Albertans. We've seen secret sky palaces, expensive Olympic trips, the partisan use of government airplanes, more debt and deficits, you name it. Now the government says that it's under new management, when really it's all the same faces in all the same places.

The new CEO is familiar, too. He's been hanging around the government halls for decades. Not only that, he's singing from the same songbook the former Premier did. He doesn't think there's a single penny of waste to cut from the most expensive government in Canada. He wants to bring in new job-killing taxes. He wants to maintain the status quo and blame Albertans for the fiscal mess this government created. The truth is that Albertans didn't create the mess; the government did.

Wildrose has been there to fight them every step of the way. For the past three years we've been the best opposition this province has seen in decades. We did it through hard work and conservative values, and we did it because we came to work in this building for Albertans, not ourselves. Let me be clear. Wildrose is the only conservative party left in Alberta. We believe in cutting waste and shrinking government. We believe in low taxes. We believe in trust and democracy.

As we prepare to face another PC Alberta deficit budget, Wildrose believes that we're the only party standing between Albertans and this self-serving government. Wildrose represents the true frontier spirit – and it's strong – of Alberta, and just as this government couldn't break the will of Albertans, it will not break the will of the Wildrose Official Opposition. We will fight your spending. We will fight your taxes. Wildrosers everywhere will hold our heads high, knowing we did right by the people of this province, past, present, and future.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, followed by Lethbridge-East.

Retrospective by the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills

Mr. Rowe: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today with mixed emotions. Since the last election I have represented the constituents of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills as their MLA. It has been an incredible journey. As we all know, we can't do this job alone. It takes a team of great staff, but most of all it takes the support of those closest to us. In my case that would be my wife, Carol. I would not be here without her.

In my time here the landscape of the caucuses, the House, and even the province itself has changed dramatically and mostly for the better. I am proud of everything I have accomplished, first to change the government and then as part of it. That, Mr. Speaker, is why I became an MLA. I have strived to champion methods and concepts that were tried and tested and to be part of implementing ones that were new and groundbreaking. I became an MLA so that my neighbours and friends could have their voices heard and to lend

decades of expertise and share in the passion of my colleagues as we charted a new course.

This journey has given me lifelong friends. The road has been at times bumpy and the climb a little steep, but we can stand triumphant knowing that we have done our best. I look forward to years of knowing those whom I have grown to respect and admire along the way.

However, as is often said, nothing lasts forever. Today I am bidding farewell to the Legislature and my colleagues. Vital, important years are ahead for my wife and family. Government frequently needs to bring in fresh ideas. I have done what I set out to do, and I can rest knowing that our great province is in capable hands.

Thank you. [Standing ovation]

2:50 Retrospective by the Member for Lethbridge-East

Ms Pastoor: Mr. Speaker, in 2005 in my maiden speech I said that I was humbled by the awesome responsibility of governing and that I would do it with fairness, openness, and accountability. I also said that continuing care staff shortages needed to be addressed to ensure that our seniors would not experience the indignity of being a commodity on a bottom line. We still have a way to go.

For my public service I wanted to emulate the example of our late Lieutenant Governor Lois Hole, that of courage, compassion, and strength of character. I'm proud of my 11 years of provincial public service. I worked diligently. In opposition I sat on a government task force and wrote an adjunct report. I had my Bill 205 passed and was an outspoken advocate on seniors', PDD, and AISH issues and critic for many ministries. As a government member I served on the Canadian/American Border Trade Alliance and had an important resolution for our cattle industry passed. Bill 13 has just passed. It was a file that I worked very hard on, the prevention of invasive species. Agricultural issues for southern Alberta were always front and centre when I spoke with the government.

Having sat on both sides of the House, I believe every member in this House is equal. Yes, we do have different jobs and different responsibilities, but each is paramount for democracy and good government.

My daughters Florence and Bridget were elected politicians. My daughter Shelagh and my granddaughter kept us grounded. My granddaughter Kerstin made me a great-grandmother to Blake, and there's another one on the way. Mr. Speaker, is that not what it's about, our families? Without my girls' love and support, this would have really been a long haul.

I had fun in this Chamber. Not all of it was recorded in *Hansard*, like the time I asked the House at 4 a.m. if I was boring anybody because I heard nothing but loud snoring. [Standing ovation]

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. members, for your indulgence there.

Let us move on to Leduc-Beaumont, followed by Whitecourt-St. Anne.

World Sledge Hockey Challenge 2015

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and not give a farewell speech. Last month from February 1 to 7 the city of Leduc, in my constituency of Leduc-Beaumont, played host to the 2015 World Sledge Hockey Challenge. This tournament gave Albertans a chance to see world-class para-athletes from Russia, Korea, the United States and, of course, Canada. The tournament was won by the United States while Canada beat Korea for the bronze. The Canadian team included 13 players who helped Canada to win bronze at the Paralympics in Sochi and 14 who won the 2013 World Sledge Hockey Challenge in Toronto.

For those who have never seen it, Mr. Speaker, the sport follows the same rules as hockey except that the players sit on specially designed sleds, or sledges, with skate blades under the seat. Two sticks are used to not only pass and stickhandle and shoot the puck but also to propel and manoeuvre their sledges. The sledges are built high enough off the ground to allow the puck to pass underneath. Sledge hockey made its debut at the '94 Lillehammer Paralympic Winter Games and has since become a full medal event at the Paralympic Winter Games. Canada has participated in sledge hockey in every Paralympic Winter Games.

I have stood before this House and spoken about paralympic athletes before, Mr. Speaker, and I am pleased to see the growing support for our para-athletes. I'm pleased to report that both medal games in Leduc were sold out, and I was pleased to be joined by the hon. minister of culture for the final game. I'd like to commend the organizers and volunteers who made this championship possible and all the athletes who competed. I'd like to wish the best of luck to our Canadian national sledge hockey team, which will next be competing in April in Buffalo at the 2015 IPC World Sledge Hockey Championship.

Again, a salute to those athletes and the great volunteers in the city of Leduc. Mr. Speaker, thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Whitecourt-St. Anne.

Legislative Assembly Staff

Mr. VanderBurg: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to give thanks to some very important people, the Legislature staff. First, I want to thank our caucus legislative assistants, research and communications team, and our constituency assistants. They work quietly behind the scenes so we as MLAs can perform our duties in this Chamber and serve our constituents at home in our ridings. I want to extend thanks to the staff in the ministers' offices, who ensure that our ministers are driving out the government agenda and addressing the concerns of all Albertans. A caucus of 70 personalities – and I can guarantee that there are personalities – always guarantees an interesting day in the Legislature. This caucus cannot be a strong and effective team without the tireless work of our staff.

