



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
First Session

Alberta Hansard

Thursday afternoon, December 3, 2015

Day 28

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta
The 29th Legislature

First Session

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Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (ND), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees
Feehan, Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)	McKitrick, Annie, Sherwood Park (ND)
Bhullar, Manmeet Singh, Calgary-Greenway (PC)	McLean, Stephanie V., Calgary-Varsity (ND), Deputy Government Whip
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Connolly, Michael R.D., Calgary-Hawkwood (ND)	Notley, Hon. Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (ND), Premier
Coolahan, Craig, Calgary-Klein (ND)	Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (W)
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Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (PC)	Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (W)
Gray, Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (ND)	Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC), Progressive Conservative Opposition House Leader
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Kazim, Anam, Calgary-Glenmore (ND)	van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)
Kleinstuber, Jamie, Calgary-Northern Hills (ND)	Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND)
Larivee, Hon. Danielle, Lesser Slave Lake (ND)	Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)
Littlewood, Jessica, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (ND)	Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)
Loewen, Todd, Grande Prairie-Smoky (W)	
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (ND)	
Luff, Robyn, Calgary-East (ND)	
MacIntyre, Donald, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (W)	

Party standings:

New Democrat: 53 Wildrose: 22 Progressive Conservative: 9 Alberta Liberal: 1 Alberta Party: 1 Independent: 1

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Kazim	

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, December 3, 2015

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Please be seated.

Introduction of Visitors

The Speaker: Leader of the third party, I understand that you have some visitors.

Mr. McIver: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of the House a former colleague and his wife, who are visiting here today. Dave Quest was a member in this House for Strathcona-Sherwood Park from 2008-2015. He also served as Associate Minister of Seniors during his time at the Legislature. His wife, Fiona Beland-Quest, is also dedicated to serving the public. She is a Strathcona county councillor who has a long record of community involvement in Sherwood Park. My guests are seated in your gallery, and I ask them to stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The opposition leader.

Mr. Jean: Thank you. I'd just like to introduce Ken and Betty Epp. Ken Epp, as many people know, served with distinction with the Conservative Party of Canada in the federal government for some years. I believe they are sitting in the Speaker's gallery. With your permission, Mr. Speaker, I would ask that they rise and receive the warm, friendly reception that they're due from this House.

Thank you.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Are there any school groups to be introduced today? Seeing none, the hon. Member for Peace River.

Ms Jabbour: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Hon. members, today I want to recognize a group of remarkable individuals in the galleries who are truly key to our democratic process in Alberta, our constituency assistants. They are the first point of contact with us for our constituents, they help maintain a nonpartisan presence, and they put up with a heck of a lot on our behalf, especially this past week. We want to say thank you to all of them. This evening they're here for a winter seminar, and tonight we're having a recognition dinner. I especially want to also recognize my own constituency assistant, Susan Thompson, who is among them, from Peace River. They're from every part of the province. If they could all rise, and can we give them the traditional warm welcome of the House. [applause]

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. members. I'm very proud of you, that you did that for all of these good people.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Hawkwood.

Mr. Connolly: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my absolute honour to rise today and introduce to you and through you distinguished members of our community who have contributed as advocates of human rights on indigenous, LGBTQ, and immigrant issues: Gurcharan S. Bhatia, former citizenship judge, recipient of the Order of Canada and founder of Daughters Day; Sonia Bitar, former citizenship judge and executive director of Changing Together: A

Centre for Immigrant Women; Robert Philp, QC, chief commissioner of the Alberta Human Rights Commission; Muriel Stanley Venne, president and founder of the Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women and recipient of the Order of Canada; and Dr. Kristopher Wells, director of the Institute for Sexual Minority Studies and Services at the University of Alberta. I'll ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my great honour and pleasure to introduce to you and to the House several distinguished men and women who've used art and journalism to advance human rights for marginalized people in society. I'll ask them each to stand as I mention their names: Kristina de Guzman, an artist who uses music and art as common ground to connect people from diverse backgrounds; Arnim Joop, publisher of community newspapers which cover stories of diverse ethnic communities in Edmonton and across Alberta; Trina Joshi, a journalist who co-organized the first public screening of *India's Daughter*, a controversial documentary on gender rights in Canada; and finally, Judy Piercey, former managing director of CBC Edmonton and northern Alberta. Her work on sexual violence against children created significant impacts. I request all now to receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two sets of introductions here this afternoon. I'll start by rising to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a group of people who have worked hard to promote justice for all, using law and labour relations. They're here to commemorate international Human Rights Day, which is coming up next week. I'll ask that they please stand as I read their names: Carrie-Lynn Rusznak, vice-president of the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees and chair of AUPE Human Rights Committee; Susan Slade, vice-president of the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees and chair of the AUPE Women's Committee, which supports women to realize their leadership potential; Matthew A. Woodley, a legal expert in constitutional law and a teacher at MacEwan University; and Doug Stollery, a human rights lawyer with more than 30 years of experience, best known for progressing the rights of people marginalized due to their sexual orientation. I ask them all to please rise and receive the traditional and very well-deserved warm welcome of the Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you – and it's a little bit redundant because they all stood already; I didn't realize that was going to happen – my two assistants from the St. Paul constituency office, Monica de Bruyn Kops and Nancy Pratch-Wiebe. If they'd both rise and receive the warm welcome of the House, please.

The Speaker: Yes. Hon. members, if there are some other members, in recognition of the time – on the notes that I've prepared, I will be contacting each of you. But if that's the situation, I think it would be appropriate that we accept the introduction by the Member for Peace River. Agreed?

The hon. Member for Calgary-North West.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly some powerful voices from Edmonton's multicultural communities. With us are Vivian Abboud, a public servant and a strong voice for immigrant women, especially for the Lebanese community; also, Lindsay Daniller, the director of community initiatives and development at Reach Edmonton; Yazmin Juarez and Sergio Olivares from Memoria Viva Society, which works closely with Latin American communities to raise awareness on human rights issues; Clarizze Truscott, a foreign workers and migrants advocate for 15 years and the president of Kabisig Society of Fort Saskatchewan; Renée Vaugeois, the executive director of the John Humphrey Centre for Peace and Human Rights, dedicated to bringing social equality; and Leslie Weigl, a public educator and director of the U of A's International House and recipient of the 2015 daughter of the year award. I ask them to rise and accept the warm wishes and welcome of this Assembly.

1:40

The Speaker: Welcome.

The Minister of Education and Minister of Culture and Tourism.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my great pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to the members six Albertans, our 2015 Stars of Alberta volunteer award recipients. I'd like them to rise as I introduce them. Number one is Ravina Anand of Edmonton. She's been a committed volunteer since the age of 12, including at Big Brothers Big Sisters of Hope Mission. Mohit Kumar was instrumental in setting up a program called water wings and in EXCEL, assisting elementary students with their school work. Deanna Lennox from Fort Saskatchewan, from the RCMP, now has an amazing program using horses to help people with posttraumatic stress disorder. I have Roberta Rehill from Hanna, who has contributed many thousands of volunteer hours to organizations like the Hanna Front Row Centre Arts Council, performing arts association, and so forth. Dawning Boston from Edmonton is a driver extraordinaire working through the helping hands seniors association and just does an unbelievable amount. Dwayne Hlady from Vegreville is an important senior citizens volunteer as well, driving and helping. I would like everyone to please recognize these individuals today. They work tirelessly to make all of our communities a better place.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you two proud Albertans who have supported and believed in me through five trying years of Alberta politics. They reside in my heart and have been instrumental in almost every major life decision that I have made, including the best decision of all, coming to Canada. Santhi is my strong and loving wife. She was a star in academics and sports, and she earned a bachelor's degree in architecture. She's also a survivor of the Bhopal industrial gas leak tragedy. When Santhi and I first came to Canada, she wanted a return ticket. That's right. She survived the largest industrial disaster in the history of the world, but she didn't know if she could get through the Alberta winter. Now we know that we can get through anything.

Himanish, my son, was a young socialist in high school, who, like the opposite members, expected a lot of freebies from the world. But when he worked in the oil sands and received his first paycheck and saw all the tax deductions, his approach to life changed, and he quickly joined me on the right side of the table.

Himanish was recently accepted to med school in Australia. He leaves home next month, and we'll miss him terribly, but I'm proud to say that he has made a promise to Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor and will return to Alberta after his studies conclude. At least, he'd better.

Santhi and Himanish are here today to show their support for Alberta's farmers and ranchers in their fight against Bill 6. In 2008, Mr. Speaker, the Calgary Zoo had two pandas. Well, today in the House we have done one better. I ask that my family stand to receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly one of the most important people in my life, my best friend, my husband, Kent Pitt. When we first discussed that I was going to be running to become the next MLA, I believe his first response was actually considered unparliamentary in this House. Despite his initial lack of enthusiasm, he's been such an amazing support and such an amazing dad. During all this excitement Kent managed to complete his final tests and training to become a journeyman electrician. He is proof that it's never too late to follow your career goals. I'm so grateful for Kent and our two wonderful children, and as I'm sure many other members would agree, I would not be here without their support. He is seated in your gallery. I will ask him to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The Minister of Human Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you seven special guests today. These individuals are members of a volunteer-run charity, the Dil Walk Foundation, which is committed to increasing the awareness of heart diseases. Their work focuses on the south Asian population, which studies show is at a much greater risk for heart attacks and cardiovascular diseases. I also have had the honour of attending their very successful fundraiser two weeks ago. I commend their efforts and work and would like to introduce these guests now. Dr. Anmol Kapoor, Mrs. Raman Kapoor, Mr. Mandeep Duggal, Kuldeep Nahal, Jocelyne Lamoureux. Also in attendance are two other guests, Roop Rai and Saby Paul, but the Member for Peace River already introduced them. They are my constituency staff, so I will not introduce them. Now I ask all my guests to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to introduce to you and to all members of the Assembly a distinguished friend of mine, Mr. Nima Dorjee, currently the vice-president of the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Alberta. Born in India in a Tibetan refugee camp, Mr. Dorjee came to Canada and has had a distinguished life, including previously serving as the president of the University of Calgary Students' Union. He is also the president of the Project Tibet Society, which is an entirely volunteer-run organization that will help up to 400 refugees from Tibet come to Alberta to resettle. I ask that Nima please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two sets of introductions. I am pleased to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly the construction crew of a favourite part of the Legislative Assembly for visitors, staff, and members alike: the people who did the Lego Legislature. Representing the building crew in the gallery here today are project managers Chris Gray and John Koob and members of the building crew Nadine Leenders and Michel Magnan.

