



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Third Session

Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, April 10, 2017

Day 18

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta
The 29th Legislature

Third Session

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Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Cyr, Scott J., Bonnyville-Cold Lake (W)	Notley, Hon. Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (ND), Premier
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Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)	Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (ND)
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Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (ND)	Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (ND)
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Kazim, Anam, Calgary-Glenmore (ND)	Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)
Kleinsteuber, Jamie, Calgary-Northern Hills (ND)	van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)
Larivee, Hon. Danielle, Lesser Slave Lake (ND)	Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND), Deputy Government Whip
Littlewood, Jessica, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (ND)	Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)
Loewen, Todd, Grande Prairie-Smoky (W)	Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

Party standings:

New Democrat: 55 Wildrose: 22 Progressive Conservative: 8 Alberta Liberal: 1 Alberta Party: 1

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, April 10, 2017

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Hon. members, let us each in our own way pray and/or reflect. April 9 marked the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge. If we as a province and as a nation want to know where we are going, it is important to know where we have been. Vimy Ridge is a part of where we have been. Vimy Ridge is one of those tragic events in our Canadian history that serves as a signpost for our future provincial, national, and global journey. We must never allow tragic events like Vimy Ridge, the Second World War, and, yes, the trouble and chaos of our current world to be erased from the minds of future generations. These events must serve as a constant reminder that when government leaders stop talking, people start dying. Lest we forget.

Hon. members and ladies and gentlemen, we will now be led in the singing of our national anthem by Mr. Robert Clark. I would invite all to participate in the language of your choice.

Hon. Members:

O Canada, our home and native land!
True patriot love in all thy sons command.
Car ton bras sait porter l'épée,
Il sait porter la croix!
Ton histoire est une épopée
Des plus brillants exploits.
God keep our land glorious and free!
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

The Speaker: Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert.

Mr. Horne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly 30 students from Muriel Martin school in the wonderful constituency of Spruce Grove-St. Albert. The students are accompanied today by their teachers Mrs. Jody Bialowas – I'm sorry if I've mispronounced that – and Mrs. Jacqueline Kelly. If they could all rise today and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

Ms Larivee: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of my colleague the hon. Lori Sigurdson it is my pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly the grade 6 students from l'école Notre-Dame school.

The Speaker: Hon. member, I just would remind you that we don't quote the names. You intended, I think, to say "the minister."

Ms Larivee: Yes, I did. Thank you.

There are almost 40 of them here today with their teacher Ms Paulin Larochelle. I would ask that the students, their teacher, and their helpers all rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Hon. members, are there any other children's groups to be introduced today?

Seeing and hearing none, I would recognize the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I have two introductions. I rise today to introduce to you and through you members seated in your gallery representing the antecedent units from Alberta of the Canadian Expeditionary Force, who fought as one for the first time as Canadian Corps in the Battle of Vimy Ridge. They have come here today in recognition of the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge and to receive the declaration our government made on April 9, 2017. Please rise as I say your unit's name: 41 Canadian Brigade Group; the South Alberta Light Horse regiment; the King's Own Calgary Regiment; 20th Field Artillery Regiment, Royal Canadian Artillery; 41 Combat Engineer Regiment, Royal Canadian Engineers; 41 Signal Regiment, Royal Canadian Corps of Signals; the Loyal Edmonton Regiment; the Calgary Highlanders; 41 Service Battalion; 1 Military Police Regiment. On behalf of all Albertans I thank you and the antecedent members of your regiment or corps for service given both in conflict and in peace. I would ask all members to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly. [Standing ovation]

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For my second introduction I rise today to introduce to you and through you Adriana A. Davies. She's a social historian whose achievements include being the executive director of the Alberta Museums Association and creating the Alberta Online Encyclopedia. She has been honoured with the Order of Canada, the Queen's Diamond Jubilee medal, the Alberta centennial medal, and others. It is a privilege to have her here today with us for the centenary of Vimy Ridge as she is also the editor of *The Frontier of Patriotism: Alberta and the First World War*, which is an in-depth look at Albertans' experience with the war, both on the battlefield and on the home front. I would ask that she please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very happy to rise and to introduce to you and through you to the whole Assembly a number of people from my ministry, beginning with Fran Hyndman, who is a team lead with the Alberta aboriginal internship program within the ministry. With her is a group of interns that have recently taken positions within the ministry. Today they are visiting our beautiful Legislature, and I want to take a few moments to recognize the hard work that these interns are about to dive into. I cannot stress enough the importance of the work that my Ministry of Indigenous Relations is doing to improve the lives of indigenous people in Alberta. I'm eager to have fresh faces taking on new roles within the ministry. If you could all rise as I read out your names: Paul Wilson, Gus Michalik, Kris Murray, Jessica Punko, Maddii Hoffmann, Fran Hyndman, Amanda Giang, Karen Delver, Trista Simpson, and Breanna Tardif. If we could all please provide them the warm reception of this House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two introductions today. First, it is an honour to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly the president of the Alberta School Boards Association, Mary Martin. ASBA has as its membership all 61 public, separate, and francophone school boards in Alberta. Mary is a strong advocate for schools and students. We found many shared values when Municipal Affairs engaged with school boards on how we can amend the MGA to better support how schools are planned. This is one more way that our government will make a difference for schools and families, and I thank Mary for all the important input we heard from her as part of the MGA review. Mary is seated in the members' gallery, and I ask that she stand as you join me in giving her the warm welcome of the Assembly.

1:40

The Speaker: Welcome.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly 18 staff from the Department of Municipal Affairs. I won't name them all. On the day that I introduce an MGA amendment bill, it is my great pleasure to recognize some of these fine folks that have helped to make this happen. I'm very proud of how open and transparent the consultation on the MGA has been for Albertans, and much of this excellent work was done by these members of the major legislative projects and strategic planning branch and legal services. I believe they are here to see with their own eyes that the final bill we'll draw up of the MGA review is really, truly happening today. I ask this accomplished group of people seated in the members' gallery to stand as you join me in giving them the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Little Bow.

Mr. Schneider: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my distinct privilege to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly a remarkable young lady from Lethbridge. She is a soldier representing the Lethbridge 20th Independent Field Battery, Royal Canadian Artillery. She has served seven years, and she is a master bombardier. I met her for the first time at the Vimy Ridge Armoury on Saturday night at the 100th commemoration of the Battle of Vimy Ridge. The 20th battery was the first artillery battery raised in Alberta and participated in the battle of Vimy. There were 25 members that were recruited from Edmonton, 25 from Calgary, and the rest from the Lethbridge area, making it a truly Albertan unit. She is sitting in the public gallery. I would ask Master Bombardier Stacey Harris to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly. [Standing ovation]

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured today to rise and introduce to you and through you to all the members of the Assembly the staff of Falcon Enterprises. Falcon Enterprises is an integral part of the Wainwright community that is a fully inclusive, community-based support service provider. They're under the provincial contract to provide support services in employment preparation, employment placement, community access supports, and specialized community supports. Please rise as I call out your names: Clive Switzer, Shannon Sherred, Sandy Lychak, and all the employees of Falcon Enterprises. Please join me in giving the traditional warm welcome to this group.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you the Alberta Students' Executive Council. We've got four members here today, and I ask that they please rise. Alberta Students' Executive Council, or ASEC, represents over a dozen postsecondary institutions that offer world-class learning environments across the province, providing Albertans education in everything from applied research to technical training, from sciences to fine arts, and from academic upgrading to green tech programs. The leaders here today are strong advocates of what matters to Alberta's students, and our government is with them on mental health supports, sustainability, and ensuring that every Albertan who wants a higher education can afford and access one no matter where they live. I ask that the members of the House please give the members of ASEC the traditional warm greeting.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all my colleagues in the House a caring Albertan, an Albertan who cares about all of our children, an Albertan who cares about our families and our communities and puts her considerable time and effort to make that happen. My wife and I still talk about how she helped us over 20 years ago. She is here today because she has made a button that clearly states to include parents because she advocates for supporting parental responsibility and parental involvement in our education system. If I could please ask Maureen Prince to rise and accept the traditional warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Ms Fitzpatrick: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly Dr. Derek Peddle from the Alberta Terrestrial Imaging Centre and the department of Geography at the University of Lethbridge. He is also a Newfoundlander who came up yesterday from Lethbridge so he could attend the world curling championship final game last night, in which another fantastic Newfoundlander, Brad Gushue, and his team were the victors. Dr. Peddle, would you please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Ministerial Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Battle of Vimy Ridge

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One hundred years ago on April 9, 1917, a new word entered the language of Canadians. That word is Vimy. The Battle of Vimy Ridge, the capture of a German stronghold near Vimy, France, cost Canadians dearly: 3,598 lives lost and 7,000 wounded. Even still, Vimy Ridge was a bright spot in a war that had few of them. The numbers of dead and injured, unimaginable as they are, were far fewer than in other battles, including previous attempts at taking Vimy Ridge.