Finally, I'd like to thank the staff that keep this fantastic building operational. Thank you to the infrastructure staff, that always keep the hallways clean, the meeting rooms ready, and the lights on. Mr. Speaker, it's a privilege to come to work here at the Legislature each and every day. I remind myself of the privilege as I walk across the breathtaking grounds that are diligently attended to by meticulous caretakers, making our Legislature a crown jewel of the capital city. When things get hectic for us as elected officials, it always brightens my day to be greeted by our security staff team and the smiling faces of our visitor services team, that shares the history of the Legislature with visitors from across the world.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I want to take the opportunity to pass on my gratitude to all the staff that are involved in the day-to-day operations of our lives. Albertans have the opportunity to get to know MLAs through television and through community events, but they never get to see the people that work behind the scenes, that are part of Alberta's success. I invite members of this Chamber to join me in thanking those excellent members that serve us each and every day.

The Speaker: Hon. Deputy Government House Leader, you caught my attention. You're rising for unanimous consent to waive Standing Order 7(7), I understand.

Mr. Scott: I am, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Does anybody object to granting unanimous consent to go a couple of minutes beyond 3 o'clock?

[Unanimous consent granted]

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Medicine Hat.

Bill 25 Alberta Centennial Education Savings Plan Amendment Act, 2015

Mr. Pedersen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 25, the Alberta Centennial Education Savings Plan Amendment Act, 2015.

These proposed amendments will close program eligibility for the Alberta centennial education savings plan, or ACES plan, as of March 31, 2015. Several reviews showed that the program, created in January of 2005, was underutilized and not achieving its goal of encouraging families to save for their children's education. Over the last 10 years our government has made it easier to access student loan funding by streamlining processes, relaxing eligibility requirements, improving debt management tools, and creating grants to support low-income borrowers. The proposed amendments to this act will result in \$19 million in savings for the taxpayers of Alberta.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Scott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move pursuant to Standing Order 75 that Bill 25, the Alberta Centennial Education Savings Plan Amendment Act, 2015, be moved onto the Order Paper . . .

The Speaker: Hon. Deputy Government House Leader, excuse me just one minute. We just had a little distraction here.

Let us vote on this motion that's just been presented here by the hon. Member for Medicine Hat because he's moved first reading of Bill 25, the Alberta Centennial Education Savings Plan Amendment Act, 2015.

[Motion carried; Bill 25 read a first time]

The Speaker: Apologies for the distraction and the interruption. Please proceed, hon. member.

Mr. Scott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move pursuant to Standing Order 75 that Bill 25, the Alberta Centennial Education Savings Plan Amendment Act, 2015, be moved onto the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

The Speaker: The hon. President of Treasury Board.

3:00 Bill 26 Fiscal Sustainability Act

Mr. Campbell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 26, Fiscal Sustainability Act. This being a money bill, His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of the bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

The proposed bill reflects the Premier's commitment to sound, conservative fiscal principles and to present Alberta's finances in a clear format that follows public-sector accounting standards. The proposed bill also supports the government's plan to deal with our

current fiscal challenge, with a long-term focus on reducing our reliance on volatile resource revenue. More details will be available today, when I present Budget 2015.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 26 read a first time]

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, I believe you're up next.

Bill 209 Commission to Safeguard Albertans' Interests in Natural Resources Act

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to request leave to introduce a bill being the Commission to Safeguard Albertans' Interests in Natural Resources Act.

Bill 209 is about ensuring that the people of Alberta, who own the natural resources of this province, receive full and fair value. Mr. Speaker, the bill is designed to ensure that our government, particularly in terms of its treatment of resources, which we all own together, abides by the principles originally set forward by Premier Peter Lougheed. These principles include acting like owners of our resources, collecting our fair share of their value, saving for a rainy day, and ensuring that high-paying, value-added jobs are kept right here in Alberta.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, like everyone in our caucus, knows that this government has squandered our resource wealth. For this reason, we are proposing the establishment of a resource owners' rights commission to ensure that our resources are managed with the correct priorities in mind, priorities that ensure a better future for Albertans and their families. This commission will regularly issue reports to the owners and will consult with Albertans across the province on what they think should be done with our resources to ensure long-term prosperity.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 209 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice or someone on behalf of.

Mr. Scott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to Standing Order 59.01(3) I'm pleased to table the requisite number of copies of the schedule for consideration of the 2015 main estimates.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, I understand you have five tablings, followed by Edmonton-Calder.

Ms Blakeman: Yes, I do. Lucky me. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The first one is from Ann Campbell, which is an e-mail noting, "What would an Alberta day be without the sound of music, the joy of reading, and the thrill of discovering a beautiful piece of art . . . or movement such as seen in dance or theatre." She asks that the government "reconsider proposed cuts to arts organizations," and I certainly agree.

The second is the appropriate number of copies of a letter from the leader of the third party, the Member for Calgary-Mountain View, to the Privacy Commissioner asking for an update on the office's investigation into the cellphone bills.

The next is also a letter from the leader of the third party, the MLA for Calgary-Mountain View, to the Calgary Police Service asking for an update on their investigation and formally requesting a copy of the report, that it's in the public interest.

I have two additional tablings, Mr. Speaker. The first is an article from the *Edmonton Sun* from yesterday: Minister Named by Two More Staffers. It is around staff members and the Alberta Infrastructure minister approaching them to find information.

Finally, one from *Metro* news, small but mighty, that the Alberta Minister of Infrastructure “doesn’t deny asking opposition to seek [the Member for Edmonton-Castle Down’s] cellphone bill.”

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder, followed by Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thanks, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table the appropriate number of copies of a petition created by the Better Way Alberta campaign that is calling on the government to “ensure there is enough money to pay for necessary public services like education and health care.” The signatories want to achieve this through measures that include a higher tax rate on corporate profits and a progressive tax system in general. It’s garnered more than 1,600 signatures on paper and 6,000 signatures online so far. It reinforces the government’s own survey, which shows that Albertans are opposed to a waiting room tax and want corporations and the wealthy of this province to pay their fair share. I only hope that the voices of Albertans will be respected today in the upcoming budget.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’d like to table the appropriate number of copies of an e-mail between my constituency office and one of Alberta’s very valued teachers. He’s worried about classroom sizes and student mental health and is in shock that the government would even consider cutting funding that is of the utmost importance to our children. He says that it’s his responsibility as a teacher to speak up when the government is not looking out for the best interests of our students. I’m tabling this e-mail because this government cannot continue to ignore the outcry of teachers, parents, and families, especially when they’re trying to protect Alberta’s most precious resource, our future generation.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. members, there are no points of order, but could we have unanimous consent to revert to introductions for one introduction only? If anybody is opposed, please say so now.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Introduction of Guests

(continued)

The Speaker: Very briefly, the hon. Associate Minister of Asia Pacific Relations.