I also would like to recognize the following guests. They, like me, have a passion for cycling, and we'd love to see Members of the Legislative Assembly join them on their rides Wednesday evenings in the river valley or in training rides for the MS Leduc and Beaumont rides. I would like to recognize Al Carlson, Dennis Miller, Dan Boonstra, and Greg Pommen. I'll ask them all to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'd like to introduce to you and through you the elected body of the Alberta College of Paramedics. They consist of Ian McEwan, president; Kieran Moore, vice-president; Dusty Schlitter, treasurer; Ted Langford, public member; Enzo Della Rocca, councillor; Jon Jaekel, councillor; and Tyler Douglas, councillor. These people not only serve on the front line and in other areas, but they dedicate so much of their private time to make EMS better. I have nothing but great respect for them and ask them to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the House.

1:50

Oral Question Period

Farm and Ranch Worker Legislation

Mr. Jean: I want to welcome the Premier back. She has been away in Paris not making news, but she is coming back to a mess of her own making. Now, the Premier says that all these good people are mad about Bill 6 because of misinformation put out by government officials. However, the same misinformation was given to us as the Wildrose and reporters in private briefings, and of course the same misinformation appeared in government information sheets and government websites. Is it just possible that the information given was correct but that the Premier just got this bill all wrong?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very, very proud that when passed this fall this bill will ensure that paid farm workers in Alberta will finally enjoy the protections enjoyed by every other farm worker in the country. What this bill will do, and the only thing that this bill will do as of January 1, is that it will ensure that if somebody is seriously injured while working as a paid farm worker, they will not lose their house and their families will not go hungry because they will be entitled to compensation, as is the case in almost every other jurisdiction in the country.

Mr. Jean: I'm going to repeat a point because I think the Premier needs to hear it. Family farms are sophisticated operations. They monitor commodity prices and markets and scientific developments. They hire accountants to structure their farms to minimize their tax bills. They put family members on the payroll and actually give them T4s because that's the smart thing to do. That's just one of the many reasons why the government's amendments will not help at all. The Premier needs to stop this bill. When will the Premier admit that this government doesn't know anything about farming and ranching and kill Bill 6?

Ms Notley: Interestingly, Mr. Speaker, I grew up in a farming community, and I do understand farming and ranching. You know one of the things I also understand? I also understand what it means when a person is injured when working on a farm or ranch and they have no compensation and they are permanently injured for the rest of their life and they have no ability to make a living. Then we say: "I'm sorry. This is just a thing about Alberta. You're going to have to be on welfare for the rest of your life because the government doesn't care about protecting vulnerable paid farm workers." Farms exist very well in other provinces that have this kind of protection, and they will here, too.

Mr. Jean: It's actually about consultation and not doing any. The government's town halls on this bill have been an absolute joke. The crowds get bigger; the answers get far less clear. Farmers and ranchers tell the government to stop. The government is deaf. Today we had the largest of three rallies on the steps. Each has been larger than the one before. If the government doesn't relent, they will get bigger. I know the Premier's top advisers are telling her to stay strong, to be tough. It's a mistake. It's bad for Alberta. It's bad for your caucus. Will the Premier do the right thing, the smart thing, and relent and kill Bill 6?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As has been the plan all along with Bill 6, once the bill is passed and farm workers, vulnerable paid farm workers, have their health and safety protected and their right to compensation protected, we will engage in fulsome consultations both before regulations are drafted and after regulations are drafted on the application of the Employment Standards Code and the Labour Relations Code and the specifics of the occupational health and safety legislation. That's the way you move legislation forward. I look forward to working with those farmers to talk about how this will impact them. Even if they're angry, that's fine. We will consult until we reach a consensus on how those work.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.
Her Majesty's Official Opposition leader.

Mr. Jean: So it's clear that NDP consultation is ramming legislation people don't want down their throats without talking to them about it first. Leaders accept responsibility. They step up when they're wrong, and they admit their mistakes. Businesses say that minimum wage is hurting their bottom lines. The Premier ignores them. The energy sector says that it's being crushed by the uncertainty of the royalty review. The Premier doesn't care. Now farmers and ranchers say that they're very worried, and the Premier tells everyone that it's not her fault. This is a failure of leadership. When is the Premier going to stop blaming others and accept the blame for her government's out-of-touch policies for Alberta?

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, I will say that I take full responsibility for the confusion that exists around that. As the Premier it does ultimately rest with me, but I also as the Premier have to think about the 177 farm workers who are paid who will be hospitalized between January 1 and April 1 who will not receive any compensation if we do not move forward on this legislation. Ultimately, that's what I think about when I go to bed at night. Those are the people that this government will act to protect, and we will do so while protecting the integrity of family farms.

Mr. Jean: Alberta has one of the best farm safety records in the country. The Premier's problem is that she has lost the trust of

Albertans. That's the truth of it. The Premier asks farmers and ranchers to trust her. Well, she has done absolutely nothing to earn that trust of hard-working Albertans. She has not consulted on this bill. Her government's consultation meetings are a joke. Now we learn that the four crop commissions proactively offered to help this government, but this Premier ignored them. The Premier thinks that she knows better than farmers and ranchers. Her arrogance is shameful. Why won't the Premier listen to Albertans and kill Bill 6?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said, you know, there were on average 17 paid farm workers who die in Alberta every year. Their families receive no compensation because we do not provide workers' compensation. That will change January 1. Interestingly, in B.C. when these rules were introduced, the farm fatality rate was reduced by 68 per cent, the farm injury rate was reduced by 52 per cent, the serious injury rate was reduced by 41 per cent. That's what happened when these rules were introduced in B.C., and – you know what? – they still have farms in B.C. That is the way we are going to go here in Alberta.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Jean: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. After all of those changes in B.C. Alberta still has a better record of safety for farmers.

The Premier seems totally unwilling to listen to Albertans. That's what it's about. She even seems unwilling to listen to her cabinet and her caucus. We see her rural caucus members walking around with hand-dog faces all over this place. We know the ag minister has told farmers that he is recommending that the Premier pull this bill. We can see the pained looks of ministers when we read farmers' letters, thousands of them. It's not too late for the Premier. She could do the right thing. It's not too late for her to show real leadership.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Ms Notley: Well, you know, it's interesting, Mr. Speaker, that the member opposite is able to talk about the comparative injury rates between B.C. and Alberta because – you know what? – the stats aren't collected in Alberta because these people are not protected in Alberta. So once again the member opposite has just made it up, much like he made up everything else in his preamble.

The fact of the matter is that this caucus is committed to moving forward, protecting vulnerable paid farm workers, and working together with farmers on the application of the other parts of this bill over time.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Now the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Public Education Collective Bargaining Legislation

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We just saw at the rally against Bill 6 how well legislation without consultation goes. Now the NDP government is trying to pull the wool over the eyes of another group of Albertans. The Alberta School Boards Association has said clearly that they want the minister to stop the bill from being "rushed through the Legislature." It's time to take off the government's training wheels. These bad bills and lack of consultation are hurting people on the front lines. When will this government realize that they need to listen to those impacted by

legislation, and when will the Minister of Education slow down . . .

2:00

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. It's very important at this juncture that we put together a coherent framework to negotiate collective bargaining with the teachers in the province of Alberta. From the time that I started as the Minister of Education, we knew that this was very important. Over a period of many months we did consultations with everybody. I think the member is confusing consultation with people sometimes having concerns. We're consulting. We're working with those concerns now. We have been in the past, we will be in the future, and we will build a framework that we can use to do good bargaining.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Edmonton public school board, the Calgary board of education, the Golden Hills school division, the Fort McMurray Catholic school board, and many more boards across the province have expressed concerns about the time provided for consultation on this bill. Wildrose is doing something that will likely seem revolutionary to the NDP; we are reaching out to the school boards and consulting with them. To the minister: can you please provide me with a single board who has given you sign-off on your rushed bill?

Mr. Eggen: Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, I tabled yesterday the process that we used for consultation, and I think the member saw that clearly. It's very important not to misrepresent the consultation that we did do. People have concerns, and that is a normal process that we are working through, but to suggest that we didn't consult is a misrepresentation of reality. I think this member could use maybe a better dose of reality to think this through properly.

The Speaker: Your first supplemental? Second supplemental. It was a late night.

Mr. Smith: Yes. I agree.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The timeline for passing Bill 8 is too fast for meaningful consultation. We've also seen what happens when school board negotiations go awry. It impacts students and learning. The minister knows that he could direct school boards and the ATA to wait on starting negotiations until this bill has had more time for real consultation. Why won't this minister – and here's a novel thought – slow down on ramming through Bill 8 and send this bill to committee for real review and consultation?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. It's very important for everyone to understand that by December 31, if we do not have a framework in place, then individual school boards can start to negotiate, and you end up with the same circumstances that you had for the last 15 years, with people negotiating here, there, and everywhere. This opposition is very concerned about – and I am, too – making sure that we control costs. The best way we can do it is to have the funder at the table to negotiate wages at a provincial level.

The Speaker: The hon. leader of the third party.

Farm and Ranch Worker Legislation

(continued)

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since I know that the Premier brought me back a new T-shirt, I'm going to appeal to her higher aspirations. We know this government cares about farm and ranch safety. We only want the government to realize that farmers and ranchers also care about farm safety for themselves, their children, and their employees. To the Premier: could we just do what's right for the people that feed us? Will you demonstrate the patience and leadership that Albertans expect and at least put Bill 6 on pause until farmers and ranchers feel heard?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. By moving forward with the bill on January 1, the fundamental duty of care and the right to receive WCB if you are a paid farm worker will apply. The details around the application of the Employment Standards Code, the details around OH and S, the details around the Labour Relations Code will all be worked out through regulation, through consultation, extensive consultation with the very farmers and ranchers that you're talking about. Nothing will go forward until that has been done. So, effectively, we're not moving ahead on all the things . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker, I often disagree with the Premier, but I hope, at the end of the day, our goal is the same, safe farmers and ranchers and their families and employees. Respectfully, I listened to her answer, and the farmers and ranchers don't agree. We work for them. They're Albertans. I'm just saying: can we not let the voice of reason rule and let them have their say before you forge ahead? It seems just reasonable.