The battle on Easter Monday, 1917, brought together all four Canadian divisions in the war for the first time. The force that launched the attack at Vimy reflected the country. There were people from across the nation. There were immigrants and

Canadians of many ethnic backgrounds. Many, such as indigenous Canadians and Asian Canadians, were fighting for their country at Vimy despite the fact that their country did not fully recognize their rights.

Albertans joined the war effort in great numbers, to a greater percentage than any other province; some 45,000 Albertans served overseas. There were Albertans at Vimy such as Lance Corporal Henry “Ducky” Norwest, a Métis marksman with Calgary’s 50th battalion, who was awarded the military medal for his actions at Vimy Ridge; and Lieutenant Joseph Stauffer, also with the 50th battalion, who was a member of this very Assembly when he died at Vimy trying to take Hill 145. He was buried where he fell.

While death was, as always, a feature of war at Vimy Ridge, many other things about the battle were different. In an embrace of new, state-of-the-art techniques soldiers received training and rehearsed on a life-sized mock-up of the battlefield. Instead of being thrown blindly into the maelstrom, they were each assigned roles, their movements planned to the minute. This made all the difference as the fighting went according to plan. Instead of the grinding, wearying months of the Battle of the Somme or Passchendaele, the main battle at Vimy Ridge was over in a day. Vimy Ridge was not the only Canadian victory of the war, but it captured the imagination of the public, and it seemed to say that Canada at last could stand on its own. It helped give Canada a seat at the table at war’s end and loosened the colonial bonds.

Looking back at the First World War, we are struck by the folly that caused it and the mind-boggling tragedy that defined it. We can be forgiven for thinking that there is nothing to celebrate about the war, but we cannot forget it. To forget it would be to forget the major historical events in the lives of our grandparents or great-grandparents. It would be to forget the mothers and fathers, siblings, relatives, spouses, and children of those gone to war, a whole society of Canadians who lived for years under the pain of separation and, all too often, bore the deafening silence of loss to the end of their days. It would be to forget some 3,000 Canadian women who served as nurses in overseas hospitals or here at home, who bravely shouldered the burden of misery as the injured and the dying were delivered to their hands for aid and comfort, and it would be to forget the tens of thousands of young men, many hardly more than boys, the pride and hope of their families, who joined the war effort out of patriotic duty and a sense of adventure, and who found themselves mired in the quicksand of history.

Mr. Speaker, today the soaring marble monument at Vimy Ridge stands at the site of a decisive victory. Let us not forget that it is dedicated to 11,285 Canadians who died in the First World War and have no known grave. April 9, 2017, has been declared the Battle of Vimy Ridge day in Alberta. Today we continue to remember them and all who serve today.

Thank you. [Standing ovation]

1:50

Mr. Jean: Both my son and my father served in the Canadian Corps. One hundred years ago the war to end all wars came at a great cost to Canadians. Over 61,000 lives were lost and 172,000 Canadians wounded, the fields of Belgium and France stained with the blood of young Canadians serving their country and their neighbours out of a profound sense of duty.

There were many tragedies during the war, but there was a battle that created one of the greatest moments in our country’s history. It became the founding battle of our nation. I had the chance five years ago to visit that sacred ground, Vimy Ridge. No one else could capture the ridge. Canada, still under the authority of the British Empire, was charged with the task. As Brigadier-General Alexander Ross said about the day: “It was Canada from the

Atlantic to the Pacific on parade. I thought then, and I think today, that in those few minutes I witnessed the birth of a nation.”

It began early morning on a cold Easter Monday, with Canada’s four divisions, 100,000 strong, united for the very first time. The Canadians pounded the German lines through creeping barrage, with the infantry attacking above and under the trenches and in tunnels. After four days of fighting and more than 10,000 dead or wounded, Canada took the ridge. It brought out great stories of heroism and self-sacrifice. Four of our soldiers that day won the very highest award for bravery, the Victoria Cross. These men fought and died for our freedoms and brought our country one step closer to putting an end to this war.

Marked in the halls of remembrance and tombstones across western Europe, we find these words: “Greater love hath no [one] than this, to lay down [one’s] life for [one’s] friends.” Today we look back at these brave soldiers and say thank you. Thank you for our many freedoms, thank you for your sacrifice, thank you for fighting for us, and thank you for your great service. May we always – always – honour their sacrifice, lest we ever forget.

Thank you. [Standing ovation]

The Speaker: The Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would request unanimous consent of the House to permit a response from the leader of the third party or his designate and from the two independent members.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Speaker: The leader of the PC opposition.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It’s a great honour for me today to rise on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus to commemorate the 100-year anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge. It’s so great to see the men and women in uniform here, half of which I’m honoured to call personal friends.

On April 9, 1917, the Canadian Corps led an attack on the German army in the Nord-Pas-de-Calais region of France in World War I. It was a battle that lasted for three days but saw all four divisions of the Canadian Expeditionary Force victorious. In this battle these brave soldiers displayed characteristics that Canada is now known for across the globe: commitment, determination, pride, and bravery. Four members of the Canadian Corps also received Victoria Crosses, including Private John George Pattison of the 50th battalion from Calgary.

This victory came with a heavy price. In the Battle of Vimy Ridge nearly 3,600 Canadians lost their lives and over 7,000 were wounded. We remember the brave Canadians who laid down their lives to protect the freedoms we enjoy today. We thank them for their ultimate sacrifice, and we will never forget.

Mr. Speaker, we are joined here today by a number of veterans and active members of our Canadian armed forces. They represent the army units from across Alberta that fought at Vimy Ridge 100 years ago. To the brave Canadian men and women defending our freedom, we are forever indebted to you. Your commitment to keeping the True North strong and free is an inspiration to us all. One hundred years later you continue to carry on the legacy of Vimy Ridge as you tirelessly defend our peace and freedom.

As author Larry Worthington wrote in *Amid the Guns Below*:

The battle of Vimy Ridge was a moment in Canadian history that we will always be proud of. A national spirit was born, and now to be British was not enough. We were Canadian and could do a good job of paddling our own canoe. Our country was born.

As I look up to the gallery today to see our armed forces, I can only say thank you for the great paddling you continue to do today on all our behalf. These words remain true today. May God bless you and all of those that served so bravely before you. [Standing ovation]

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

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On this day a hundred years ago a great battle of triumph and tragedy was raging on Vimy Ridge. I'm honoured today to rise in this democratically elected Assembly to be able to speak freely about these brave men and women, about the survivors, their families, and pay tribute to the fallen. Indeed, this is one of the gifts these courageous warriors gave to all of us, not just freedom from oppression and tyranny but the freedom to exercise our rights of self-determination and recognition of our inalienable human rights.

The price they paid was high: an entire generation lost. Vimy Ridge remains the single bloodiest battle Canadians fought, with about 3,600 lives being laid down in the fields in France. It was a defining moment, both in terms of the Great War as well as the birthing of this great nation, Canada. It fills us with pride to remember the victory that was wrought on Vimy Ridge. It also reminds us of the preciousness of life, the duty of public service, and the eternal vigilance required to protect our rights and freedoms and the rule of law.

Finally, I'd be amiss if I did not speak about the unspeakable horror of war and the need for each of us to work always and everywhere to create the conditions for peace. The average age of Canadian soldiers in World War I was 26; the oldest, 80; the youngest reported, 10 years old. What they were to experience in those fields was unimaginable for these young minds. While many lives were lost at Vimy, many more were forever changed. Those who did not die had been surrounded by death and terror on a daily basis: unrelenting physical, emotional, and spiritual trauma.