Ms Woo-Paw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It’s my honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Dr. Edy Wong, associate dean of the University of Alberta’s faculty of business. In addition to the important role of educating our young, he’s a great asset to Alberta’s effort in the Asia Pacific region to expand our market and presence in that area. Mr. Wong has now risen to receive the warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. members, the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall wishes unanimous consent to offer 30 seconds, but I’m watching the clock, and it would be against all protocols. I wonder if we could just thank

him for his service, the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall. [Standing ovation]

Thank you, hon. members. I know we’re tight to the clock.

In order to allow adequate time to prepare for the Budget Address by the hon. President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance this afternoon, the House will stand recessed for the next seven minutes, until 3:15 or thereabouts.

Thank you.

[The Assembly adjourned from 3:08 p.m. to 3:17 p.m.]

The Speaker: Hon. members, if we could take our seats, please, we could continue with our important business in one minute.

Orders of the Day

Transmittal of Estimates

Mr. Campbell: Mr. Speaker, I have received certain messages from His Honour the Honourable Lieutenant Governor, which I now transmit to you.

The Sergeant-at-Arms: Order!

The Speaker: Hon. members, the Lieutenant Governor transmits estimates of certain sums required by the offices of the Legislative Assembly for the service of the province for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2016, and recommends the same to the Legislative Assembly.

The Lieutenant Governor also transmits estimates of certain sums required by the government for the service of the province for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2016, and recommends the same to the Legislative Assembly.

Please be seated.

The hon. President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance.

Mr. Campbell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the 2015-16 offices of the Legislative Assembly estimates as well as the 2015-16 government estimates. Further, I also wish to table the government performance plan and ministry business plans and the 10-year strategic plan, Putting Things Right.

Government Motions

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

Mr. Campbell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I now wish to table the government’s Budget 2015 fiscal plan. The government has introduced Bill 26, the Fiscal Sustainability Act, which will define the fiscal and financial reporting requirements of the province beginning April 1, 2015. The form and contents of each of these plans anticipates this new legislation.

3:20

Budget Address

24. Mr. Campbell moved:

Be it resolved that the Assembly approve in general the business plans and fiscal policies of the government.

Mr. Campbell: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present my first-ever budget as Minister of Finance. I’d like to introduce my wife and partner, Jennifer, who is seated in the Speaker’s gallery. She keeps me grounded and on task. I’d also like to thank our Premier for this opportunity. This is a privilege few Albertans get to experience.

With a change in the tradition of Finance ministers wearing new shoes on budget day, I am proud to deliver my budget speech

wearing a new pair of moccasins. These were made by Mary Whitehorse, an elder in my constituency of West Yellowhead, and presented to me as a gift by the Edson Friendship Centre. Mr. Speaker, I've always had a deep respect for our First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people, and as a previous Minister of Aboriginal Relations that respect has grown. I've learned much about aboriginal peoples' relationship with the land and the resources it has to offer, an appreciation of family, the need to ensure the well-being of both young and old, as well as the responsibility of each generation to consider the vitality of generations to come. These long-held but simple values are important to consider as we address the challenges we face.

Earlier this month our Premier spoke about the unacceptable achievement gap that exists between First Nations students and other students in Alberta. To help address that gap, our government will work with First Nations in the province on a made-in-Alberta solution to improve First Nations education. We will invest \$74 million over the next three years to improve educational outcomes for First Nations students by working as a partner with First Nation chiefs and First Nation educational authorities in the province.

Mr. Speaker, all children in Alberta should have equal opportunities to be successful. For decades people have been drawn to our province by the promise of making a better life for their families. They were drawn by the very attributes that make Alberta the unique place it is, a province where hard work, perseverance, and the willingness to take risks brings rewards. Certainly, this was the case for me. I came to this province looking for opportunity. My journey began in Hinton 36 years ago, when I first, as a young man, was seeking to make my mark in the Alberta coal industry. Perhaps it's no surprise that I would have a career in mining. Like the Premier, I come from northern Ontario, and I'm also the son of a miner. My sisters and I would see my father arrive home after working the night shift. He would be bone tired but content in the knowledge that his day's work would provide for our needs.

My mother did triple duty keeping us all clean and fed, working as a bank teller to help make ends meet but never missing a hockey game or other sporting event that I or my sisters were involved in. We were fortunate as kids that our parents always lived within their means, ensuring we had a safe home and we were looked after. These memories helped guide my career as a labour representative in the coal industry, an industry that has had many ups and downs due to volatility in commodity prices. When negotiating contracts, we often had to sit down and resolve issues by working together. That sometimes included giving up raises or benefits in order to save jobs, good-paying jobs, Mr. Speaker, that allowed our members to stay in the community, meet the needs of their families, and successfully raise another generation of Albertans. We took a long-term view of what was best for our community.

Our government is doing the same thing. We are working hard to meet the needs of families and the next generation by providing the programs and services that ensure Alberta remains strong. We want an Alberta that responsibly develops its resources but also protects the environment. We want an Alberta that has strong communities that care for the elderly, support the growth of our youth. We want an Alberta that has the economic and social strength to be the best place for our families now and the best place for our children's and grandchildren's families in the future.

To realize the long-term vision for Alberta I have just described, we need long-term stability. Today we have everything but stability. North American crude oil prices plunged in the final four months of last year and in the past few weeks have hovered around \$45 U.S. per barrel, down by over 50 per cent from last summer. This plunge in oil prices has had a dramatic impact on government revenues. For the fiscal year of 2015-16 alone a revenue shortfall

of approximately \$7 billion is anticipated. To put this in perspective, \$1 out of every \$7 in government revenue is gone. That is close to the Education budget for the entire year or our provincial health care costs for less than five months.

In the past strong resource prices masked the fundamental stresses and cracks in our financial foundation. Our overreliance on volatile resource revenue to pay for the needs of today meant that stable revenues such as taxes and fees haven't kept pace with our growing expenses. To put it in a household context, our weekly paycheque has not been covering our day-to-day expenses. We have been lucky in recent years that resource revenues provided a bonus that allowed us to pay the bills. But as many Albertans who work in the oil and gas sector already know, there will be no bonus this year, and for some there might not even be a weekly paycheque. We are now faced with a lifestyle and household expenses that we can no longer afford.