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, as I said, there will be a multitude of opportunities for farmers and ranchers to have their say on the vast majority of this, but while that goes on, say between January 1 and April 1, over 170 paid farm workers will end up in the hospital. They will have no entitlement to workers' compensation, they will have no ability to refuse unsafe work, and roughly seven or eight people will die, and their families will get no compensation. So we do not need to delay that part of the bill, and I will not delay that part of the bill. But we will work very closely with farmers and with ranchers to negotiate the remainder of the regulations, which will not . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker, I will continue to try to give the Premier all the credit that I can, but here's the thing. Your government has admitted the communication was botched. You've said that we need amendments. When you do put the legislation in place, certain things become permanent that can't be changed without coming back with more legislation. All the more reason to talk to farmers and ranchers before you put the regulations in place. I'll ask a third time. Will you please listen to the people that we work for, that feed us, and talk to them before you make it permanent?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I've said before and will continue to say, there are a number of different regulations that need to be fully thought out and discussed and negotiated with farmers so that we develop a common-sense

approach to the application of the Employment Standards Code, the application of specific OH and S standards, and the application of the Labour Relations Code. That is what we've always intended to do, to engage in a common-sense discussion about those things, and we will do that. But because it's involved and because it's complicated and because it involves a great deal of consultation, it is going to take a while, and we're not going to let those injured and killed workers suffer while that happens.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Now, I care about farm safety, and I know the government does, too, but how legislation is passed matters as much as what is passed. *Webster's* dictionary defines consultation as seeking information or advice from someone with expertise in a particular area. Now, given that there was yet another big rally on the steps of the Legislature today, it's pretty clear that the experts from Alberta family farms don't feel particularly well consulted, and the government has the opportunity to make it right. To the Premier: will you withdraw Bill 6 and start again with real, honest consultation?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This is a fabulous opportunity to make my case over and over, so this is great. What we will do is that on January 1 we will make sure that paid farm workers have the legal right to refuse unsafe work, and we will make sure that paid farm workers who are injured will receive compensation, and we will make sure that for paid farm workers who die, their family will receive compensation. In the meantime, while that is happening, we will engage in fulsome consultations, both before the regulations are drafted and after the regulations are drafted, with everybody so that everybody's issues are acknowledged, the farm . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

First supplemental.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Consultation after the fact isn't consulting; it's telling. I'm an MLA from a big city, and I've heard from dozens of my constituents in Calgary-Elbow. They tell me that they are all for farm safety, but they don't like Bill 6. I am here to tell rural Alberta that urban Alberta has got your back. Now, if I'm hearing from people in inner-city Calgary, I can't even begin to imagine what the backbench rural MLAs are hearing from their constituents. To the Premier: why have none of your . . .

2:10

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Ms Notley: Well, I'm not entirely sure what the question is. Nonetheless, what we know is that workers' compensation . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Madam Premier, please proceed.

Ms Notley: What we know is that workers' compensation has been in play for almost a hundred years, and it has provided compensation and benefits to the families of injured workers and to injured workers when they are injured at their workplace. For almost a hundred years that has not applied to vulnerable paid farm workers in Alberta, mostly only in Alberta. For about 40 years vulnerable paid farm workers in Alberta have been the only farm workers and the only workers in all of Canada who . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Clark: Mr. Speaker, there was a huge convoy in Lethbridge today and the same in Okotoks and Red Deer yesterday, and I don't need to tell you that family farmers in Alberta are obviously not happy. Now, the NDP doesn't have many veteran MLAs over there, but there are a few, and when they were in opposition, they knew when it was time for the government to step back, seek input, and start again. They knew that any bill that requires extensive amendments is not a good bill. To the Premier: given how badly this has been handled, do you feel your government has earned the right to pass Bill 6?

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, when I think about the roughly 170 people who will be hospitalized in the next three months who won't enjoy workers' compensation benefits if we don't act, I absolutely believe we have the right, and we have the obligation.

Environmental Policies

Mr. Westhead: Mr. Speaker, the government's climate change policies put a price on pollution, but my constituents in Banff-Cochrane want to know that this will be effective. Communities like Banff and Canmore also know that co-operation in investment supported by GreenTRIP funding on regional transit is one of the best ways to reduce our impact on the environment. To the Minister of Infrastructure and of Transportation: what kind of infrastructure supports are we providing to control greenhouse gas emissions on public transit?

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, hon. member, for the question. One of the key priorities of our government, Mr. Speaker, is public transit. I'm pleased to say that we've set aside a significant amount of money in the capital plan for an extension to the GreenTRIP program. There is going to be a third call for applications from municipalities as well as support for municipal water, waste water, and so on. I think there are going to be some exciting new programs as well as we implement our climate change initiative to enable Albertans to reduce their carbon imprint.

Mr. Westhead: Well, thank you, Minister. I'm looking forward to those programs.

Mr. Speaker, given that we are addressing climate change to protect our shrinking glaciers, to the same minister: what are we doing to support better water management in our communities?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Our government understands the importance of clean water . . .

Mr. Fildebrandt: Go easy on him, Brian.

Mr. Mason: . . . public health, and healthy waste-water programs for the province, and that's why I was pleased to announce our government's \$170 million increase to the water for life program and the Alberta municipal water/waste-water program. They are cost sharing with municipalities in order to ensure that all Albertans have access to clean, safe drinking water and safe waste-water systems.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks, could you desist from using first names in the House. I'd appreciate that. Thank you.

Please proceed.

Mr. Westhead: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the important role that Albertans play in all communities in supporting the sustainability of our province, to the same minister: how will these programs affect and improve the lives of rural Albertans?

Mr. Mason: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Rural Alberta is a critical part of our province, and the government is pleased to support rural Alberta with municipal infrastructure that allows sustainable growth. That's why we've made investments in the priorities that matter to rural Albertans. We're going to continue our grant program so that communities are able to access them. For example, our water and waste-water grant programs operate on a 75 per cent government cost-shared basis for municipalities with populations under 1,000 people. It ensures that rural communities are able to take advantage of these important programs.

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

Farm and Ranch Worker Legislation (continued)

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, it is my hope today to be able to represent the concerned faces of our farming brothers and sisters. It's important to note that Bill 6 is not only going after the farmer's pocketbook; it's going after what farmers love to do. It's going after their heart, their passion, and their way of life. That's what this government doesn't seem to understand. This is why they will never, never, never give up. It's not easy to give up on your passion because it takes a piece of your heart with it. On behalf of my farming brothers and sisters I humbly ask: please, stop Bill 6.

The Speaker: The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. On Friday, Monday, Tuesday, and today I have been there listening to the pain and anxiety and stress from the misunderstandings of what Bill 6 is about. When I tell them that it's very small, that it's about protecting and compensating those paid workers, that we will protect the farming way of life, then they're good with it. I'm so thankful to bring that information back.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the members opposite have rallied in the past for issues that they have felt passionate about – and I respect them for that. It's their right to do it. It's a democratic society. I ask my colleagues to think about how the farmers and ranchers outside feel, hoping that you will listen, as you hoped when you rallied, that someone would take your concerns seriously. Will you crush their hopes now, or will you stop Bill 6?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. As the hon. Minister of Education said, consultation is about listening and about hearing those concerns. You know what? We've been listening, and we hear those concerns, and we're working with those concerns. We're committed to continuing to work with farmers to ensure that we protect their way of life so they can have their kids on the farm, can live that way of life, can work with their neighbours, and can do all the things they still want to do.

The Speaker: Hon. member, I think you have a second supplemental question.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The number of Albertans standing against this bill grows by the day. In fact, it could turn out to be the largest movement against the government in Alberta's history. Given that we've seen rallies in every corner of the province, from Grande Prairie to Medicine Hat, and given that we've seen protests numbering in the thousands, including the one right in front of the steps of this building, to the minister: will you take the only option left to you and stop Bill 6? For the sake of farmers please do the right thing.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. I've been talking with many farmers, and all of my colleagues, who represent over 11,000 farms in this province, have been listening to our members and bringing forward those concerns to this team. We will recognize that farming is a way of life. We will protect that. When I go to my partner's family farm, I'll be out there to help build the fence. I'll be there with their nieces and nephews riding the horses, and I'll be at 4-H with my daughter in the future.

Emergency Medical Services

Mr. Fraser: Alberta has the distinction of having one of the best emergency medical services in the country. Over the years other jurisdictions have looked to cities like Calgary and Edmonton and their best practices to develop and enhance their own emergency medical services. It's not the size of the ambulance or how good the ambulance looks or how the uniforms look or how good the siren sounds that determines how good an EMS is. It's what's inside the ambulance. It's the paramedics, the EMTs, and the EMRs that determine how good the service is. In Alberta we have the best-educated and -trained professionals, and that's why the service has been so good.

2:20

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member. Your time is gone.
Is there a response? The Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: I want to thank the hon. member for his many years of service as a front-line first responder. I also want to thank him for the continuous leadership that he shows. I enjoyed a meeting this morning with the hon. member and with the College of Paramedics to discuss ways that we can expedite their ability to serve in the most acute ways. In the spring I will be bringing forward Health Professions Act amendments to make sure that we can include paramedics as well.

Mr. Fraser: Thanks, Minister, and thanks again for your generosity today.

Minister, we've heard a lot about PTSD, and we see more reporting since the bill passed in 2012. Given the fact that paramedics deal with heartbreaking circumstances, physical and mental, and they're particularly susceptible to PTSD themselves, Minister, would you consider putting a paramedic on the mental health review to get a better perspective of front-line and prehospital care for all Albertans?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. I think that it's a very good proposal. The mental health review is actually just wrapping up their process. We wanted to make sure that it was completed by the end of this year. I think it would be most appropriate, though, when the recommendations are complete, to get feedback from the various

colleges and organizations. Certainly, we'll be happy to have a dialogue around their feedback around that piece moving forward.