When they returned home, they were enthusiastically welcomed by a truly grateful nation. But how could anyone who had not been there and experienced the devastation begin to understand the effect it would have on the survivors and their families? This was a time when knowledge of mental health and particularly the lasting impacts of trauma was in its infancy. To be a man often meant then and still means maintaining a bravado of strength, refusing to ask for help, and suffering in silence. Many if not all of those returning from the battlefield agonized under the torment of posttraumatic illness. Too often this led to mental illness, alcoholism, drug abuse, and family violence. Although the guns had gone quiet, there was still a war raging in their minds, reverberating through intimate family members, and a different peace that remained to be won.

Our understanding of this disorder has come a long way since, but there are many hills we have yet to climb together. More needs to be done to support our brave servicemen, women, and families who faced and are facing today the devastations of war. We need to end the stigma and make it clear that admitting mental illness does not make us weak. In fact, it takes great strength and bravery. Bravery comes in many forms.

Let us earnestly, then, work in this House and in our communities to preserve the peace through respectful discourse, reducing inequality, and justice for all, remembering the peace that was purchased at such a high price.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [Standing ovation]

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

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First World War veteran Reginald Roy said:

I became a Canadian on Vimy Ridge. We became a nation there in the eyes of the world. It cut across French and English, rich and poor, urban and rural. Vimy Ridge confirmed that we were as good as, if not better than, any European power.

Attacking together for the first time, four Canadian divisions stormed the ridge at 5:30 a.m. on April 9, 1917, and fought for three days until they were victorious.

2:00

The Canadian success at Vimy Ridge was a result of meticulous planning and rehearsals behind our own lines, including digging tunnels through no-man's-land into German territory. It was only recently, 2001, that stone carvings made by Canadians awaiting orders to commence the Vimy attack were discovered in these tunnels. They range from elaborately carved regimental banners bearing names like the Canadian Scottish 15th battalion and the 48th Highlanders to the names of soldiers, their wives, mothers, or girlfriends, or, in true Canadian style, even a tongue-in-cheek mailbox for mail bound from France to Toronto, Canada.

Now, this reminds us of the humanity of the people who served in the Canadian armed forces at Vimy Ridge, people like Private Joseph Goldie Fairholm, an Edmonton soldier whose diary includes details of the preparations for Vimy and of the battle's legacy. He wrote: "During this vacant space behind, we rehearsed the whole detail of our now famous Victory of Vimy Ridge. Even in the days after that battle, it appears the soldiers already knew the place it would hold in history." It was the preparation, military innovations, and disciplined execution of the Vimy battle plan that earned Canada the reputation for being a tenacious and trustworthy ally. We became a nation in the eyes of the world rather than simply a colony of Britain, but we know this victory came at a heavy cost: 3,598 Canadians were killed, and another 7,000 were wounded.

One of the Albertans to take part was Métis sharpshooter Henry Norwest from Fort Saskatchewan, who joined the Canadian Expeditionary Force in January 1915 and eventually fought with Calgary's 50th battalion. He was awarded a medal for his efforts to help Allied forces capture a significant point along Vimy Ridge. In his award citation officials said that he showed great bravery and saved a great many men's lives. But just three months before the end of the First World War Norwest himself became the target of a German sharpshooter, and the 33-year-old was killed in the Battle of Amiens. On his temporary grave marker one of his fellow soldiers wrote, "It must have been a damned good sniper that got Norwest." It was only very recently, in 2008, that the name Henry Norwest was added to the cenotaph at the Fort Saskatchewan Legion.

As we commemorate the great Canadians who helped secure victory at Vimy Ridge, I think of the Canadian men and women who serve our country today. They walk in the footsteps of the thousands of soldiers who have gone before them and honour our country every day with their bravery.

Thank you. [Standing ovation]

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

Judge and Lawyer Training on Sexual Offences

Mr. Jean: Many Albertans have been surprised to learn that a lawyer or judge in Alberta that is involved in trials related to sexual offences does not need specific training on dealing with victims. In

our province we have seen at least four instances where judges have had an outdated understanding of the law that has ruined confidence in our judicial system. It's why I will be bringing forward a motion on Thursday supporting training for judges and lawyers in the province if the House agrees. Does the Premier support the intent of this motion?

Ms Notley: Well, of course, Mr. Speaker, we absolutely support the intent. That's why our government has been working very hard to increase awareness of victims' rights and increase awareness around matters of domestic violence and sexual violence in our courts and in our justice system. The principle is certainly a very good one, and I anticipate that our minister will work very hard to make that principle real within the rules that we have in place.

Mr. Jean: Training judges and training lawyers would strengthen Albertans' trust in the judicial system and, hopefully, put an end to errors based on outdated myths and stereotypes related to sexual offences. These types of comments are what make sexual assault victims think twice about coming forward and reporting crime. We need to respect the independence of the judiciary, but we also need to ensure that we bring our courts into the 21st century immediately. Does the Premier agree that comments like those made by Justice Camp asking why a complainant didn't, quote, just keep her knees together, end quote, have no place whatsoever in Alberta courts?

Ms Notley: Of course, Mr. Speaker, I absolutely agree that that was inappropriate. That's why I was very proud of our Justice minister for, frankly, leading the efforts to ensure that that judge was reviewed by the appropriate body and had the appropriate consequences go his way. I thank our Justice minister for her leadership on that issue because, of course, all victims deserve to be treated with dignity in our courts, and it is about time that victims of domestic and sexual violence are treated with the dignity that they deserve.

Mr. Jean: Sexual assault continues to be chronically underreported in Canada, with about 90 per cent, Mr. Speaker, of victims never bringing their cases or complaints forward. When someone does bring forward the story of their assault, we need to ensure that they are not revictimized. Mistakes made because of an outdated understanding of the law are not acceptable. Will the Premier agree that trust in our judicial system will be strengthened if Albertans know that the legal system is trained to handle cases of sexual assault or misconduct in an appropriate manner?

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, we have to do everything that we can do to ensure, as I said before, that survivors of sexual violence and domestic violence are treated with, exactly, compassion and with dignity and with respect in our judicial system, so of course we're going to do everything we can. I mean, the member opposite, of course, was part of the caucus of the cabinet that appointed this particular judge that's generating this conversation. I'm glad to see that they see the import of this issue now. We certainly do, and we'll continue . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.
Second main question.

Job Creation

Mr. Jean: Sixty-three thousand Albertans have been unemployed for six months or longer. There are now over 55,000 Albertans relying on income support. While life for the public sector has never

been better, there are tens of thousands of Albertans that are suffering right across this province. These are the women and men forgotten by the NDP as they introduce policies that strangle the ability for businesses to hire and for businesses to grow in Alberta. Carbon taxes, big pay and big perks for government insiders, and risky labour legislation won't help. Why can't the Premier just give Albertans a break now?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Twenty thousand full-time jobs: the most in Canada. Now, I know that the Leader of the Opposition thinks that tax breaks for high-income earners are the only way to create jobs, but yesterday's numbers or last week's numbers show that that's not true. What our government is doing is supporting Albertans, having their backs, helping them through these tough times, and working to create jobs each and every day, and it's starting to work.

Mr. Jean: Well, the backs they have, Mr. Speaker; let's listen. The public sector has bloomed, with 36,000 new positions since the NDP took power here in Alberta. Meanwhile over 35,000 Albertans have been unemployed for over a year, with big losses in the oil patch. These are families and an industry who are not being helped by policies from the NDP and their pals in Ottawa, policies that raise taxes on the oil and gas sector while protecting the pay and perks across the public sector. This is wrong. Our top industries continue to be pummeled with bad policies from this NDP government. When is it going to stop?

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, to be clear, our government is very proud of the job numbers that were announced last week, the 20,000 full-time jobs created in Alberta, leading the country. And while we are working on job creation, we are also working to support families. I'm still waiting for the member opposite to finish his six-week deliberation on whether or not feeding hungry children in school is a good idea.

Mr. Jean: Surprisingly, our economy with labour reviews isn't helping at all, Premier.