As a government we know that we must change course, and under the leadership of Premier Prentice we will move forward with a balanced, thoughtful approach that will repair the cracks in our fiscal foundation and set us on a path of stability, prosperity, and hope. Doing nothing is not an option. Oil prices are not on the cusp of recovery, and industry experts anticipate that this low-price environment will continue for at least three budget cycles. Falling back on the province's reserves is not an option either.

At today's oil prices if government took no action, we would burn through our savings from the contingency fund in the first year and then blow through the heritage fund over the next two years. That would not be responsible decision-making. If we want long-term stability, we need a long-term plan, a plan that gives us the courage to make tough choices, the common sense to change how we must pay for the services we use, the confidence to try new approaches to long-standing problems, and the commitment to persevere during difficult days ahead.

Earlier this week the Premier announced a 10-year strategic plan that does just that. The 10-year plan outlines the steps Alberta needs to take to get ourselves off this economic roller coaster. We will put our revenues and spending back in balance so that our government can afford the high-quality services Albertans need regardless of the price of oil.

The strategic plan consists of three main goals: strengthening Alberta's fiscal foundation, building a lasting legacy, and securing Alberta's future. To put Alberta on the right track, our first goal is to take a disciplined and principled approach to Alberta's public finances and strengthen our fiscal foundation. The government will make responsible choices about how much Alberta spends on public services, how it finances those services, and how it ensures the long-term stability of those services.

The second goal is building a lasting legacy. As the provincial budget is put back into balance and on a more stable footing, the government will work to enhance the province's financial security over the long term.

Our third goal in the 10-year strategic plan is securing Alberta's future. We will invest strategically to create new opportunities for Albertans, build a strong economy, and foster a strong society to enable our children, grandchildren, and future generations to lead happy, healthy, and fulfilling lives.

Mr. Speaker, that brings us to today. Budget 2015 is the first year of our plan to restore Alberta's fiscal foundation and begin the path to balancing the budget. Now, balancing the budget by eliminating \$7 billion in spending in a single year or dramatically raising taxes is not a responsible course of action. Economists have advised us not to move too fast and that we should avoid taking drastic decisions that would further aggravate the economic situation for Albertans.

Over the past few months my caucus colleagues and I listened to Albertans in 26 communities, met with over 2,000 participants, and received over 40,000 online survey responses. Albertans told us that a calm, reasoned approach is needed. In communities like Grande Prairie, Athabasca, and Chestermere I was told that we need to do more to diversify our economy. In Calgary there was agreement that we need a long-term plan to address the budgetary issue and that we should put more money away into the heritage fund. In communities like Sylvan Lake and Camrose we heard from residents about the importance of protecting front-line services and funding for persons with developmental disabilities. Everywhere I travelled, there was one common theme: we need to get off the roller coaster of energy prices, and we need to do it in a balanced and measured way. We must control expenses while protecting front-line services.

Based on this input we have developed a plan for getting our budget in balance and still meeting the needs of Albertans. It is a plan that uses a combination of the three levers available to government: restraining spending, increasing revenue, and using our savings.

Albertans are demanding more than words. They need to see action, and we are already taking action starting at the top. Earlier this year the Premier announced a 5 per cent reduction in his salary plus the salaries for cabinet ministers, government MLAs, and his office staff. We have limited severance pay for political staff and have eliminated unnecessary discretionary spending. These actions serve as an important example to the rest of the public service that we're all part of the solution.

3:30

The first step in implementing our first budget under the 10-year strategic plan is to slow the growth of government spending. Starting with this budget and over the next several years, our government will focus on holding the line on expenses. In 2013-14 Alberta spent approximately \$1,300 more per capita than the national average on public services. That same year approximately 50 per cent of the entire budget, \$22.5 billion, was spent on public-sector compensation, including teachers, nurses, physicians, and members of the public service. This number is set to rise further over the next three fiscal years. Clearly, this is not sustainable.

The government will honour current contracts that are now in place, but as they expire, new contracts will be negotiated that take into account our current fiscal situation. This spring we will launch talks with public-sector employers and their respective unions about how a different approach, including an essential service model similar to that in place in other provinces, might be appropriate for Alberta. Change must be informed by mutual understanding, and we are prepared to listen to our partners in the public sector and take the time to get this right.

Beyond salaries, further action is needed to reach our goal of bringing our spending closer to the national average over the next four years. It means we need to hold the line on our overall spending, to be more innovative and efficient but still meet the needs of Albertans. Make no mistake: holding the line on spending while our province grows will be difficult. It means the government will have to absorb the costs of population growth, inflation, and wage increases. When factoring in these pressures, spending across the government in 2015-16 will be \$2 billion less than previously planned.

In Budget 2015 we made strategic decisions about where to allocate our limited fiscal resources. We established priorities and made decisions on how to deliver the most important programs and services Albertans need. As we made these decisions, we were guided by some key principles: to minimize the impact to the front line and seek administrative efficiencies first; to explore alternative

delivery mechanisms that can deliver the right services at the right time in the right way for the right results; to make smart investments and system improvements to ensure quality education for our children, protect vulnerable Albertans, provide supportive care for the elderly, and ensure access to high-quality health care for everyone; to continue to invest in infrastructure that supports Alberta's growing population in the most effective way possible; and to protect working families and maintain our position as the lowest tax jurisdiction in Canada.

This is not a one-year or one-budget fix. Spending constraints across government and the public sector will be part of our budgeting plan over the next three years.

Today, however, I want to speak to Albertans about some of the key changes contained in Budget 2015. On a program basis the single largest employer and largest expense in Alberta's budget is health care. Therefore, this must be our biggest focus for innovation and efficiency. Over the past decade Alberta's population has grown by 25 per cent, but funding to health care has grown by 100 per cent. Today Alberta spends 19 per cent more per capita on health care than the Canadian average. For the first time in 20 years we will start moving to bring health care spending closer to the Canadian average.

Budget 2015 will see a decrease of \$160 million for Health, for a total investment of almost \$18.9 billion. However, \$950 million in pressures will also need to be absorbed. There is room to achieve these cost reductions without disrupting the health care system or reducing care to patients. We will protect front-line care as we promised. There will be no hospital bed closures, no cuts in funding for physician services to patients, and no deinsurance of services. In fact, we're increasing access by opening new continuing care and restorative beds next year. The path forward requires our health managers and providers to do things differently. The improved health system governance recently announced will drive change and will give Albertans a stronger voice in local health care decisions that affect them.