Mr. Fraser: To the same minister: given the fact that EMS plays a vital role in our community, having one foot in health care and one foot in public safety, and given the fact that the province has experienced unprecedented growth and that with the poor economy history tells us that EMS call volumes will rise, Minister, will you commit to following through with our former Progressive Conservative government's commitment to increase funding for desperately needed EMS infrastructure and operational needs?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. We are certainly bringing forward a variety of ways to make sure that we spend the \$4.4 billion allocated toward capital needs in a thoughtful way that's evidence based and driven by where the most acute pressures are in the province as well as through the various systems that we serve. We will look forward to bringing further updates in a timely fashion.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Physician Service Contracts

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The culture of doctor bullying and intimidation is alive and well at Alberta Health Services. It's sickening. The Premier once called for doctor intimidation to be part of the health inquiry. Quote: patients who suffered as a result of their doctor feeling they could not advocate for their health and safety will continue to suffer. End quote. The NDP used to rail against doctors being muzzled. Now they call it nothing but an "HR situation." Hypocritical. Why is the Health minister now letting ongoing bullying of doctors by Alberta Health Services go unchecked?

Ms Hoffman: I have to say how disappointed I am that this hon. member continues to bring up in this House a very personal situation involving an employee and an employer. I think that it is most inappropriate, Mr. Speaker. If she wants to discuss this, there are certainly ways to do that in a professional and appropriate manner. In this House is not one of them.

Mrs. Pitt: Mr. Speaker, our doctor, Dr. Kyne, was fired for sticking up for the people of Airdrie. The NDP used to stick up for front-line workers. Now they stick up for bureaucrats at Alberta Health Services. Given that we all know Dr. Kyne was doing his job as a relentless advocate fighting for a 24-hour urgent health care centre and given that we know that Alberta Health Services and this NDP government are steadfast against the project, why can't the minister clearly see that this was nothing but revenge against a doctor fighting for his patients?

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I had nothing to do with this situation. My department had nothing to do with this situation. If the hon. member wants to have an appropriate conversation about what is actually legally allowed to be talked about – of course, everyone deserves rights to privacy and protection of information. I'm going to respect the law. I'm going to respect employees and employers, and I wish the hon. member would do the same.

Mrs. Pitt: Mr. Speaker, this isn't the change that Albertans wanted. It's just more of the same from a broken, out-of-touch government. Given that we know that the Health Quality Council clearly laid out in its report that doctors feel constrained in their ability to stick up for

their patients and seeing that this Premier once called for a public inquiry around the culture of intimidation in our health care system, does the minister think that the Premier was wrong then, or is she just happier to stick up for bureaucrats at Alberta Health Services?

Ms Hoffman: I will stick up for the protection of privacy of employment contracts and privacy of information. When it comes to making sure that we address the workplace culture, we certainly have made a number of efforts in that way. I'd say number one was making sure that we had stable health care funding as opposed to proposing cuts of billions of dollars for front-line services, nurses, teachers, doctors. Give me a break, Mr. Speaker. I've had enough.

Coal-fired Electric Power Plant Retirement

Mr. Orr: The energy sector is vital to Alberta's economy. Coal has been a crucial part of that sector, but now with an accelerated shutdown of coal-fired operations 7,000 more Albertans will be out of a job. They know that our province is moving away from coal-fired power, but to say that these 7,000 Albertans will easily find a new job is laughable. To the minister of jobs, skills, and training: why is this government waging war against these 7,000 employees in a year when 65,000 jobs have already been lost?

The Speaker: The minister of economic development.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The premise of the hon. member's question is patently false. First of all, our government is showing leadership on the climate by the introduction of our climate leadership strategy, which is going to work with the coal sector and work with those folks working at plants in communities affected. Our plan, Mr. Speaker, is to phase out coal emissions by 2030, a phase-out that we are accelerating, but we're going to do this in a way that's fair to employees, fair to companies, and fair to communities.

Thank you.

Mr. Orr: Given that the coal industry currently provides millions in revenue to this government, in fact to the tune of \$90 million in royalties over the past five years, and given that an Industrial Alliance Securities report has said that the accelerated phase-out of coal plants will result in \$12 billion in forgone revenue to plant owners, will this government acknowledge that on top of risky economic policies like the carbon tax, they are hurting our economy even more with this phase-out when we can afford it the least?

Mr. Bilous: Mr. Speaker, we're committed to a thoughtful transition away from coal that ensures that our electricity system is stable and that the lights stay on in people's homes. We're also committed to working with all of the workers in the coal industry. This is a task that the Premier has given to me, to work with the affected communities and their families to look at ways that we can work with workers either with transition as well as look for opportunities for them to work in other sectors. Quite frankly, our plan includes an adjustment envelope, and we are going to ensure that there is funding and that workers, families, and companies will be treated fairly.

Mr. Orr: Again to the minister: given that Alberta actually has a proud record of clean energy and given the fact that it's about time that the NDP government started being proud of and not embarrassed by our energy sector, will the minister of environment acknowledge that Alberta does energy better than anyone else in the world?

Mr. Bilous: Mr. Speaker, our climate leadership plan will invest in new technology, diversify the economy, and help us gain access to new markets. Unlike the Official Opposition, that would like us to pretend that climate change doesn't exist and do nothing about it, we are showing leadership, and by doing that, we are going to create new jobs in this economy, new access for our products, and ensure that Alberta is the best place to live, raise a family, and invest in.

Thank you.

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

2:30 Lower Athabasca Regional Land-use Plan

Mr. Rodney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. An independent review panel was established back in June 2014 to investigate the effects of the lower Athabasca regional plan. Six First Nations communities applied to the review to determine if the plan directly or adversely affects them. According to the Land Stewardship Act here in Alberta the panel had one year to submit a report with accompanying recommendations to the minister, and that deadline was back on June 22 of this year. To the environment minister: have you received this report, and if so, when?

The Speaker: The Minister of Justice.

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Well, of course, it's challenging for me to speak on behalf of the minister of environment, but I have been working quite closely with the minister of environment with respect to the lower Athabasca regional plan. Certainly, you know, our caucus has had concerns about the planning going back to the past, and I've certainly heard concerns from indigenous communities. We have been working quite closely on a strategy to move forward with this. In terms of the specific report I'm afraid I'll have to get back to the member.

Thank you.

Mr. Rodney: Again to the minister. Given that section 45(c) of the act requires that the government of Alberta post this review panel's report on the Land Use Secretariat website and given that as of today at 1 p.m. the report is still not available on the website and given that lawful transparency is not occurring, please tell us and Albertans across the province: when are you planning on releasing this report so that First Nations communities and all other interested Albertans can review its findings and its recommendations?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Well, of course, we have been working very closely with a number of First Nations communities on multiple concerns that they have with policies that were brought forward under the last government, including environmental policies and land and resource consultation policies. Again, as I've said, I can't comment on the specific report. We'll have to get back to the hon. member on that.

Mr. Rodney: Mr. Speaker, I'm seeing a time lag and a disturbing trend.

Given that the six First Nations that applied for the review deserve to learn if the panel has recommended recourse for addressing any negative effects to health, property, income, and more and given that we have heard feedback from aboriginal groups indicating they are at a loss to understand why your government has not shared this information with them – keep in mind six months –

and given the vow to forge a new relationship with Alberta's aboriginal peoples, Albertans are wondering: what are you hiding from them, and is this the kind of consultation that aboriginal peoples can expect from this kind of government?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Well, of course, we've been working very closely with indigenous communities on a number of issues. Certainly, some of those issues surround the management of cumulative effects because they feel that nothing was done under the previous government with respect to that policy. In terms of the specific report I've told the member that I'll get back to him, so I'm not sure what else he wants me to say. But we will be working very closely with First Nations going forward to address the concerns.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

Aboriginal Peoples' Economic Development

Ms Babcock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In my constituency many are struggling in these tough economic times. In particular, indigenous communities are feeling the effects of the slowdown surrounding their communities. To the Minister of Aboriginal Relations: what are you doing to help indigenous people, who often live in rural, remote areas of Alberta, take part in the resource sector and participate in our economy?

The Speaker: The Minister of Justice.

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Well, in my conversations with First Nations we have heard some real concerns from them and some genuine pleas from their leadership on behalf of their people that they be included and involved, going forward, in Alberta's economy and that they, too, share in the wealth that this province has to give. So we are moving forward with our consultation on the UN declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples. We intend to use a whole government approach to this issue, so we have a number of funding mechanisms available for jobs on that front.

Thank you.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms Babcock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that in Edmonton and Calgary there are great opportunities for entrepreneurs to access capital and to start up or expand a business and given that it's not the case in many First Nations communities, to the Minister of Aboriginal Relations again: what are you doing to support the many entrepreneurs in indigenous communities of Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and, again, to the member for the absolutely critical question. One of the policies that my department has is the aboriginal business investment fund. This fund is designed to increase the number of indigenous-owned businesses, increase the number of employment opportunities, and create local revenue streams. We also just recently announced a partnership with the Siksika Nation and the Indian Business Corporation to provide access to capital, which is sometimes difficult to access on reserves.

Thank you.

Ms Babcock: Mr. Speaker, these programs sound like a good idea, but my constituents need help now. Can the Minister of Aboriginal Relations please tell us when this money will start flowing?

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the incredibly timely question. The application submission period for the aboriginal business investment fund goes on until January 1 for this current funding year. The evaluation process will be completed in mid-January, and decisions will be announced for applicants during the week of January 15. We are absolutely committed to working with indigenous groups in this way, and we hope that they will bring forward applications in this process.

Thank you very much.

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Job Creation and Protection in Calgary

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Like farmers, Calgarians are very concerned with the direction this NDP government is taking with the economy. Last month Statistics Canada found that Alberta lost 11,600 jobs, many of these in Calgary, and now this government is making it worse for Calgarians with a new carbon tax, a tax on everything and everyone. To the minister: why is your government doing nothing to help Calgarians who have lost their jobs but, instead, doing your best to make . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The minister of economic development.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for his question. Quite frankly, our government is doing a number of things, and we are doing our job. In fact, we're working with the private sector to create jobs. There are a number of initiatives that we've already taken under way, from giving start-ups and budding entrepreneurs access to venture capital through \$50 million in the Alberta Enterprise Corporation, increasing the debt ceiling of ATB or their lending capacity by \$1.5 billion, and we've also introduced the job creation incentive program.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Panda: Employment insurance claims are up almost 100 per cent in Calgary – this is shocking – and this is more than just a number. These people who have lost their jobs include many friends of mine. They are good people who want Alberta to succeed. They're Albertans that are being hurt by this government's bad ideas. Given all this, why is the new economic development minister not speaking out against his government's bad ideas, which are punishing all Calgarians?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I want to say, first of all, that when any layoff is announced, we're not talking about a number; we're talking about people, and we're talking about Alberta families. Our government takes this very seriously, which is exactly why about six weeks ago the Premier created this Ministry of Economic Development and Trade to do just that, to focus on economic diversification, looking at ways to develop our economy further, looking at ways to build more value-added within our growing sectors, and also looking for new markets to access as far as exports and bringing investment dollars back to Alberta.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Panda: Not helping Calgarians.