While Ontario had a two-year consultation period for changes to their labour code, the NDP here in Alberta has given Albertans less than five weeks with something so important. It's clear to a growing number of businesses and Albertans that the NDP has already made up their minds, obviously. It's created a further climate of uncertainty at a time when businesses cannot afford it and Albertans are out of work. One policy pumped by NDP appointee and insider Gil McGowan is to scrap the workers' right to secret ballots. [interjections] I know they're laughing over there, Mr. Speaker, but this is serious. Is the Premier going to commit to this policy? Yes or no?

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

2:10

Ms Notley: Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, if it's dithering for six weeks on whether feeding hungry children is important or dithering for two years on a piece of legislation that hasn't been amended for 29, both of those things create uncertainty. But you know what doesn't create uncertainty? Twenty thousand new jobs; two new pipelines; \$30 billion in capital investment; ensuring that our schools and our hospitals are there for Albertans when they need them. This is what creates certainty, and this is what helps Albertans' lives get better.

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

Government Procurement Process

Mr. Panda: A new provincial trade deal is good news for Alberta, but the minister's plan to create the new Crown corporation for handing out infrastructure contracts is questionable. This means more spending and more taxes for Albertans. If the minister wants to create new Crown corporations to handle the work his government should be doing, he's going to have to explain himself. Premier: why can't the most expensive government in Canada award contracts in a way that is fast, fair, and affordable?

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, there are many great mysteries in this place, and one of them is where that hon. member got the information that we're setting up a Crown corporation. We are working on improving our infrastructure and transportation tendering process so that we foster innovation, so that we give work to Alberta companies and Alberta workers, and so that we work to green the economy. Those are all positive things supported by private industry. Maybe in his next question he can answer where he gets this idea of this Crown corporation from.

Mr. Panda: Well, Mr. Speaker, Albertans are speculating what this government will do next. Albertans have seen how the NDP politicized its arm's-length agencies across the province with the hiring of the AIMCo board, the chairs of NAIT, and the chair of the U of A. When they talk about creating Crown corporations, which they might, we all know that that's the NDP's code for creating jobs for their friends. Will the minister give up on his dream to bring back the 1980s and drop this Crown corporation scheme if it is in the pipeline?

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of things we might do, but if I can just suggest to the hon. member, it might be a good idea to ask a question about real government policy.

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, the *Globe and Mail* reminds us the minister almost killed the new interprovincial trade deal he is celebrating by demanding a 20 per cent exemption for local public procurement contracts. I'm told that other provinces were so angered by his actions, they were prepared to build a trade firewall around Alberta. Instead, they gave Alberta four years to comply. With no free trade in beer, wine, and spirits in this agreement, was the minister purposely trying to sabotage this trade deal?

Mr. Bilous: Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud of the new Canadian free trade agreement and the fact that Alberta finally has a fair and balanced trade agreement with all provinces and territories across this country. Not only have we now levelled the playing field – for decades Alberta had the most open borders, yet it wasn't reciprocated across the country – but now Alberta businesses have the equal access to other provinces and territories that they've enjoyed for decades.

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

AIMCo Governance

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker, I remain troubled by the dark path this government is taking the pension funds of our civil servants on. Sections 5 and 6 of the AIMCo regulation were put in place to ensure that the rationale for making investment decisions would be based on sound expertise in financial matters. Pensions are no place for political cronyism. To the Premier. The people that have worked

hard for this province want to know their retirement funds are being managed to provide a worry-free retirement. Will you do the right thing and reverse this dangerous decision that could threaten . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've got to tell you that it is really rich to hear that coming from the member opposite. I remember a time when we had 5,000 public servants on the steps out there because of the retrograde changes they were trying to make to the very pension plans that they claim to be protecting right now. It is really quite rich coming from over there. You know what? We do have the backs of Albertans who have their money in that pension plan. We will make sure that it's invested well on their behalf, and we will make sure that the people that are running the board are appointed on the basis of their skill and their abilities and . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.
First supplemental.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The current board was appointed by a former process that provided us with people with impeccable credentials on AIMCo. Simply put, this is a solution in search of a problem. This year there are seven new members coming up, and we're just told, "Trust me," by the NDP. To the Premier: before you endanger the retirement of government employees, what are you hiding, what is your real agenda, and why the need to repeal requirements to have qualified people making decisions on \$90 billion?

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, first of all, the member opposite is incorrect in his characterization of what has happened. What we have done is that we've made sure that our agencies, boards, and commissions are open to all Albertans, so all Albertans are welcome to apply. Of course, they will be appointed on the basis of their qualifications. I ask the member to look at the appointments coming forward, and I'm sure that he will agree that that's exactly what happens. Nobody is more committed to protecting defined benefit contribution pension plans for the people of this province than this government.

Mr. McIver: Regardless of what the Premier says, she has opened the door for unqualified people, and she needs to shut that door.

Along with the Member for Calgary-West I have repeatedly asked the Minister of Finance whether he would respond to requests by members of the Heritage Savings Trust Fund Committee to attend the next meeting and explain this bizarre move. He has never answered the question yet. To the Premier: will you direct your Minister of Finance to attend the next meeting of the heritage savings committee and explain?

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, you know, there's truly no need to do that because the Minister of Finance answered the question last week on Monday, and then he answered it again on Tuesday, and I believe he answered it again on Wednesday, and it's very possible that he answered it again on Thursday. [interjections] Now, I appreciate that the members opposite may have trouble hearing answers over all this yelling that they're doing right now, but the reality is that the answer has been given, and there is absolutely nothing to hide. We are completely focused on protecting the pension funds of Alberta workers, unlike all of the members opposite. [interjections]

The Speaker: Quiet.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Opioid Use Prevention and Mitigation

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Friday Alberta Health posted the first near quarter interim report on opioids, further detailing the devastating impact this epidemic is having. An issue as serious as this should have been accompanied by a greater public response. Instead, this government was busy making funding announcements. In the first six weeks of 2017 51 Albertans died from fentanyl-related overdoses, nearly twice as many as last year, yet this government still refuses to call this an emergency. To the associate minister: what will it take for you to call this an emergency?

The Speaker: The Associate Minister of Health.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. The interim numbers that were released last week by the chief medical officer of health confirmed what we've heard clearly from front-line health care workers and community agencies, that synthetic opioids remain a deadly threat to Albertans living with substance use, their families, and first responders. That's why we're multiplying our efforts and will spend up to \$56 million over the next year to help Albertans get the treatment that they need to reduce the harm of substance use and to raise public awareness.

Dr. Swann: This minister has repeatedly told us that the government has already got enough resources to deal with the crisis. However, Albertans with mental health and addiction illnesses are not getting the supports they need to recover. Access to treatment clinics outside of our two largest cities is a major issue. I don't know of any clinics that are open evenings and weekends. We continue to see a piecemeal approach instead of a coherent strategy, one that involves government and nongovernment organizations, police, human services, and indigenous groups. To the minister: when will we see a comprehensive provincial opioid strategy aimed at getting ahead of this crisis?

2:20

The Speaker: The hon. associate minister.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our response to the opioid crisis is being led by the chief medical officer of health, something that the member opposite has supported. We're going to make sure that we have all of the tools available, but we believe fundamentally that this is a public health issue. What we will not do is subscribe to the discredited war-on-drugs approach that the Official Opposition supports. Certainly, access to opioid replacement therapy is a critical part of our government's response, and part of the money allocated in Budget 2017 is to expand the overall capacity and geographic reach of our clinical systems.

Dr. Swann: Mr. Speaker, it's clearly beyond the current chief medical officer.

Following the flood that ravaged southern Alberta in 2013, the previous government established the office of the chief addictions and mental health officer to provide psychological and social help to the flood victims. Later he began to focus on harm reduction issues, including fentanyl and opioids. Instead of supporting this expanded scope for the chief addictions and mental health officer, the minister eliminated the position. My question is now to the Health minister. In hindsight, this may have been a mistake. When

will we see the reappointment of the chief addictions and mental health officer to lead this government's response?