The 2015-16 Education budget is increasing by \$145 million over the previous year. This funding increase will protect teaching positions and allow government to honour existing collective agreements. In order to accommodate teaching salaries, funding in other areas of education will see reductions. Budget reductions will start at the top, with a 9 per cent decrease in ministry administration. School boards will be required to find efficiencies and productivity improvements to reduce their nonteaching costs by 3 per cent. We recognize that school board reductions will be challenging in the face of increasing enrolment, which will not be funded but still must be accommodated. The transition will not be easy but will be necessary to ensure a quality education system is affordable to taxpayers now and in the future no matter what the price of oil.

Alberta universities receive almost 58 per cent of their operating revenue from government funding, compared to 42 per cent in Ontario. We need to align our system with national averages in government funding, user-pay, and revenue generation. Campus Alberta will see a reduction in its base grant funding of 1.4 per cent in 2015-16. While Budget 2015 protects postsecondary institutions from significant reductions to their operating grants, we must make changes to ensure a financially sustainable, accessible system. We will work with postsecondary institutions to preserve high-demand, high-value programs and, correspondingly, to identify and shed low-value programs that do not represent a good return on investment. In the months ahead we'll be discussing with our stakeholders a review of tuition fees and other revenue generation options, and at the same time we're making changes to student aid programs that will help students cover their education costs.

Holding the line on spending in some departments also means that we can make some strategic investments in other departments such as Human Services. Albertans have been clear that we must not balance the budget at the expense of those who are the most vulnerable. This government, under the leadership of our Premier, will ensure that they are protected. Budget 2015 increases our government's overall investment in services and programs for vulnerable Albertans by \$72 million to maintain high standards of support for communities and families. It means that our government will keep the Michener Centre open, allowing current residents to remain in the place that has long been their home, and it means that front-line services and staff that vulnerable Albertans depend on are maintained and services are integrated so they are close to home and can be accessed quickly.

There is nearly \$1.1 billion budgeted in 2015-16 for programs supporting persons with disabilities, including PDD and families of children with disabilities, an increase of \$66 million. There is also an additional \$31.5 million budgeted to maintain Alberta's monthly AISH benefit, which is the highest among provinces.

Beyond these specific highlights, Budget 2015 will require government and our related agencies to be innovative. There is a quote attributed to Apple's Steve Jobs that says: innovation is not about saying yes to everything; it's about saying no to all but the most crucial features. We must not be afraid to eliminate or reduce programs and grants that no longer achieve results. We can leave no stone unturned as we seek to remove inefficiencies, avoid duplication, or stop using outdated service delivery models. We must, in Steve Jobs' words, say no to things that are not essential.

But efficiencies and innovation alone cannot achieve our goals. If Albertans want stable public services, Alberta needs to establish stable ways of paying for them. This means making the responsible choice to use stable sources of revenue such as fees, levies, and taxes rather than relying on volatile energy royalties. As the government of Alberta brings the budget back into balance, it will make changes and provide greater funding stability for Alberta's public services.

In 2014 if Alberta had employed the tax system of any other province, Albertans and Alberta businesses would have paid at least \$11.6 billion more in taxes. This means that Alberta has the flexibility to place revenues on a more stable footing while remaining the most tax-competitive place in the country. At this difficult economic time we're also mindful of increasing the burden on the business sector both small and large. I've heard Albertans say that business needs to do its part, and we agree. Businesses are often thought of as large, multinational entities. The reality is that 95 per cent of all businesses in Alberta are small businesses. They are found in every community across the province and employ 35 per cent of Albertans.

3:40

As our province deals with the current economic challenges, we will expect that businesses both large and small will do their parts creating jobs and employing Albertans. There have been significant layoffs in our economy already. We don't want to make the situation worse, so we are holding the line on corporate taxes so that corporations will keep existing jobs here in Alberta, not move them to some other province or some other country. As our 10-year strategic plan helps diversify our economy, the current corporate and small-business tax rates will create more businesses, more revenues for government, and more employment for Albertans.

As our government looks for greater funding stability, we will ensure that this burden does not fall on the backs of vulnerable Albertans or lower income working families. Our government will ensure that Alberta has a fair and competitive tax system tied to a

person's ability to pay. Budget 2015 maintains the current 10 per cent tax rate for all Albertans who earn under \$100,000 a year. However, our tax system will be adjusted so those who can afford to pay more will pay more. This is a reflection of what we've heard from Albertans.

Personal income taxes for individuals with taxable incomes over \$100,000 will see an increase from 10 per cent to 10.5 per cent effective January 1, 2016. This will gradually move to 11.5 per cent by 2018. There will also be a three-year additional temporary tax of .5 per cent applied to taxable incomes of over \$250,000. A more progressive tax system will provide a more stable source of revenue to fund public services.

Our government also recognizes that these are challenging times and more can be done to protect working families. In 2016-17 we'll significantly enhance the Alberta family tax credit, which provides incentives for parents in lower and middle-income families to seek employment while providing credit for the cost of raising a family. Starting July 1 this year, payments will increase to a maximum of \$754 for one child and a maximum of \$1,987 for four or more children. We will enhance this program in 2016 by raising the rate at which payments start and raising the levels at which the benefits phase out. This change will provide an additional \$25 million in benefits for lower and middle-income families.

To further support Alberta's working families, Budget 2015 introduces a new refundable tax credit, the Alberta working family supplement. Starting in July 1, 2016, this new program will benefit families earning under \$41,250. Under this program working families with one child will be eligible for a maximum annual benefit of \$1,100, with a maximum benefit of \$2,750 for larger families. This program will provide an additional \$85 million in direct support to approximately 75,000 working families.

Over the years we have been complacent and have fallen back on the status quo approach of funding public services without any effort to recover or mitigate costs. Where appropriate, government will ensure that those who use public services are defraying the true costs of providing those services. The government will build on the user-pay principle. Fees for motor vehicle registrations, provincial parks, and land titles transactions, among others, will increase. There will be a 35 per cent increase in the rates of traffic fines. This is long overdue since traffic fines have not been increased since 2003 and have lost their value as a deterrent to poor driving.

Recognizing the additional costs to society of the consumption of alcohol and tobacco products, our government will increase the taxes collected on tobacco and the markup on liquor. These increases will take effect at midnight tonight.

An Hon. Member: Everybody is leaving.

Mr. Campbell: Everybody is leaving. Yeah.

Our government will increase the current fuel tax by four cents, to 13 cents per litre, also effective tonight at midnight.