Let me try again. Given that this NDP government is not helping Calgarians in a time of economic need and given that it is time they stop hurting Calgarians with their risky economic policies, Minister, it's clear that this government is hurting the economy and not developing it. I ask the minister: when will your government increase economic development rather than work to kill our job-creating industries like the energy sector?

2:40

Mr. Bilous: Mr. Speaker, we are working with the energy sector. In fact, we're working with all sectors and all job creators, which is, again, the reason that we introduced the job creation incentive program, to create up to 27,000 jobs. But I'll tell you this much. We also introduced the climate change strategy, which is going to build our economy and create jobs. The opposition here, their approach is to ignore the problem. Their approach created barriers that we need for our energy. Their approach is not leadership.

Introduction of Guests

(continued)

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly distinguished guests who have worked untiringly to improve equal rights for all: Ratna Basappa and Jagjeet Bhardwaj from the Indo-Canadian Women's Association, who work tirelessly to prevent harmful cultural and domestic violence against women; Vasant Chotai worked with organizations, including the Edmonton Social Planning Council, to promote social equity and affordable housing; Indranil Chaudhury, active community volunteer who raised funds for UNICEF Canada to help Syrian refugees; Charan Khehra, co-founder of Daughters Day, an initiative to support Alberta women; and Dr. Mohyuddin Mirza, a passionate advocate and public educator for human rights in the Ahmadiyya Muslim community. I request that they rise and receive the traditional welcome of the House.

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

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Brandon Gibb, a fourth-generation farmer-rancher. He grew up on a small family farm in southwest Alberta, where he learned many valuable lessons in life about working safely. He doesn't employ anyone full-time, but he does rely very heavily on the help of family and neighbours. His wife is a full-time nurse and works to help support their small family of two young boys and a third one due in March.

Brenden Scott is a grade 10 student at Cardston high school, who helps his grandpa and uncle on the farm they own.

Blake Gibb is a grade 8 student at Paterson middle school in Lethbridge. His parents own a trucking company and almost his entire family is involved in the agriculture trade. During the last four summers he has worked with both his grandpa and uncle on their farm.

Kenyon Jackson is a fourth-generation farmer on the land that his late grandfather posted in the late 1800s. He has four children who wish to remain on the farm. They have had various farming operations, from raising pure-bred cattle to farming hay. His wife is a part-time school assistant. They both wish to keep their rights and privileges to use their land as they see fit.

They have risen, and I'd like to give them the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to be able to rise today to introduce to you and through you my beautiful daughter Ashley. Ashley Taylor is up there. She came in a little bit late, so I didn't get to see her right away. It's an honour to be able to see her up there. She's the youngest of my three children, and she worked tirelessly throughout my campaign. Now she's actually finishing off her fifth year of university. She's taking an education degree, and she's going to be teaching elementary. Ashley, could you rise and accept the warm welcome and the greetings of this House.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Carol Robertson Baker, our Mental Health Patient Advocate, as well as Deborah Prowse, our Health Advocate and interim Seniors' Advocate as well. Joining them are patient rights advocates and health advocate representatives and staff. I ask that they also rise. They are Beverly, Ryan, Lorraine, Mark, Lisa, Wendy, Ashley, Than, and Janina. I want to thank them for the amazing work they do for Albertans, a lot of which is outlined in their annual reports, which I look forward to tabling today.

I also want to extend a special thank you and congratulations to our Mental Health Patient Advocate, who is celebrating a 30-year anniversary as a public servant with the government of Alberta. I'd ask that we extend the warm welcome and congratulations to the hon. guests.

The Speaker: Are there any other individuals who have guests that I might have overlooked? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the House Bev Anuszewski. She farms with her husband, Barry, in the Whitemud area. They're here to rally on the steps for Bill 6. Of course, it's great to see them here today. They've travelled a long way to be here today. Bev, if you could stand. I introduced your husband the other day. If we could give her the traditional warm welcome of the House.

Members' Statements

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

Human Rights

Loyola: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. International Human Rights Day, celebrated on December 10 of every year, commemorates the day, in 1948, when the United Nations General Assembly adopted the universal declaration of human rights. The universal declaration is, of course, universal, but a Canadian law professor, John Humphrey, wrote it, and that document has two daughters inside the Canadian federation, our Charter of Rights and Freedoms and our Bill of Rights. In a world of war and tyranny that sets millions fleeing their homes in search of justice, these documents are lighthouses in the storm, guiding freedom seekers to a land where they can stand without fear, with dignity and hope and peace.

It gives me great pleasure to announce that Canadians for a Civil Society has developed a poster containing the universal declaration, our Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and our Bill of Rights. They produced this poster because they are convening a national conversation in 2017 on how Canadian values can contribute to

making Canada the best country it can be and a beacon during the storms that shake the world.

I encourage all members to use this poster to inspire everyone to learn the planet-shaping significance of what no political prisoner, no refugee, and no oppressed person anywhere at any time has ever taken for granted, human rights. We need to understand our profound and inalienable rights. Without understanding them, given the right scare tactics we could be tricked into losing them, surrendering freedom for the illusion of security.

The universal declaration enshrines three main categories: freedoms, equality and political rights, and social rights. It's neither simple nor easy to guarantee that we protect all three categories of human rights. But, Mr. Speaker, it wasn't easy for a small population like Canada's to fight fascism in Europe and in Asia. It wasn't easy to face our sins within truth and reconciliation, but we did it. So, too, can we respect and protect these three sacred covenants.

As legislators we share an enormous responsibility. Ultimately, we must accept our true duty as members of this Legislature to clear away systemic barriers that keep Albertans from living up to their full potential, providing the opportunity to increase their standard of living and be treated with dignity.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Human Rights

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to continue on with the same idea. The next week will obviously mark the 67th anniversary of when the United Nations adopted the universal declaration of human rights, drafted after the horrors and unspeakable evil of the world wars. It is a document that reminds us of our humanity's own past atrocities and the obligation to protect all peoples from the forces that seek to repeat and make new these horrific crimes. Despite the document's binding moral clarity and the need to protect the rights of every person and their rights to life, liberty, and security of the person, evil still persists.

There is perhaps no better reminder, as we look beyond our borders, than men and women still being forced into hiding, tortured, or ultimately killed because of whom they don't pray to. Basic religious freedoms are constantly ignored and abused from Afghanistan to Syria to Iraq. In states and countries across the world religious minorities are suffering from persecution. Others have to go into hiding or face unspeakable discrimination and violence just because of the colour of their skin, who they love, their family name, their nationality, disabilities, or other statuses.

Behind these actions remain the states and political leaders that continue to oppress their people, suppress free thought, rip up property rights, and make unconscionable and brutal violations of these basic human rights. Let's never forget our moral obligation to continue to speak out against these abuses and do what we can do to prevent them.

2:50

Here in Alberta we have much to be thankful for. As a province we have been world leaders in advocating for rights for all peoples. We are truly fortunate to have the Magna Carta within walking distance of this House today. This 800-year-old document is the very foundation of our laws and Canada's democracy. It has established clear boundaries on the power and the rights of the state against the individuals. It led to the establishment of property rights and other basic liberties and freedoms.

As legislators may we always remember to stay vigilant, to speak against evil, and to promote liberty and equality for all. Thank you.

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

Human Rights

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Indeed, next Thursday is Human Rights Day, which commemorates the anniversary of the adoption of the UN universal declaration of human rights. Sixty-seven years ago the UN presented to the world a commitment to equal rights for all people. The chief drafter, of course, was the Canadian John Humphrey, so it's fitting that we would take some time to celebrate both him and the John Humphrey Centre for Peace and Human Rights here at the University of Alberta, of which I'm a member.

Mr. Speaker, it seems particularly appropriate that we would mark this anniversary at a time when the Magna Carta is visiting the Legislature. Eight hundred years ago the barons forced King John to sign the document. We saw one of the first official charters outlining the rights of human beings. Of course, that document was extremely limited, applying only to a select number of white, landowning men. Over time we've expanded that notion of human rights beyond those select few. The UN declaration marks that expansion, declaring, "Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth . . . without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status."

We continue to struggle with this commitment. Our society continues to grow as we gain greater understanding of those who have been left in the shadows, denied those rights and human dignity. Just this week, Mr. Speaker, this House was able to take an important step towards protecting the trans and gender-variant community, and in this House we've been debating human and constitutional rights of paid farm workers. We know all too well that the rights of First Nations continue to be neglected in this society, and I'm pleased to see that the government has embraced the UN declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples.

The UN declaration on human rights remains a work-in-progress. We continue to strive to meet the high bar that it has set for humanity, so even 67 years later the work goes on.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Calgary-North West.

Human Rights

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In recognition of Human Rights Day, on December 10, 2015, I'd like to reflect on our privilege and power as legislators in order to advance and protect human rights in Alberta. Although it's crucial to enshrine human rights in formal legislation such as the International Bill of Human Rights and the Alberta Human Rights Act, it is equally important to engender respect for human rights in individuals both at home and abroad.

The last few months of discussions about gender rights; refugee, immigration, and indigenous rights; and vulnerable Afghan minorities have all allowed progressive defenders of human rights to demonstrate a depth of caring, compassion, and motivation to make this world a better place for those whose enjoyment of human rights is hampered at best, yet our human rights champions constantly face individuals and groups who believe that we don't have the capacity to welcome refugees into our hearts and our homes.