The Speaker: The associate minister.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. As I noted earlier, our response to the crisis is being led by the chief medical officer of health, who's working very closely with experts in the field to ensure that our plan is heading in the right direction. What we are doing is that we have expanded the reach and scope of our naloxone kit program, which has expanded to more than a thousand registered sites across our province, without a prescription and at no cost to Albertans. We are expanding access to opioid dependency treatments across our province, making use of telehealth and other services to ensure . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, Associate Minister.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Alberta Hospital Edmonton

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Alberta Hospital is an important part of the Edmonton-Manning constituency and is a significant part of our mental health network, can the minister please speak to the plans that the government has for keeping Alberta Hospital open?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. I was pleased just a few short weeks ago to meet with a number of physicians at Alberta Hospital Edmonton in Edmonton-Manning with the member opposite, and we had a very good conversation. I confirmed to them then, as I will now and forevermore and in no uncertain terms, that as long as there is an NDP government in Alberta, there will be Alberta Hospital Edmonton.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that Alberta Hospital meets the needs of individuals transitioning to community, can the minister please tell Albertans what the government is doing to ensure that the current wards at Alberta Hospital are meeting the needs of Albertans?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much. Again, from the start mental health has been a priority for this government, and our priorities have been backed up with real action and real investments. We are looking at ways that we can use the facility at Alberta Hospital Edmonton to the best of its capabilities. The opposition's plan to cut \$9 billion from capital and \$2 billion from operations would certainly reduce the ability for us to be able to do that. That's why I'm so proud to be part of a government that's making life better for Alberta families, not far worse, which is the Official Opposition's plan.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: given that the hospital has identified the need for an ECT machine and has been promised that that machine will be returned to the site, can the minister please tell my constituents when this will be delivered and ready to be used?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. We know that it's best to bring services to patients because they deserve to have the right care in the right place at the right time, and that's why we're so proud that this device is going to be coming back to Alberta Hospital Edmonton. We expect it to be up and working in the next few weeks. Certainly, in the month of May we'll be able to ensure that we reduce those transportation times and keep the service close to home. So May, and I'm proud of that.

Brewing Industry Trade Barriers

Mr. Fildebrandt: Last week governments signed on to the Canadian free trade agreement. This is a big step forward for Canada finally functioning as our founding fathers intended. Alas, there are still areas of trade not yet covered by this agreement, though. Chief among them is beer. Alberta's brewers face significant nontariff trade barriers, though, when selling to places like B.C. and Ontario, where governments continue to maintain a high level of direct control over the market. What is the government doing to break down trade barriers faced by Alberta's brewing industry?

The Speaker: The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for the very important question. Through the Canadian free trade agreement negotiations, that took us about two and a half years, there are a number of outstanding issues. One of them is alcohol and access to other markets. We know that Alberta brewers have faced a disadvantage and continue to when they're trying to sell their products into other provinces' markets. That is going to be addressed over the next 12 months through a round-table from all provinces and territories. We will continue to work hard to ensure that Alberta brewers have access to all Canadian markets.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Given, Mr. Speaker, that while other provinces have nontariff trade barriers, this government has introduced the most overtly protectionist beer tax in the country, which has resulted in multiple successful court challenges from breweries in other provinces, and given that, first, it was a full-blown tariff to be paid for by Alberta beer drinkers and that when the government lost in court it was a preferential subsidy, which fits the definition of a backdoor tariff, is the government . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member. Hon. member, please sit down when I stand.

The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Listen. First of all, the policy that the Minister of Finance brought forward levels the playing field for brewers in this province. As far as the small-brewers grant, I encourage the hon. member opposite to look at other provinces like Ontario which have had similar programs for many, many years. They are trade compliant as far as what we're doing. What I'd love to know is why the hon. member continues to advocate for Alberta subsidizing beers from other provinces. We want to work with Alberta brewers. We want a level playing field for brewers across the country, but we're going to stand up for Alberta brewers.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Given, Mr. Speaker, that when the minister introduced this beer tariff in 2015, we warned that it was unconstitutional and given that he lost in court, given that when the

minister introduced the backdoor subsidy plan, we again warned that it was unconstitutional, given – given – that he scoffed until brewers took him to court again, until he may well lose again, given that the minister's protectionist policy is exposing Alberta's brewing industry to massive uncertainty – given, given – will the minister, if he loses in court again, finally respect free trade?

Speaker's Ruling Oral Question Period Practices

The Speaker: Hon. members, as hon. members I would hope that all of you, but particularly in this instance I would cite the member who just asked what I think might have been a question buried in there, would not use words like "given" in a way that is disrespectful. You were using it, in my opinion, in a sardonic tone, that somehow these various comments that you wanted him to reject needed to be prefaced by "given." To you, to all of you, don't take advantage of the phraseology by lightening and embellishing your comments without getting to the point and asking the policy question that I know you're very concerned about.

The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Brewing Industry Trade Barriers (continued)

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Much of the hon. member's preamble is actually incorrect. Alberta has and has always had the most open market for beer sales in Canada. What we've done is ensured that the same markup applies to all provinces. I want to inform the member that Alberta lists 7,475 beer products, including some from Saskatchewan. That is not reciprocated for Alberta brewers in other provinces. Unlike what the opposition is proposing, our government will continue to stand up for Alberta brewers.

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

AIMCo Governance (continued)

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When you invite a guest to dinner and that guest refuses to give you an answer, that could be construed as impolite, but I'm sure the Finance minister did not mean to be discourteous when he refused to RSVP the members of the heritage trust fund committee. To the minister: let me give you another chance. Will you attend the next meeting of the Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund?

2:30

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have stood up and repeatedly said that I'm in constant communication with the AIMCo chair and board of directors, and I'm also talking with the CEO at all points in time. So we'll continue to have good discussions with AIMCo. We'll continue to work on their behalf on this side of the government, and we will ensure that they have all they need to do the great job they do on behalf of Albertans.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this direct question has now been asked at least six times and the minister still will not answer and given that the committee chair has said this about accommodating the minister's schedule, that the meeting is "being scheduled right now, so we will try and do that," and given that

because the minister refuses to answer questions about his attendance, we can only assume that he has decided not to attend, to the minister: will you please tell Albertans why you won't attend the next Heritage Savings Trust Fund Committee meeting?

Mr. Ceci: You know, the things that people are interested in, I think, are with regard to the appointments. Just last week there were interviews for board members. A number of interviews took place, so those decisions are being made right now in terms of the six or so appointments that need to come forward. I think members on the other side should judge this government on the quality of the appointments that will come forward soon.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Albertans are alarmed that the NDP is politically interfering with AIMCo and they fear that this meddling can lead anywhere and given that Albertans are concerned that this government views the \$90 billion worth of pensions, endowments, and their heritage fund as easy pickings, will you promise, Minister, to Albertans today that you will not dip into the heritage trust fund or any other fund managed by AIMCo to cover up your gross financial mismanagement of our province?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you. You know, the ridiculousness of the allegations from the other side I don't want to even address. What I will say is that AIMCo is a great company that works on behalf of Albertans, invests a great deal of money. I have confidence in them. I think the other side should have confidence in them as well, but they exhibit a lack of confidence. We'll see where those appointments are shortly when they come forward.

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

Pure North S'Energy Foundation

Mr. Yao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There have been concerning reports in the media about Pure North, a nonprofit foundation that promotes the use of multivitamins and supplements. The reports suggest that government provided funding and support for what were called medical experiments on vulnerable people without their fully informed consent. Apparently, these people were given very high doses of vitamin D and other nutrients in a way that can pose a health risk. To the Health minister: did this actually happen, and is this type of program consistent with the guidelines on ethical experiments on people?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. This is something that, in the detailed coverage that has been available, happened under the previous government, that grants were given out for these types of programs that certainly weren't respectful, I think, of the dignity that we want to ensure that all Albertans have through our billable services. So, please, to the member: I hope that the next time he's slow dancing with the third party, he asks them that specific question because if that happened, which I have no specific knowledge of, that certainly would be very concerning, and we would want to make sure that we follow it up appropriately.