In recognition of the cost of health care and its importance to Albertans a new health care contribution levy will be introduced. Let me be clear. This is not the system that we've seen in the past, which was regressive and had sizable administrative costs. We recognize that the old premium resulted in a disproportionate impact on lower and middle-income earners. The new health care contribution levy will have a progressive structure. It will be based on an individual's ability to pay, and it will ensure that we're not causing undue hardship for vulnerable Albertans. The new health care contribution levy will be applied to individuals with taxable income over \$50,000, impacting roughly 1.1 million Albertans. Only those with a taxable income over \$50,000 will pay the levy,

which increases in \$200 increments as income rises and is capped at a maximum of \$1,000.

In achieving greater funding stability, Albertans will have a stronger connection between the taxes they pay and the public services they receive. Taken together, we expect these measures to generate almost \$1.5 billion in new revenue in 2015-16. Despite paying more, Albertans will remain by far the lowest taxed jurisdiction in Canada. More importantly, these steps will put our province on a path to reduce our reliance on nonrenewable resource revenue.

Even as we hold the line on spending and increase revenue, both this year's budget and next year's will run deficits due to our commitment to minimize the impact on front-line services while we continue to invest in infrastructure. In 2015-16 a deficit of \$5 billion is estimated and in 2016-17 a deficit of \$3 billion. We will return to surpluses in 2017-18.

We are fortunate that our contingency savings account is forecast to be \$6.5 billion at the end of this fiscal year and that for the next two years we can draw on it to avoid borrowing for the operating costs of government. Alberta's savings, much like a family's emergency fund, need to be there for shocks and difficult situations. Much like a family, our province should responsibly work to replenish those funds after they've been used.

By 2019-20 only 50 per cent of our resource revenue will be used for programs and services, with the other 50 per cent allocated to savings and paying for investment in infrastructure or the reduction of capital debt. Instead of leaving future generations a bill, we will create for them a legacy and restore the heritage fund. With this plan we will more than double the value of the heritage fund over the next 10 years.

The province also has a responsibility to pay off its capital debt. Left unaddressed, this debt will act as a drag on Alberta's competitiveness and agility. In the short term our 10-year plan will see an initial increase in capital debt as we continue to build and maintain needed infrastructure. However, with the return of surplus budgets beginning in 2017-18, we will work to bring our capital debt down to \$11 billion by 2024-25 and to pay it off completely in the following years.

In Budget 2015 we're unveiling a \$29.5 billion capital plan to provide the public infrastructure Alberta families and communities need. Over the next five years there will be \$7.9 billion in municipal infrastructure support through the municipal sustainability initiative and other programs. This includes \$5.6 billion under MSI, including \$1.8 billion in basic municipal transportation grants, \$965 million for GreenTRIP, and \$188 million for the small communities fund. This is on top of the additional \$398 million in MSI funding that we announced earlier this month.

Albertans rely on a safe and efficient transportation network to move people and goods across the province. The capital plan invests \$6.7 billion in the provincial transportation network. This includes \$2.9 billion for the Calgary and Edmonton ring roads. There is \$774 million for other highway projects plus \$353 million to complete the twinning of highway 63 from Grassland to Fort McMurray. We are committed to providing innovative, high-quality, and well-designed learning facilities for Alberta's children. The capital plan has \$5 billion to build new schools in neighbourhoods where students live and modernize existing schools to meet today's educational needs. This includes \$3.9 billion to support almost 200 schools and modernization projects and an additional \$80 million to deliver more than 160 modular classrooms in 2015-16 and complete previously approved projects.

Over the next five years \$3.4 billion is budgeted to build, modernize, and maintain facilities that support Alberta's health system. Our plan includes \$926 million for capacity expansion

projects in Calgary and Edmonton; \$849 million for health facility projects in Grande Prairie, High Prairie, Edson, Lethbridge, Whitecourt, Beaverlodge, Medicine Hat, and Red Deer; and a further \$200 million for long-term care beds and other critical-care projects.

3:50

Our capital plan also includes \$4.8 billion in maintenance and renewal projects for nearly 1,900 public schools, over 1,000 health facilities, and 1,600 other properties across the province. We have learned from past mistakes that deferring maintenance impacts our services and our service levels to Albertans. Our capital plan identifies \$2.1 billion for maintenance and renewal of existing roads and bridges, \$909 million for schools, \$653 million for health care facilities, and \$547 million for postsecondary institutions.

Mr. Speaker, our province has been blessed with abundant and amazing natural resources, but the full benefits of these resources have only been realized due to a well-educated workforce, a commitment to innovation, and perseverance. We must build on our economic strengths in areas like energy, tourism, agriculture, and forestry to develop new opportunities for Albertans and confidently reach into new markets. Because Alberta has important competitive advantages when it comes to petrochemicals, we must ensure that additional petrochemical value chains like methane and propane are also competitive. We can build on our environmental strengths and become leaders in the areas of climate change and conservation. We must build on the strength of Albertans and support them as they age and invest actively in our children.

Many Albertans are asking, quite understandably: "Haven't we been here before? What's different this time?" I will tell you what's different. We're going to be strategic in our approach, not blindly cutting services but determining where we can get better value for tax dollars and improve the bottom line. We are going to be thoughtful, measured, and steady in our moves to balance the budget. We're going to make decisions that consider the impact on front-line services and the need to protect vulnerable Albertans. We're going to remain committed to a capital investment plan and build through this downturn so that we will have the infrastructure we need to accommodate future growth and get good value for taxpayers during this good time to build. We will make decisions that ensure that we maintain our triple-A credit rating. We've worked too hard and made too many sacrifices to reach this point only to fall back into bad habits.

At this time we will do the full job that's necessary. Simply getting the budget back in balance is pointless if we also don't fix the underlying problems that created our current deficit. We are committed to fixing the fundamental structural problems in Alberta's fiscal foundation. By following our 10-year vision and using the three levers available to us – restraining spending, increasing revenue, and using contingency savings – we will get Alberta off the revenue roller coaster. Over our long-term fiscal plan we will ask much of Albertans to help get us back to a point where we're spending within our means on what we need and saving for the future once again. We will do this in a way that protects jobs, protects our vital services, and protects our tax advantage.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans are resilient, and we have an abundance of opportunity in our province. Going forward, we have much work to do, and all Albertans can take great pride in who we are, what we have accomplished, and what we are committed to do in the future as we build this great province and seize every opportunity before us.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

On behalf of Her Majesty's Official Opposition, the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to debating and opposing tax increases in this House. With that, I move that we adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Denis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. At this point I would hereby move that the Assembly adjourn until 1:30 p.m. on Monday, April 13, 2015.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 3:55 p.m. to Monday, April 13, at 1:30 p.m.]