Although we've stumbled at times in our efforts to protect basic human rights in Canada and in Alberta, oppressed people worldwide have looked to us to defend the core values that everyone on this planet has a right to. Those rights include a life free of fear and oppression regardless of their nation, language, religion, or ethnic origin. We see an excellent example of Alberta's passion for human rights in our warm welcome for Syrian refugees, our resolve to show them how we value human rights in Alberta.

As Alberta's voices of reason we must each exercise social responsibility as legislators to become educated about the human rights issues faced by some of our new and established constituents and to educate and help each other and our constituents understand and sympathize and connect personally with those in need.

Female refugees face particular vulnerability when fleeing human rights violations around the world. Often, as heads of war-torn households they are simultaneously responsible for feeding, clothing, housing, and educating their families. They're targets for human trafficking, pressured into forced prostitution.

All of these things we must remember, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The deputy House leader.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to ask for unanimous consent of the House to waive Standing Order 7(7) to continue the Routine past 3 o'clock.

[Unanimous consent granted]

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

Human Rights

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As we celebrate international Human Rights Day, although a bit early, I think it's telling that all the different parties in the House have been given an opportunity to mark this very important occasion. It is important that we rise and speak as it is celebrated around the world.

In 1948 the United Nations General Assembly adopted the universal declaration on human rights, a declaration that has allowed for the basic human rights of all to be fought for by those who seek to live in a better world. This year's Human Rights Day is devoted to the launch of a year-long campaign for the 50th anniversary of the two international covenants on human rights, the international covenant on economic, social, and cultural rights and the international covenant on civil and political rights. These, alongside the universal declaration of human rights, create the International Bill of Human Rights, setting out civil, political, cultural, economic, and social rights that are the birthright of all human beings.

Today we rise to honour the better future centred around the four freedoms: freedom of speech, of religion, from want, and from fear. It is this last one that we have been dealing with in the House this week, Mr. Speaker. When we pass Bill 7, the Alberta Human Rights Amendment Act, 2015, we are seeking to allow gender-variant and gender-diverse individuals to live a life free of fear, where they can live and be accepted in a world that is inclusive and understanding. It is as an ally for those individuals that I am honoured to rise today and speak to the importance of international Human Rights Day.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

Family Farms and Bill 6

Mr. Rosendahl: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to discuss Bill 6. I grew up on the family farm. I know all too well the work that goes

into making the farm successful. The family had to work together as a unit to ensure that chores got done. This included feeding chickens, turkeys, ducks, geese, and many other livestock. No one or anything went without food or water, 24/7, 365, and we respect that. Calving season, spring seeding, later summer haying, making forage, taking the crop off in the fall, and also tending the very large gardens went on for many years without any issues. I think we were extremely lucky considering some of the work that we did on the family farm, but sometimes we weren't so lucky. My brother was hurt when his arm was broken in three places when it was wrapped in the knotted of a square baler. No coverage; no insurance.

Bill 6 does not kill the family farm or rob children of experiencing the life of growing up on a family farm or participating in 4-H projects that make our communities proud. Bill 6 does nothing more than bring Alberta safety standards on farms and ranching operations in line with every other province in Canada. Bill 6 provides two simple things. A paid farm worker who is directed to do something dangerous can simply say no, just like any other worker in Alberta and Canada. Second, if the worker is hurt or even killed at work, they or their family can be compensated like any other worker in Alberta and Canada as well. Neighbours and relatives . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

3:00

Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As chair of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts I am pleased to table five copies of the committee's report on its 2014 activities.

Thank you.

Presenting Petitions

Mr. Orr: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table in the approved format the following petition:

We the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government to immediately withdraw its proposed Bill 6, Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act, from the legislative agenda, request its withdrawal from the order paper and we petition the Assembly to cease all further readings and debate of its content.

Thank you, sir.

Tabling Returns and Reports

Cortes-Vargas: Mr. Speaker, as the chair of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices and in accordance with section 4(2) of the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act I would like to table five copies of the 2014 Annual Report of the Chief Electoral Officer: the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act for the 2014 Calendar Year.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Minister of Seniors.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have the requisite number of copies of the two reports I mentioned earlier, Helping Bridge the Gaps: Annual Report of the Alberta Health Advocate 2014-2015 as well as Alberta Mental Health Patient Advocate: Celebrating 25 Years of Advocacy and Protecting Patient Rights. Just so everyone is aware of the mission of this organization, they assist Albertans in dealing with concerns about

services impacting their health and becoming empowered and effective advocates.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The Minister of Justice and Solicitor General and Minister of Aboriginal Relations.

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table the requisite number of copies of a document entitled Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act, summary of public access to compensation disclosure. This document discusses the estimate with respect to the cost of creating a searchable database as discussed yesterday in committee.

I also wish to table the requisite number of copies of follow-up answers to questions in my Justice estimates.

Thank you very much.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

Mr. Westhead: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's with respect and humility that I rise today to table two reports, that I referred to last night, of individuals that were tragically affected by farm accidents.

The first document is a report to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of a public fatality inquiry for Mr. Kevan Chandler, who tragically lost his life.

The second document is a newspaper article about a farm worker who is disabled for life, Mr. Speaker.

I urge all the members to read these documents.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table a letter that I read last night.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Little Bow.

Mr. Schneider: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table the appropriate number of copies of letters from constituents, that I referred to last night in the second reading debate on Bill 6.

The Speaker: The Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table the appropriate number of copies from constituents and people around Alberta that I spoke about last night in second reading of Bill 6. I have several copies of letters from Albertans who don't trust this government on Bill 6.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I'm pleased to table the requisite number of copies of the Legislative Assembly Office 2014 annual report, Stewards of the Parliamentary Process.

The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite number of copies of eight letters from constituents who have wished to be able to express their concerns over Bill 6.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake. Or Battle River-Wainwright.

Mr. Taylor: Now we're going to fight each other here on this.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table letters from farmers and some people that are from my riding, that have been sent to me. They are the constituents of Battle River-Wainwright, and they're trying to get their message across to the government about Bill 6. I have the required five copies.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

Mr. MacIntyre: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the requisite number of copies of a letter from Chinook's Edge school division, which contradicts statements made by the hon. Minister of Education that he had some sort of universal support for Bill 8. This letter clearly indicates the opposite.

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

The Chair: Hon. members, I'll call the committee to order.

Bill 4

An Act to Implement Various Tax Measures and to Enact the Fiscal Planning and Transparency Act

The Chair: We are on amendment A7 as proposed by the hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks. Are there any comments with respect to this amendment? The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Chair. It is an honour to continue debate on Bill 4, the fifth amendment coming from the Wildrose Official Opposition. We are having a strange debate in this case. The Official Opposition and the third party are having a debate about one topic, and the government is having a debate about another. This amendment clearly states, "The consolidated fiscal plan must clearly state a projected consolidated cash balance for each fiscal year . . . in the plan." This is requiring the government to provide a piece of information. It is requiring the government to merely provide a data point, that they could easily put together in Excel, taking about five minutes, with information that they already have.

3:10

The Minister of Finance appears to believe that this is a huge, earth-shattering motion to change the entire accounting structure of the government.

The Minister of Finance stood up and argued a different topic altogether. He was arguing about his desire to see the government continue with accrual accounting methods, his desire to see our expenditures reported in such a way that they include operational spending but only a small fraction of capital spending for each given year, to keep it in that way, without providing a simple income and expense statement.

What we are calling for is a consolidated cash balance. We are not arguing about switching to another accounting system for the government. We are not arguing about accounting for the government's finances in a different way. What we're calling for is simply for them to ask their officials to go into and print off an Excel sheet, that they already have, to take up about half a page in the budget and print another table in it. We could do an interesting study on the printing cost of this, a little bit more ink, slightly more ink for the budget, and half a page.

Mr. MacIntyre: I'll pay for it. I'll donate.

Mr. Fildebrandt: The Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake has volunteered to donate the extra costs of the ink for an extra table. I thank him for his charity.

Mr. MacIntyre: I want a receipt.

Mr. Fildebrandt: But he wants a charitable tax receipt. I see.

This is asking the government to provide information in the budget that they already have. Their departmental officials have already told everybody that they have an income statement – they have a cash-adjusted balance that they have as an internal document – but since Budget 2013 the government has declined to provide one. That is unfortunate. What we're asking for is simple. We're asking that they just put it in the budget.

There are important reasons for this. This is an important accountability measure that will help Albertans understand their budget. It's an important accountability measure that will help the 99.9 per cent of Albertans who don't open up the fiscal plan documents every year with glee and sit in a budget lock-up eagerly awaiting their chance to get into the operational plan and the capital plan and the savings plan and sit there with a calculator and try to do their best to sort it all out. This is for Albertans who want to have a clear idea of how much their government is spending: money in, money out. There are good reasons for this.

There is a place for different metrics of the deficit. What was used in 2013 was three separate buckets: a totally separate budget for operational, a totally separate budget for capital, a totally separate budget for savings. That was rather confusing to pretty much anybody who read the documents. I think most people here would agree.

Mr. Rodney: Agreed.

Mr. Fildebrandt: I'm always glad to have the eager agreement of the Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

Mr. Rodney: Agreed.

Mr. Fildebrandt: He agrees with that.

The government made attempts to improve upon that system subsequently with what they called a consolidated primary balance, which blended them somewhat, but they were not fully reconciled. It was and remains still a valuable measure, based on accrual accounting, of the operational costs of the government and the amortized cost of capital for a particular year. It is a valuable measure, that I find useful when analyzing budgets, but it does not tell the entire picture. By that measure, governments could make, as we're doing this year, between \$8 billion and \$9 billion in capital commitments, important projects for the most part. They could make commitments of between \$8 billion and \$9 billion on capital, but only a small fraction of that actually shows up in the spending ledger for a year. That's dangerous. [Disturbance in the gallery] I believe someone is calling for mommy in the gallery. Madam Chair, I think we've got the government crying for mommy after the last few days.

The government's current form of a consolidated budget figure is a useful measure as it includes the operational costs of the government and it includes a portion of the capital costs amortized for a particular year. But that is a dangerous measure if it's left on its own, without more context behind it, other important data metrics to help explain the budget. That number on its own would allow a government to make approximately \$8 billion a year, as we're doing, in capital commitments but only have a few billion of that show up in the expenditure ledger for the year.