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, given that according to these media reports Alberta Health officials raised very serious safety, ethics, evidence,

and liability issues about Pure North's alternative health program and given that senior ministry officials advised the previous government against providing Pure North with a grant and given that the documentation cited in these media reports came from FOIPed information from the Health minister, will the Health minister tell us if and when she was aware of the concerns of Alberta Health experts when she provided even more funding to Pure North?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thanks again, Mr. Speaker. To help inform the member opposite and any others who have concerns, there are two different programs, one that was funded under the former government which, I believe, could have been for things that aren't covered under Alberta Health billable services, and a second program, which is a nurse practitioner program. I hope all members of this House are keen in wanting to work with us to expand the practice of nurse practitioners in primary care. The grant that he's speaking of is about primary care with nurses, LPNs, RNs, and nurse practitioners as well. This is a completely different program. This is a government of Alberta nurse practitioner program, and I think we can wait and see the results of that. But certainly not any other . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, six days before the funding agreement was signed by the previous government, the grant's stated purpose was changed from a research project to simply an expansion of Pure North's existing seniors' program. It appears that a group can circumvent ethical guidelines through creating a program rather than conducting a legitimate medical experiment. To the Health minister: is it acceptable to frame a research project as a program in order to get around ethical guidelines?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. No, I don't believe it is. I think that that question is probably best directed to the former associate minister of Health, who happens to be the MLA for Calgary-Lougheed, at the time at which this was signed. I have very grave concerns about this. As I said previously, maybe when you're square dancing with members of the third party, feel free to ask them that exact question.

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

Justice System Delays

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government is well aware of rising crime in rural Alberta but have lollygagged around before doing something about it. The Wetaskiwin Crown prosecutor's office, which serves the Ponoka area, saw a 36 per cent increase in the number of charges commenced this year compared to last, the highest in the province. In response, even after the appointment of new judges, the minister wants to triage crime. Will a miscarriage of justice be the result of the minister picking which crimes will not be prosecuted, or how will she triage crime and maintain the integrity of the law?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As the member has referenced, there are a number of cases that are at risk under Jordan, and given the intense backlogs that have built in the system

over a long time, that is a significant concern. That's why this government took immediate action to ensure that we are injecting the necessary resources into the system. It's also why we ensured that Crown prosecutors were able to focus on the most serious and violent crimes, so that it wasn't being picked just on the length of time but that we were doing this in a thoughtful manner that protected the safety of Albertans.

Mr. Orr: Mr. Speaker, rising crime levels combined with a lack of staff mean that criminals are being let go under the Jordan timeline. Given that both the minister and the Wetaskiwin prosecutor's office have outlined staffing as the main cause of this problem, which has caused 2,100 charges to be unconcluded or just dropped this year alone, and given that we have heard over and over about the staff shortage at the Alberta Crown prosecutors' offices long before the Jordan ruling, why did the minister wait so long to address these issues?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to stand up and confirm that there is hiring under way for a new Crown prosecutor in Wetaskiwin. In terms of the numbers the member opposite cited, I don't think that those are correct. It is certainly the case that the result of the Jordan decision in combination with systemic backlogs has created quite a situation, and that's why this government moved to invest resources where the members opposite would have cut.

Mr. Orr: Mr. Speaker, the numbers come from the Alberta Crown Attorneys' Association, so if they're wrong, it's them.

Given that prosecution is only one aspect of the problem, the other being enforcement of the law, and that an 18-year veteran of the Edmonton police force recently told me that small crimes are the training grounds for major felonies, yet these are overlooked due to lack of resources, and given that experts know that petty crimes lead to major crimes, what is this government doing to nip the small criminals in the bud before they're back in our court system for a major crime?

Ms Ganley: Mr. Speaker, I have to absolutely disagree with the member opposite. Taking individuals who are suffering from mental health challenges or addictions problems and throwing them in jail has never solved anything. We need to provide these individuals with access to the treatment they need so that our criminal justice system can focus on serious and violent offenders.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Whirling Disease in Alberta Fish Populations

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In February the government released a statement regarding whirling disease in the Bow River basin watershed outlining steps that will be taken to contain the disease such as testing provincial aquaculture facilities and class A fish farms. To the Minister of Environment and Parks: can you please update this House on the status of whirling disease in Alberta?

2:40

The Speaker: The Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. I appreciate it very much, and I appreciate the opportunity to update the House on this particular matter. It is a pressing matter for the health of the fisheries in

southern Alberta; there's no question. That is why we have proposed \$9 million extra within this year's budget in order to address the problem of whirling disease, in order to expand our education efforts among anglers and boaters, and to ensure that we are quarantining commercial fish farms and that we are deploying resources for monitoring and further testing so that we can at least know where the disease is and contain it appropriately.

Thank you.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that hundreds of recreational and commercial fish culture licences are under review by the government and given that stocking season is days away, to the same minister: what is the status of these reviews, and when can those waiting expect a decision?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. We have been able to test many of these commercial fish operations. I would be happy to follow up with the member to give him a full status report on which ones have been cleared and which others still require further action. We're working with those commercial fish farms in order to have a response plan that works for them as well.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the entire aquaculture industry plays an important role in Alberta's economic diversification and given that this industry is estimated to have an impact of up to \$14 million per year and is losing investment every day that decisions aren't made, to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade: what is being done to support the long-term viability of these family-run fish farms so that they can support your efforts to diversify the Alberta economy and grow the fish farm industry?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. There is no question that whirling disease poses a challenge to commercial fisheries as well as to our wild fish populations, which is why we have taken the actions that we have. We have invested more resources into monitoring, testing, and working with those commercial fish hatcheries to ensure that we can work with them to develop a plan going into the future that works for them and that works for anglers and for the tourism industry.

Thank you.

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

Calgary Gas Plus Brownfield Site

Drever: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Constituents from Calgary-Bow have had ongoing concerns that date back many years about the Gas Plus brownfield site. This empty site is a detriment to local businesses and a major concern to community members, a problem that was inherited from the previous government. To the Minister of Environment and Parks: why has it taken so long for the community to get resolution of this concern?

The Speaker: The minister of environment.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I'd like to start off by acknowledging the advocacy work that has been done by the Member for Calgary-Bow. I appreciate her efforts to advocate on behalf of her constituents very much. Similarly, the city of Calgary has been a good partner to us as we try to find a resolution to this matter. We're in legal proceedings right now to access the site so that we can assess its status, and the matter continues to be before the courts. As the legal action on the file proceeds, we have already taken a number of actions to support community members in the Member for Calgary-Bow's riding, including . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
First supplemental.

Drever: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: what has the Department of Environment and Parks done to support community members in Calgary-Bow to address this ongoing problem?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Department of Environment and Parks has begun remediating materials and off-site migration on the outskirts of the site. We are also finishing the field portion of the remedial approach pilot test and completing the remedial pilot activities and findings report from 2016. We're also completing many of the preparatory activities to support implementation of the remedial action plan. In order to support all of those efforts, we're hosting an open house to ensure ongoing communications with community members in Calgary-Bow and to update them on the status of the site, the work done to date, and the actions going forward.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Drever: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the brownfield site represents not only problems but also opportunities, to the same minister: what is the government doing to support the 2012 Alberta Urban Municipalities Association's recommendations around brownfield site remediation?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we have heard loud and clear from municipalities that they would like to see us move forward in terms of reviewing the regulation and operation of the remediation certificate program, so we are pleased to do so. A number of the steps that we've taken so far include release of the updated tier 1 and tier 2 Alberta soil and water guidelines. We've recently hired a brownfield co-ordinator in our department. We've created a crossministry contaminated-site steering committee. We are also updating the Municipal Government Act very soon, concerning taxation powers, to support brownfield redevelopment and negotiations on big-city charters. We are committed to . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Victims of Crime

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Victims' services units across the province are seeing a rise in their case files. Victims' services provides a range of services from helping victims through the criminal justice system, providing court support, making sure that victims know their rights, and informing clients of the different

packages available through the Alberta government for financial benefits. Yet despite these facts, they have found no increase in their budget. To the minister: how are you ensuring that victims of crime have access to the services they need?

The Speaker: The Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's important that all victims have access to services throughout the province. That's why we're looking very closely at the system. On the recommendation of the Auditor General we are doing a full evaluation. We have completed a gaps analysis in terms of what needs to be done to move forward. Once we have completed an analysis of how best to measure the outcomes in that matter, we will absolutely be moving forward to help resolve this issue.