Bill Status Report for the 28th Legislature - 3rd Session (2014-2015)

Activity to March 26, 2015

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 199 are Government Bills. Bills numbered 200 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 numbers until the conclusion of the Fall Sitings.

1 Respecting Property Rights Act (Prentice)

First Reading -- 6 (Nov. 17, 2014 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 30-31 (Nov. 18, 2014 aft.), 142-46 (Nov. 24, 2014 eve, passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 169-73 (Nov. 25, 2014 aft., passed)

Third Reading -- 206-11 (Nov. 26, 2014 aft.), 277-79 (Dec. 1, 2014 eve., passed)

Royal Assent -- (Dec. 17, 2014 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force December 17, 2014; SA 2014 c15]

2* Alberta Accountability Act (Denis)

First Reading -- 404-05 (Dec. 8, 2014 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 456-67 (Dec. 9, 2014 aft., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 500-14 (Dec. 10, 2014 aft.), 515-16 (Dec. 10, 2014 eve., passed with amendments)

Third Reading -- 516-20 (Dec. 10, 2014 eve., passed on division)

Royal Assent -- (Dec. 17, 2014 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force December 17, 2014, with exceptions; SA 2014 c9]

3 Personal Information Protection Amendment Act, 2014 (Quadri)

First Reading -- 22 (Nov. 18, 2014 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 89 (Nov. 20, 2014 aft.), 165 (Nov. 25, 2014 aft., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 173 (Nov. 25, 2014 aft., passed)

Third Reading -- 259-75 (Dec. 1, 2014 eve., passed)

Royal Assent -- (Dec. 17, 2014 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force December 17, 2014; SA 2014 c14]

4 Horse Racing Alberta Amendment Act, 2014 (Campbell)

First Reading -- 22 (Nov. 18, 2014 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 89 (Nov. 20, 2014 aft.), 165-67 (Nov. 25, 2014 aft., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 174-75 (Nov. 25, 2014 aft.), 177-79 (Nov. 25, 2014 eve., passed)

Third Reading -- 279-81 (Dec. 1, 2014 eve., passed)

Royal Assent -- (Dec. 17, 2014 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2014 c12]

5 Securities Amendment Act, 2014 (Campbell)

First Reading -- 22 (Nov. 18, 2014 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 89-90 (Nov. 20, 2014 aft.), 167-68 (Nov. 25, 2014 aft., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 173 (Nov. 25, 2014 aft., passed)

Third Reading -- 281-83 (Dec. 1, 2014 eve., passed)

Royal Assent -- (Dec. 17, 2014 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force December 17, 2014, with exceptions; SA 2014 c17]

6 Statutes Amendment Act, 2014 (No. 2) (Olson)

First Reading -- 22-23 (Nov. 18, 2014 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 90-92 (Nov. 20, 2014 aft.), 175 (Nov. 25, 2014 aft., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 193-206 (Nov. 26, 2014 aft.), 283 (Dec. 1, 2014 eve., passed)

Third Reading -- 321 (Dec. 2, 2014 eve., passed)

Royal Assent -- (Dec. 17, 2014 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force December 17, 2014, with exceptions; SA 2014 c18]

- 7 Chartered Professional Accountants Act (McIver)**
First Reading -- 159 (Nov. 25, 2014 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 275-76 (Dec. 1, 2014 eve.), 319 (Dec. 2, 2014 eve., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 425 (Dec. 8, 2014 eve., passed)
Third Reading -- 480 (Dec. 9, 2014 eve., passed)
Royal Assent -- (Dec. 17, 2014 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force on proclamation, with exceptions; SA 2014 cC-10.2]
- 8* Justice Statutes Amendment Act, 2014 (Kennedy-Glans)**
First Reading -- 159 (Nov. 25, 2014 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 276-77 (Dec. 1, 2014 eve.), 319-21 (Dec. 2, 2014 eve., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 425-28 (Dec. 8, 2014 eve., passed with amendments)
Third Reading -- 480 (Dec. 9, 2014 eve., passed)
Royal Assent -- (Dec. 17, 2014 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force December 17, 2014; SA 2014 c13]
- 9* Condominium Property Amendment Act, 2014 (Olesen)**
First Reading -- 237 (Dec. 1, 2014 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 336-38 (Dec. 3, 2014 aft.), 428-33 (Dec. 8, 2014 eve., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 470-75 (Dec. 9, 2014 aft.), 477-80 (Dec. 9, 2014 eve., passed with amendments)
Third Reading -- 495-500 (Dec. 10, 2014 aft., passed)
Royal Assent -- (Dec. 17, 2014 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2014 c10]
- 10* An Act to Amend the Alberta Bill of Rights to Protect our Children (Jansen)**
First Reading -- 238 (Dec. 1, 2014 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 300-18 (Dec. 2, 2014 aft., passed on division)
Committee of the Whole -- 338-55 (Dec. 3, 2014 aft.), 357-66 (Dec. 3, 2014 eve.), 367-74 (Dec. 3, 2014 eve., passed with amendments), 538-548 (Mar. 10, 2015 aft., recommitted, passed with amendments)
Third Reading -- 536-38 (Mar. 10, 2015 aft, recommitted to Committee), 548 (Mar. 10, 2015 aft., passed)
Royal Assent -- (Mar. 19, 2015 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force June 1, 2015, with exceptions; SA 2015 c1]
- 11 Savings Management Repeal Act (Campbell)**
First Reading -- 334 (Dec. 3, 2014 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 433-41 (Dec. 8, 2014 eve., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 468-70 (Dec. 9, 2014 eve., passed)
Third Reading -- 494-95 (Dec. 10, 2014 aft., passed)
Royal Assent -- (Dec. 17, 2014 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force December 17, 2014; SA 2014 c16]
- 12 Common Business Number Act (Quest)**
First Reading -- 562-3 (Mar. 11, 2015 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 619 (Mar. 12, 2015 aft.), 698 (Mar. 17, 2015 aft.), 733-4 (Mar. 18, 2015 aft., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 798-800 (Mar. 23, 2015 eve., passed)
Third Reading -- 858-59 (Mar. 25, 2015 aft., passed)
- 13* Fisheries (Alberta) Amendment Act, 2015 (Leskiw)**
First Reading -- 563 (Mar. 11, 2015 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 619 (Mar. 12, 2015 aft.), 668-71 (Mar. 16, 2015 eve., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 730-3 (Mar. 18, 2015 aft., passed)
Third Reading -- 754-57 (Mar. 19, 2015 aft., passed)
- 14 Agricultural Societies Amendment Act, 2015 (Olson)**
First Reading -- 563 (Mar. 11, 2015 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 619-20 (Mar. 12, 2015 aft.), 800-01 (Mar. 23, 2015 eve., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 832-33 (Mar. 24, 2015 aft., passed)
Third Reading -- 859-60 (Mar. 25, 2015 aft., passed)
- 15 Securities Amendment Act, 2015 (Campbell)**
First Reading -- 563 (Mar. 11, 2015 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 620-21 (Mar. 12, 2015 aft.), 667-8 (Mar. 16, 2015 eve., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 730 (Mar. 18, 2015 aft., passed)
Third Reading -- 753-54 (Mar. 19, 2015 aft., passed)