This downplays the true size and scope of the deficit significantly. It allows the government to run massive consolidated deficits, borrowing money and seeing its net financial assets decline year after year, but claim that it is running a balanced budget because the operational side of the ledger may or may not be

balanced. But overall the government is still spending significantly more money than it is bringing in. Now, this is not an argument that the government should do that. That is a separate argument: if the government should be borrowing or not or what it should be borrowing for or not borrowing for or how much it should be borrowing or not borrowing. This is an argument about the transparency of that borrowing. This is an argument about the ability of Albertans to understand the size and scope of the borrowing.

The next important metric that we could look at when we're measuring, essentially, the primary balance of the government is our net change in financial assets. It's an extremely valuable metric for us to use when measuring the financial health of the government. This is what we use when we measure, effectively, the change in the wealth of the province. The way we do that is that we look at the net change in financial assets; that is, in English, are we richer or poorer this year than we were the year before? Do we have more money to our name this fiscal year than we did last? It's a simple calculation. We take our assets, and we net them against our liabilities on a financial basis.

Assets. We lump together the heritage fund; external investments; self-supporting lending organizations; the sustainability fund, which has been renamed the contingency account; endowment funds; the capital account; what we used to have as the debt retirement account – that is a line item I would like to see returned to the budget some day – and anonymous other financial assets. Together those constitute the financial assets of the government. We net that against our accumulated debt and liabilities, against our pension obligations, against liabilities for self-supporting lending organizations like ATB, liabilities for government-owned capital, other liabilities, and direct borrowing for capital purposes. These two broad categories of liabilities and financial assets we used to net against each other and compare that year over year as our net change in financial assets.

3:20

This particular year our net change in financial assets – effectively, the überdeficit, the overarching deficit number, net change in financial assets for the overall government – will be a negative decline of \$8.7 billion. That constitutes the single largest decline in the net financial assets of the government of Alberta in our history. The next largest change in net financial assets was, if I'm not mistaken, in 1992. Off the top of my head, I believe that that change in financial assets was a negative \$4.2 billion to \$4.7 billion. So we have now effectively doubled what was previously the largest deficit, as defined by net financial assets, in the history of the province. It's a staggering figure. But defining our deficit as net change in financial assets, as valuable as it is, is still one snapshot. We're blindfolded, touching the elephant in different areas, and all finding different things.

The fourth metric to define the overall financial health of the government is our income statement. That is the cash-adjusted balance. That's what we're asking for. We already have the three other metrics, those three other metrics that help us define the financial health or ills of the government, but we're missing the fourth, being our cash-adjusted balance. It is important as another metric so that Albertans can understand the balance of money coming into government and the money leaving government. The cash balance truly reflects what borrowing or savings are possible for the government. Right now, under the current system money is moved around, but it's very difficult to follow.

If we had a hypothetical balanced budget in this province – and I long for the day when we finally do . . .

Mr. MacIntyre: Three and a half years.

Mr. Fildebrandt: It will take longer than three and a half years because it will take us a little time to do it, I think, when we get there. But in three and a half years the healing can start, however much I wish that we could start today.

If we had a hypothetically balanced budget, we wouldn't have a difficult time understanding in a transparent way how much money we can allocate to the contingency account to rebuild what we used to call the sustainability fund, which once reached \$17 billion. That was more than a rainy-day fund. That was a retirement that we blew on a really great vacation. We wouldn't know how much money we have to clearly allocate to the contingency account, but having an adjusted cash balance would allow us to know that. It would allow us to know how much we can clearly allocate to the heritage savings trust fund account. It would allow us to know how much we could put towards an account which I believe we no longer have, effectively, the debt retirement account.

The government has put forward no plan whatsoever to pay down the debt. They have a plan to rack it up, and that's easy. It's always easy to go into your online banking and do an Interac transfer from your line of credit to your chequing account or from your line of credit to your credit card. That's always easy, but finding a time and finding a way to save money is always more difficult.

The easiest way to understand how we effectively do that in a transparent way is to provide a cash-adjusted balance. It's not difficult to do. The data already exists. It's sitting on a spreadsheet of some bureaucrat a few hundred metres away, probably not more than a kilometre, saved in an Excel file on their desktop. It's just sitting there waiting for the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake to donate some money for the ink to print it. He is reaching for change right now. He probably has enough money in his pocket to do it right now. Probably a few dollars of ink. This is easy to do.

Perhaps the only reason that the Minister of Finance is opposed to this is because it's an embarrassing metric. Frankly, all of the metrics in this budget are embarrassing. A record decline in our net financial assets of \$8.7 billion. Again, every time I say that, I feel I need to put my pinky to my lip and say: \$8.7 billion. It is a sad, sad number to have to read. The minister should be less worried about being embarrassed by the figure and more concerned with providing transparent numbers on the financial health of the province to Albertans.

I thank the members for their time and hand the floor to the next member who wishes to speak.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

Mr. MacIntyre: Thank you, Madam Chair. Earlier today, when the Minister of Finance was here, he made a statement regarding this very amendment which I found – well, it would have been amusing if it wasn't so sad. In reading this simple little amendment, the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board came back in his response saying that this amendment means that the Wildrose wants to change our accrual accounting method to a cash accounting method. It had already been stated on a number of occasions by the hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks that this simple little amendment did not change the method of accounting used by the government. It did not do away with the accrual accounting method.

The minister's statement took me aback a little bit because it meant to me that he actually didn't understand the amendment or doesn't understand the difference between accrual accounting and cash accounting or doesn't understand what a cash-adjusted balance means. The lack of whichever one it is concerns me, that the man

in charge of the purse strings of our province doesn't understand basic financial reporting 101. Yet he is effectively riding herd on tens of billions of dollars of other people's money – our people's money, taxpayers' money – and could not understand, from a very simple amendment, that we are simply asking for a listing of the cash-adjusted balance in budgets and annual reports. It is the cash position of the government. To make the statement that he did, reading this simple little amendment that we put forward, just boggles my mind. This is the individual in charge of our money? It's concerning to me.

3:30

This simple amendment would provide extra transparency and understanding and clarity of the province's true cash position – true cash position. That's why it's called cash-adjusted balance. It's more than just the balance; it's cash adjusted. It reflects all the spending decisions made by the government, and it includes capital. It is – no kidding – a superior measure to the current so-called consolidated balance, which currently leaves out about \$3 billion to \$6 billion worth of money. Now, I don't know about you, but I would rather know that than not know that.

Actually, the adjusted cash balance gives a true reflection of the cash position and what borrowing or saving we can then move forward with. Those are important numbers to know, and the strange thing is that the government has these numbers already. It has to. It already has these calculations done. It has to. Otherwise, the government would never know how much room it had to borrow or how much money was still there to save. So the math has even been done already. The numbers are known. All this amendment is asking for is that all the rest of Alberta be told, too. It's just that simple. It's not a change to the accounting method; it's simply a change to the reporting method, to include in the current reporting method one more thing.

For this to be met with the kind of opposition that we heard from the minister is very disconcerting. Why is the Minister of Finance, the person in charge of and handling and responsible for and the steward of the taxpayers' money, so concerned about a simple little table in a document? Why is that number that critical, that important, that he would buck against something so simple? It concerns me. It makes me question: what are we trying to hide here? Is there something we're trying to hide or not? That's a valid question. You know, I don't want to go back in history too much, but there was a government recently that was rejected by the people of Alberta because they didn't like the way their money was being handled, and here we go again. Something similar is going on.

The people of Alberta want to have faith in their government handling their money, and this sort of an amendment is another one of those trust-building measures that I've spoken to before here. It's such a simple thing. We're not asking for a change in the accounting method; we're simply asking that these numbers, which the government already has, be reported to the people of Alberta. It is, after all, their money. It's their bank account. It's not our bank account. It is not the Minister of Finance's bank account. It is all Albertans' bank account, and they have a right to see what's in their bank account. It's a right, really. To deny Albertans this information, in my opinion, is to deny them their right to accurate information about what they have in their bank account. It's just that simple. I do not understand the government side's rejection of this amendment. It makes no sense to me, and I'm sure that it makes no sense to a lot of Albertans either. I believe that it further erodes the trust that Albertans have in this government's forthrightness, which is not a good thing.

So, Madam Chair, I support this amendment for all of the reasons that I think I made very clear. I am surprised that this government

is not also supporting this very simple thing, and I would hope that all members in this House would genuinely have a sense of responsibility to our people. This their money. We ought never to be shy or attempt to hide from our people information about their money and what this government is doing with their money. So I would hope that every member in here would feel the responsibility, would feel the accountability to be forthright in the reporting of the true cash position of the government when it makes reports to the people.

I thank you for this time, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Any other hon. members wishing to speak to the amendment?

If not, we'll call the question.

Mr. Hanson: Excuse me. I'd request a call for one-minute bells.

The Chair: Hon. member, according to our standing orders we are unable to do that when we sit again as a committee. The first bell has to be the full 15 minutes even with unanimous consent. It's a technicality. It's explained that it is a fair way because it allows for the members to come in and know that we're starting this process. You know, it just is what it is, so unfortunately we can't entertain that motion.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A7 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:37 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Hanson	Orr
Barnes	MacIntyre	Rodney
Cooper	McIver	Schneider
Fildebrandt	Nixon	Starke
Gotfried		

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Goehring	Miller
Babcock	Gray	Nielsen
Bilous	Hinkley	Piquette
Carson	Hoffman	Renaud
Connolly	Horne	Rosendahl
Cortes-Vargas	Kazim	Sabir
Dach	Kleinsteuber	Schmidt
Dang	Littlewood	Schreiner
Drever	Loyola	Shepherd
Eggen	Luff	Sucha
Feehan	Mason	Sweet
Ganley	McKitrick	Woollard

Totals: For – 13 Against – 36

[Motion on amendment A7 lost]

The Chair: We are back on Bill 4. Are there any further comments, questions, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you, Madam Chair. If I could move that the committee rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

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

Mr. Nielsen: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill: Bill 4. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report? All in favour, say aye.

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed, say no. So ordered.

Hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore, I need to confirm that you're reporting progress. I believe we missed that piece.

Mr. Nielsen: Yes, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

Bill 5 Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to move third reading of Bill 5, the Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act.