Mrs. Pitt: Mr. Speaker, given that the victims of crime fund has come under fire, as stated by the minister as well, from the Auditor General for its lack of plans to deal with the extra money and given that victims' services units across this province are seeing a sharp increase in case files and given that Alberta has seen an 18 per cent increase in crime, the largest of any province or territory, will the minister direct the surplus monies to the front-line workers who support victims of violent crime?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we've been working very closely with groups that advocate for victims. We have been meeting with them as well as their members to ensure that they do have the resources they need. As we move forward doing our work, it's important not just that that money goes out the door but that it gets to the place where it's directed, that it, in fact, be used to address the needs of victims. That's why we're ensuring that we do the work first and get the money out the door second.

Mrs. Pitt: Mr. Speaker, given that under the Victims of Crime Act the minister has under section 10(a) the ability to make regulations to make payments from the fund and given the rise in crime and the need for victims' services units and other invaluable victims' services, will the minister amend the regulations today to ensure that victims in our province do not go without support?

The Speaker: The Minister of Justice.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's clear that the members opposite aren't interested in getting the evidence to make sure that money is used effectively, but on this side of the House we think that it's important to ensure that we have the gaps analysis so that we have an understanding of what the needs of victims are to make sure that that money is going to do what it's supposed to do; that is to say, to support the needs of victims, exactly as we've been asked to do by the Auditor General.

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

Transportation Infrastructure in Fort Saskatchewan

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A couple of weeks ago, to great fanfare and a superb photo op, the Premier and the Transportation minister announced that Fort Saskatchewan would see a new bridge built. Just like that, everyone applauded. This project was well received; the community was happy. But let's drill down a little bit. In all this applause perhaps the people missed that the total funds dedicated to this project are only \$10 million. Minister, what will

come with the \$10 million? What kind of bridge, a Lego bridge or something?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. [interjections] Obviously, the capital plan . . .

The Speaker: Quiet.

Mr. Mason: . . . as the member ought to know, extends over a number of years. It's a four-year capital plan, Mr. Speaker. Some projects take more than that. Certain amounts are allocated to that in a given year. That will get the bridge started, and then we'll finish it.
2:50

Mr. Gill: Given that the project is set to begin in 2019 with a three-year build-out, which brings us to 2022, and given that the government has only committed \$10 million to this multiyear project, without any further indication that it'll provide the remaining funds, and given that the people of Alberta are sick and tired of this NDP government's buying announcements, to the same minister: when will the government commit the rest of the funds to this project in 2019? Again, an election year promise . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member.

The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, you know, it's really, really interesting that the hon. member opposite thinks that we're not going to finish the bridge. He may not have noticed, but there's a change in government, and we do things differently now than they used to do. That bridge was due for twinning 10 years ago. [interjections]

The Speaker: Quiet.

Mr. Mason: The amount of traffic on that bridge should have triggered this action 10 years ago. That government sat around for eight of those years and did nothing, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: I'm sure it was an oversight.

To the hon. member: be cautious of the preambles.

Mr. Gill: Given that we used to pay our debts on time and given that there was a lot of fanfare and a lot of photo ops for \$10 million and given that the Industrial Heartland has been and will continue to be a much-needed economic generator for our province and given that this bridge must provide full access for heavy industries on the other side of the river, Minister, can you commit to Albertans today that this will be a wide heavy-load bridge . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member. Thank you.

Mr. Gill: . . . to accommodate traffic to . . .

Speaker's Ruling Addressing the Chair

The Speaker: Thank you. Thank you. Hon. member, when you're looking at the chair, you'll know when he's standing up. When you're looking to the other side, you sometimes miss it. I encourage you to look at the chair in the future so that you can sit down on time.

The Minister of Transportation.

Transportation Infrastructure in Fort Saskatchewan

(continued)

Mr. Mason: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to look at the chair. The view is much better.

Now, the mayor of Fort Saskatchewan says: this announcement is very good news for the prosperity of Alberta's Industrial Heartland and the quality of life for our residents; we look forward to continued dialogue with the province and our community as the project unfolds and more information is available. Mr. Speaker, we are supportive of the Industrial Heartland and the economic development that that generates for our entire province.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Highway 2 Gaetz Avenue Interchange in Red Deer

Mrs. Schreiner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the MLA for Red Deer-North I see first-hand that my city is an important hub for provincial travel. Given that its unique location on highway 2 is both a defining feature of the city and also a lifelong infrastructure challenge for my constituents as they deal with significant congestion issues, to the Minister of Transportation: what is the government doing to improve road infrastructure in Red Deer along the QE II?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the hon. member and her colleague from Red Deer for their strong advocacy on behalf of the people of Red Deer and the surrounding area. Red Deer is in fact becoming a fast-growing economic engine of our province, driving our economy forward. Last year our government moved forward on the Gaetz Avenue interchange project, an \$80 million project that will significantly improve critical infrastructure in the area. I'm very proud of the significant infrastructure investments we've made in the Red Deer region, making life better for all . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

First supplemental.

Mrs. Schreiner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that my constituents have expressed concerns regarding significant traffic congestion and slow-moving traffic on and off the highway, to the Minister of Transportation: will this interchange improve my residents' frustrations with traffic in this highly used area?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Thanks very much. I certainly hope so, Mr. Speaker. The new interchange will accommodate increased traffic volumes on highway 2 by providing three lanes in each direction. It will improve safety – and this is very important – for motorists by separating high- and low-speed traffic getting to and from the highway. And it will integrate the Taylor Drive and Gaetz Avenue interchanges into one full interchange system. These much-needed improvements will help create jobs and sustain economic growth and make life better for the people of Red Deer.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mrs. Schreiner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Red Deer has become an important centre for travellers and industry; however, provincial infrastructure has not kept pace with our growth. Given that road

infrastructure needs will likely continue to increase in our growing city, what has our government committed to in Budget 2017 to ensure continued improvements at this important intersection?

Mr. Mason: Well, Mr. Speaker, as part of our four-year capital plan we're investing nearly \$5.2 billion in our provincial highway network. It includes a commitment of \$64 million over the next four years to this project, which will help connect communities and make life better for residents in Red Deer. Gaetz Avenue interchange project is well under way, and multiple construction activities are planned for the upcoming season. It will support the city as it hosts the 2019 Canada Winter Games, one of the many reasons our government supported this important project.

The Speaker: Government House Leader, did you have a motion?

Mr. Mason: Oh. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to ask for unanimous consent to extend the Routine until its completion.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Members' Statements

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

Battle of Vimy Ridge

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak about the incredible sacrifice made 100 years ago at the Battle of Vimy Ridge. As the government of Alberta's liaison to the Canadian armed forces I have had the privilege of meeting and speaking with our guests in the gallery as well as many more members of the Canadian forces and their families at commemorations across our province.

On April 9, 1917, our brave Canadian soldiers began the infamous creeping barrage at 5:30 a.m. Over 3,598 Canadian soldiers were killed and 7,004 wounded in this historic battle.

The Vimy Ridge monument was erected in 1936 to commemorate Canada's fallen sons and the sacrifice so many made for freedom on those fields in France. There are 20 symbolic statues on the monument, but one in particular stood out to me. It was the statue of Canada Bereft, or, as many commonly know her, Mother Canada. She is symbolic of the spirit of Canada weeping for her fallen sons.

Many of you were here in the House when I introduced my eldest son last week. He is the same age as so many who died fighting for Canada at Vimy Ridge. As a mother I am awestruck by the strength of so many Canadian mothers and fathers who said goodbye to their sons not knowing if they would ever see them again. I can't even begin to fathom the sense of loss and grief that so many mothers, fathers, spouses, and children must have endured after this historic battle.

Yesterday I was proud to be part of a declaration by the government of Alberta that recognized April 9, 2017, as the Battle of Vimy Ridge Day here in Alberta. This declaration cannot bring back the fallen, but this recognition and the other commemorations around the province and the world can demonstrate in a small way our gratitude and the honour in which we hold all who fought and still fight for our freedom.