- 16 Statutes Amendment Act, 2015 (Donovan)**
First Reading -- 563-4 (Mar. 11, 2015 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 621-22 (Mar. 12, 2015 aft.), 666-7 (Mar. 16, 2015 eve., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 727-9 (Mar. 18, 2015 aft., passed)
Third Reading -- 751-53 (Mar. 19, 2015 aft., passed)
- 17 Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2015 (\$) (Campbell)**
First Reading -- 597 (Mar. 11, 2015 eve., passed)
Second Reading -- 612-19 (Mar. 12, 2015 aft., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 659-66 (Mar. 16, 2015 eve., passed)
Third Reading -- 687-9 (Mar. 17, 2015 aft., passed)
Royal Assent -- (Mar. 19, 2015 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force March 19, 2015; SA 2015 c2]
- 18 Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2015 (\$) (Campbell)**
First Reading -- 698 (Mar. 17, 2015 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 716-22 (Mar. 18, 2015 aft., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 748-51 (Mar. 19, 2015 aft., passed)
Third Reading -- 791-92 (Mar. 23, 2015 eve., passed)
- 19 Education Amendment Act, 2015 (Dirks)**
First Reading -- 635-6 (Mar. 16, 2015 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 801-05 (Mar. 23, 2015 eve., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 833-38 (Mar. 24, 2015 aft., passed)
Third Reading -- 860-61 (Mar. 25, 2015 aft., passed)
- 20* Municipal Government Amendment Act, 2015 (Weadick)**
First Reading -- 636 (Mar. 16, 2015 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 722-7 (Mar. 18, 2015 aft., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 792-98 (Mar. 23, 2015 eve., passed with amendments)
Third Reading -- 829-32 (Mar. 24, 2015 aft., passed)
- 21 Safety Codes Amendment Act, 2015 (Casey)**
First Reading -- 746-47 (Mar. 19, 2015 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 805-07 (Mar. 23, 2015 eve., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 838-40 (Mar. 24, 2015 aft., passed)
Third Reading -- 861-63 (Mar. 25, 2015 aft., passed)
- 22 Skin Cancer Prevention (Artificial Tanning) Act (Quest)**
First Reading -- 771 (Mar. 23, 2015 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 823-25 (Mar. 24, 2015 aft., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 840 (Mar. 24, 2015 aft., passed)
Third Reading -- (Mar. 25, 2015 aft., passed)
- 23 Victims Restitution and Compensation Payment Amendment Act, 2015 (\$) (Denis)**
First Reading -- 821 (Mar. 24, 2015 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 863-65 (Mar. 25, 2015 aft., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 865-68 (Mar. 25, 2015 aft., passed)
- 24 Public Sector Services Continuation Repeal Act (McIver)**
First Reading -- 771 (Mar. 23, 2015 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 825-29 (Mar. 24, 2015 aft., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 832 (Mar. 24, 2015 aft., passed)
Third Reading -- 857-58 (Mar. 25, 2015 aft., passed)
- 25 Alberta Centennial Education Savings Plan Amendment Act, 2015 (Pedersen)**
First Reading -- 882 (Mar. 26, 2015 aft., passed)
- 26 Fiscal Sustainability Act (\$) (Campbell)**
First Reading -- 882 (Mar. 26, 2015 aft., passed)

- 201* Electric Utilities (Transparency in Billing) Amendment Act, 2014 (Anglin)**
First Reading -- 86 (Nov. 20, 2014 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 125-28 (Nov. 24, 2014 aft.), 238-52 (Dec. 1, 2014 aft., passed on division)
Committee of the Whole -- 406-08 (Dec. 8, 2014 aft., passed with amendments)
Third Reading -- 408 (Dec. 8, 2014 aft., passed)
Royal Assent -- (Dec. 17, 2014 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force December 17, 2014; SA 2014 c11]
- 202 Safe and Inclusive Schools Statutes Amendment Act, 2014 (Blakeman)**
First Reading -- 86 (Nov. 20, 2014 aft., passed), 335-6 (Dec. 3, 2014 aft., withdrawn)
- 203* Safety Codes (Sustainable Structures) Amendment Act, 2014 (VanderBurg)**
First Reading -- 192 (Nov. 26, 2014 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 409-18 (Dec. 8, 2014 aft., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 639-42 (Mar. 16, 2015 aft., passed with amendments)
Third Reading -- 642 (Mar. 16, 2015 aft., passed)
Royal Assent -- (Mar. 19, 2015 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force 3 months after date of Royal Assent; SA 2015 c3]
- 204 Traffic Safety (Distracted Driving Demerit) Amendment Act, 2014 (Amery)**
First Reading -- 388 (Dec. 4, 2014 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 642-51 (Mar. 16, 2015 aft.), 774-79 (Mar. 23, 2015 aft., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 779-84 (Mar. 23, 2015 aft., passed)
Third Reading -- 784 (Mar. 23, 2015 aft., passed)
- 205 Police (Protection of Victims of Sexual Violence) Amendment Act, 2015 (Cusanelli)**
First Reading -- 747 (Mar. 19, 2015 aft., passed)
- 206 Childhood Comprehensive Eye Examination Act (Jablonski)**
First Reading -- 636 (Mar. 16, 2015 aft., passed)
- 207 Independent Budget Officer Act (Forsyth)**
First Reading -- 636 (Mar. 16, 2015 aft., passed)
- 208 Alberta Human Rights (Commission Accountability) Amendment Act, 2015 (Saskiw)**
First Reading -- 713 (Mar. 18, 2015 aft., passed)
- 209 Commission to Safeguard Albertans' Interests in Natural Resources Act (Notley)**
First Reading -- 882 (Mar. 26, 2015 aft., passed)

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