The bill will follow through on our commitment to make the government more transparent. It will extend what is commonly referred to as the sunshine list to include our province's agencies, boards, and commissions. Albertans expect and deserve further insight into how their tax dollars are spent. Agencies, boards, and commissions, including Alberta Health Services, will be required to disclose names and salaries of employees that earn more than \$125,000 a year. All compensation paid to board members will be required to be disclosed. In addition, Madam Speaker, the bill enables municipalities and school boards to disclose the names and the compensation paid to employees if they wish to.

In order to ensure that we further the goals and underlying principles of this bill, we accepted some amendments proposed by the hon. members for Drayton Valley-Devon and Calgary-Elbow, which were passed yesterday in Committee of the Whole. These amendments set up minimum thresholds for employees of school boards and municipalities to ensure that it is consistent with the threshold for other public-sector bodies. We believe that these amendments strike the right balance, Madam Speaker.

Another amendment was passed yesterday to address concerns raised by offices of the Legislature. We respect the independence of these offices, so we have made the changes.

The hon. Member for Calgary-North West also brought forward an amendment that was passed yesterday. This amendment stipulates that the legislation will be reviewed every four years and the review shall last no longer than six months. We support this amendment, and I think we can agree that ensuring that legislation is reviewed to ensure that it is having the intended effect is the prudent and responsible thing to do.

Madam Speaker, in conclusion, this government is committed to helping to ensure that Albertans know how their public money is being spent, and I urge all members to support this bill. Thank you.

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

Loyola: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm honoured to rise once again and speak to Bill 5, the Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act. First, please allow me to express how appreciative I am for the collaboration and the co-operation and, overall, the spirit of working together that have gotten us to this point. Thank you.

Very briefly, I'd like to take the opportunity to address some of the concerns expressed by several of my MLA colleagues during the presentation of this bill, the main concern being why all agencies, boards, and commissions would not be required to publicly disclose the salaries or per diem rates of their members under this bill. It's my understanding that many of the agencies, boards, and commissions not covered under Bill 5 have little government role or funding. One example of this is the Law Society of Alberta, where the government appoints a couple of members and is not providing substantial or any funding. That being said, I'll remind the members of this House that the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board has announced a much-delayed review of the province's agencies, boards, and commissions, and therefore additional agencies, boards, and commissions may be added through regulation at a later date. So I think we're on the right track here.

Again I want to express my thanks to all the members here in the House for their collaboration and co-operation. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

4:00

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'll just close by speaking strongly in support of this legislation. There are small areas that can be improved. It's an interesting day when the member across and I will be voting on the same piece of legislation in the same way. It's a very good day, in the holiday spirit, before we all go and enjoy the holiday season together.

I will call the question and move that we vote.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any further speakers who wish to comment on this bill?

If not, the Minister of Justice to close debate.

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Madam Speaker. In closing, I will just say that teamwork makes dream work.

[Motion carried; Bill 5 read a third time]

Mr. Mason: Madam Speaker, I will move that the House stand adjourned until Monday at 1:30.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 4:02 p.m. to Monday at 1:30 p.m. pursuant to Government Motion 14]

Bill Status Report for the 29th Legislature - 1st Session (2015)

Activity to December 03, 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 200 are Government Bills. Bills numbered 201 or higher are Private Members' Public Bills. Bills numbered with a "Pr" prefix are Private Bills.

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

The date a Bill comes into force is indicated in square brackets after the date of Royal Assent. If a Bill comes into force "on proclamation," "with exceptions," or "on various dates," please contact Legislative Counsel, Alberta Justice, for details at (780) 427-2217. The chapter number assigned to the Bill is entered immediately following the date the Bill comes into force. SA indicates Statutes of Alberta; this is followed by the year in which it is included in the statutes, and its chapter number. Please note, Private Bills are not assigned chapter numbers until the conclusion of the Fall Sitings.

1* An Act to Renew Democracy in Alberta (Ganley)

First Reading -- 9-10 (Jun. 15, 2015 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 30-38 (Jun. 16, 2015 aft., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 85-94 (Jun. 17, 2015 eve.), 152-157 (Jun. 22, 2015 eve., passed with amendments)

Third Reading -- 157-159 (Jun. 22, 2015 eve., passed on division)

Royal Assent -- (Jun. 29, 2015 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force June 15, 2015; SA 2015 c15]

2 An Act to Restore Fairness to Public Revenue (Ceci)

First Reading -- 104 (Jun. 18, 2015 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 161-162 (Jun. 22, 2015 eve.), 183-193 (Jun. 23, 2015 aft.), 201-213 (Jun. 23, 2015 eve.), 213-227 (Jun. 23, 2015 eve., passed on division)

Committee of the Whole -- 242-257 (Jun. 24, 2015 aft.), 259 (Jun. 24, 2015 eve., passed)

Third Reading -- 259-271 (Jun. 24, 2015 eve., passed on division)

Royal Assent -- (Jun. 29, 2015 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force January 1, 2015, with exceptions; SA 2015 c16]

3 Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2015 (No. 2) (\$) (Ceci)

First Reading -- 77 (Jun. 17, 2015 eve., passed)

Second Reading -- 107-114 (Jun. 18, 2015 aft., passed on division)

Committee of the Whole -- 145-152 (Jun. 22, 2015 eve.), 159-161 (Jun. 22, 2015 eve., passed on division)

Third Reading -- 182-183 (Jun. 23, 2015 aft.), 213 (Jun. 23, 2015 eve., passed on division)

Royal Assent -- (Jun. 29, 2015 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force June 29, 2015; SA 2015 c14]

4* An Act to Implement Various Tax Measures and to Enact the Fiscal Planning and Transparency Act (\$) (Ceci)

First Reading -- 331-32 (Oct. 27, 2015 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 379-81 (Oct. 29, 2015 aft.), 501-522 (Nov. 17, 2015 aft., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 753-68 (Dec. 2, 2015 morn.), 795-99 (Dec. 2, 2015 aft.), 839-54 (Dec. 3, 2015 morn.), 867-70 (Dec. 3, 2015 aft., adjourned)

5* Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act (Ganley)

First Reading -- 448 (Nov. 5, 2015 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 619 (Nov. 25, 2015 aft.), 650-60 (Nov. 26, 2015 aft., passed on division)

Committee of the Whole -- 782-95 (Dec. 2, 2015 aft., passed with amendments)

Third Reading -- 870-71 (Dec. 3, 2015 aft., passed)

6 Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act (Sigurdson)

First Reading -- 501 (Nov. 17, 2015 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 619-20 (Nov. 25, 2015 aft.), 735-51 (Dec. 1, 2015 eve.), (Dec. 2, 2015 eve., adjourned)

7 Alberta Human Rights Amendment Act, 2015 (Ganley)

First Reading -- 548 (Nov. 19, 2015 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 618-19 (Nov. 25, 2015 aft.), 693-704 (Dec. 1, 2015 morn., passed on division)

8 Public Education Collective Bargaining Act (Eggen)

First Reading -- 649 (Nov. 26, 2015 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 717-734 (Dec. 1, 2015 aft., passed)

- 9 Appropriation Act, 2015 (\$) (Ceci)**
First Reading -- 612 (Nov. 25, 2015 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 613-18 (Nov. 25, 2015 aft., passed on division)
Committee of the Whole -- 621-31 (Nov. 26, 2015 morn., passed)
Third Reading -- 631-38 (Nov. 26, 2015 morn., passed on division)
Royal Assent -- (Nov. 27, 2015 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force Nov. 27, 2015; SA 2015 c17]
- 201 Assuring Alberta's Fiscal Future Act (Fraser)**
First Reading -- 104-105 (Jun. 18, 2015 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 128-139 (Jun. 22, 2015 aft.), 302 (Oct. 26, 2015 aft., defeated on division)
- 202* Alberta Local Food Act (Cortes-Vargas)**
First Reading -- 105 (Jun. 18, 2015 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 303-313 (Oct. 26, 2015 aft.), 401-404 (Nov. 2, 2015 aft., passed on division)
Committee of the Whole -- 573-83 (Nov. 23, 2015 aft., passed with amendments)
- 203 Election (Restrictions on Government Advertising) Amendment Act, 2015 (Strankman)**
First Reading -- 349 (Oct. 28, 2015 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 404-10 (Nov. 2, 2015 aft., adjourned), 474-77 (Nov. 16, 2015 aft., passed), 477 (Nov. 16, 2015 aft., referred to Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee)
- 204* Residential Tenancies (Safer Spaces for Victims of Domestic Violence) Amendment Act, 2015 (Drever)**
First Reading -- 448 (Nov. 5, 2015 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 477-84 (Nov. 16, 2015 aft., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 680-86 (Nov. 30, 2015 aft., amendments agreed to and introduced)
- 205 Persons with Developmental Disabilities Services (Public Consultation) Amendment Act, 2015 (Renaud)**
First Reading -- (Nov. 18, 2015 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 583-84 (Nov. 23, 2015 aft., adjourned)
- 206 Recall Act (Aheer)**
First Reading -- 649 (Nov. 26, 2015 aft., passed)
- Pr1 The King's University College Amendment Act, 2015 (Schmidt)**
First Reading -- 377 (Oct. 29, 2015 aft., passed)
- Pr2 Bethesda Bible College Amendment Act, 2015 (Nielsen)**
First Reading -- 377 (Oct. 29, 2015 aft., passed)
- Pr3 Rosary Hall, Edmonton Repeal Act (Shepherd)**
First Reading -- 377 (Oct. 29, 2015 aft., passed)
- Pr4 Canadian University College Amendment Act, 2015 (Orr)**
First Reading -- 377 (Oct. 29, 2015 aft., passed)
- Pr5 Concordia University College of Alberta Amendment Act, 2015 (McLean)**
First Reading -- 377 (Oct. 29, 2015 aft., passed)
- Pr6 Covenant Bible College Amendment Act, 2015 (Fildebrandt)**
First Reading -- 377 (Oct. 29, 2015 aft., passed)
- Pr7 Living Faith Bible College Amendment Act, 2015 (Nixon)**
First Reading -- 377 (Oct. 29, 2015 aft., passed)

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Managing Editor
Alberta Hansard
3rd Floor, 9820 – 107 St.
EDMONTON, AB T5K 1E7
Telephone: 780.427.1875