To all Canadians who sacrificed that day, to their families and loved ones, and to those who continue to protect our rights and freedoms: we thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

3:00

Battle of Vimy Ridge

Mr. Schneider: In my riding next to the Lethbridge Airport is the home of the 20th Independent Field Battery, Royal Canadian

Artillery. At the outbreak of World War I Major John Smith Stewart raised the first Alberta artillery battery, to be known as the 20th battery, augmented with members from Edmonton and Calgary. The 20th would be joined in France shortly afterward by another Lethbridge battery, the 39th. It's interesting to note that during the planning for the battle a trench was marked on the battle map, to be known as Stafford Street in honour of the battery commander of the 39th, Major Alexander Boswell Stafford. Both of these units fought with distinction at Vimy Ridge.

To recognize the importance and close connection these two units have with this historic victory, their armoury was rededicated and renamed as Vimy Ridge Armoury on November 9, 2001. This year, in order to commemorate and mark the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge, a parade and salute with their howitzers were held on April 8 at Lethbridge city hall. This parade also included cadets from Fort Macleod, Lethbridge, and Taber. That evening the 20th battery held their annual Vimy Ridge dinner, which this year commemorated the 100th anniversary of the battle.

Canada's military achievements during the remainder of the war raised our international stature and helped us earn a separate signature on the Treaty of Versailles, that formally ended the war.

Today on land granted to Canada for all time by a grateful France, the Canadian National Vimy Memorial sits atop Hill 145 as a lasting legacy. This great monument is inscribed with the names of 11,285 Canadian soldiers who were listed as missing, presumed dead in France during the First World War. Whenever Canadians visit the memorial today, one can't help but leave with a renewed sense of patriotism, similar, no doubt, to the sense of pride felt after the victory by the Canadian Corps. It stands as a tribute to all who served our country in the conflict and paid the ultimate price to help ensure that peace and freedom are alive and well today.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Employment and Labour Code Consultations

Mr. Gottfried: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Everyone can agree that Bill 6 was an unmitigated disaster. Even the minister of agriculture admitted that their communication efforts were lacklustre and that they would need to improve in the future. However, this government just cannot learn from their mistakes. Instead of broadly consulting openly and with wide-ranging engagement efforts across our province, this government is rushing ahead, with limited consultation and minimal ministerial representation, on significant changes to both employment standards and the Labour Relations Code.

The Minister of Labour is utilizing a 36-day online survey to consult only on potential changes to employment standards. Not only is this timeline wholly insufficient; the questions appear to be leading respondents to a predetermined outcome. Thirty-six days is shorter than the consultation period for both daylight saving time and the Castle park management plan and will take less than one-tenth the time this government has spent reviewing WCB. The Calgary Chamber describes the process as completely, woefully inadequate.

Multiple stakeholders are concerned about government bias towards making it easier for unions to certify, moving away from the democratic secret ballot to a card check process, yet despite all the concerns from stakeholders across this province, the government still feels they know best. The minister has stated publicly: the timeline we've set out is very reasonable. Their favourite son, Gil McGowan, stated: we don't need two years of consultation to say what's obvious. Well, the irony of the statement is that Ontario is taking two years to consult before making similar changes.

I would like to take the time to offer this government some friendly advice: remember Bill 6. Take your time, consult widely,

and build as broad based a consensus between business and labour, Albertans all, as you can. Mr. Speaker, Alberta's economy is struggling to recover. These changes could have a serious impact, and the short-term gain of pleasing your elite, union-boss friends will be far outweighed by the damage you do to Alberta businesses and our fragile economy.

Thank you.

Henson Trusts for Persons with Disabilities

Mr. Malkinson: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to address a question asked by every Albertan parent who has a child with a disability: how will they ensure that their child has the support they need even after they pass away? I know that this question keeps many Albertan parents and caregivers up at night.

Many parents across Canada can ensure that their children receive the support they need after they pass through something called a Henson trust, also known as an absolute discretionary trust, for the lawyers in the room. If Alberta had Henson trust legislation, this would ensure that persons with disabilities who inherit assets following a parent's death will not be penalized, as Frances Harley explained to me, for being too rich. That's shameful. Since my being elected to this House, parents like Frances, Farhood, Mina, and many others have shared with me their worry that their child's AISH would be cut or that their child would no longer be able to afford the medication or supportive housing they need. What these families, what the parents are seeking, Mr. Speaker, is continuity of care.

I have heard these concerns in Calgary-Currie, Mr. Speaker, and they have motivated me to investigate the idea of Henson trust legislation here in Alberta. This is why over the past two weeks my office has begun a series of consultations in both Calgary and Edmonton on the best way to introduce Henson trusts here in Alberta. These consultations could not have been better attended. Self-advocates, disability advocates, and organizations like Connections Counselling and the Developmental Disabilities Resource Centre of Calgary all attended. But I now appeal to my fellow Albertans. I ask them to contact my office and share how such legislation could offer them peace of mind, knowing that loved ones will be cared for after they are gone.

As legislators we should work to make life better. Our laws should ensure that all are able to live dignified lives, but right now in this case ours do the opposite, and that needs to change.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Women's Suffrage Anniversary

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Voting is a hallmark of Canadian citizenship, and I would wager that every single Member of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, past and present, holds the right to vote in very high regard. Political franchise is a precious right and one of the tenets of democracy. The authority of government flows from the people. It's based on their consent.

Imagine living in a society that didn't recognize you as a person. You could be an accomplished professional. Maybe you're the first female judge in the British Empire or the first woman elected to a Legislature in the British Empire. Maybe you're the first female cabinet minister in the province or the founder of a charitable foundation that cares for people in the community, that still exists today. Imagine that you are well-informed and engaged, not just

engaged but passionate about the place you live, passionate about ensuring better working conditions for women, better wages for women, passionate about protecting children. Now imagine that you have no say in these matters because you are not legally recognized as a person.

The passion to change women's status was what led the Famous Five – Emily Murphy, Irene Parlby, Nellie McClung, Louise McKinney, and Henrietta Edwards – to ask the Supreme Court of Canada if the word "persons" in section 24 of the British North America Act meant women, too. Because of their efforts the Equal Suffrage Statutory Law Amendment Act was passed in April 1916, giving most women in Alberta the right to vote, ending a time when women had been deemed to have no place in political life, an ideology that maligned women as lacking logic, solely belonging at home to raise children, and incapable of making good choices.

I am incredibly grateful for the courage and commitment of these women and their supporters, Mr. Speaker, because the 29 women that are current members of this Assembly probably wouldn't be here representing the interests of half the population or marking the 101st anniversary of women's suffrage in Alberta, and that would be a travesty.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Rocky View School District Funding

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak about the importance of education and the need for us as parliamentarians to work together to ensure that schools are being built in the communities that need them most. The Rocky View school district is one of the fastest growing school boards, and Airdrie alone needs an average of two schools built per year just to keep up with the growth. This highlights the desperate need to address infrastructure deficits. Obviously, schools can only fit so many teachers, students, and classrooms.

According to a recent report it appears that Rocky View school district is one of the lowest funded school divisions in Alberta, based on geography and student populations. Encompassed in this district is, of course, the beautiful city of Airdrie. Since 2006 Airdrie's population has more than doubled. It continues to grow by an average of 3,000 people per year, and that is the same as other communities within the Rocky View school division like the rapidly growing city of Chestermere and the hamlet of Langdon. What this means is obvious, Mr. Speaker: more people and more families looking to raise their children in Airdrie.

But schools are not the only problem. Recent changes to the types of school fees that schools can charge have also made it more difficult for schools to fund essential operations like busing for students who live 2.4 kilometres or greater from their designated school. School fees are definitely something that, we can all agree, needed to be addressed, but the current offsets are leaving schools at a loss to cover these programs. In my area the \$3.5 million in offset funding will still leave them with an operating deficit of a quarter of a million dollars. It is my understanding that some discussions have begun to take place with the minister, and I'm grateful for that.

I would also encourage that these discussions continue so that we can all work together in the best interests of students to ensure that schools are in place and that there is adequate funding to support them.

Thank you very much.

3:10 Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees

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

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the honour of submitting on behalf of the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future its final report, pursuant to Standing Order 52.07(2) and (4), Growing and Diversifying Alberta's Agrifood and Agribusiness Sectors. For the past six months we received feedback from over 100 stakeholders in Alberta and invited nearly 50 presenters to appear in front of the committee. This report provides 13 recommendations, that received unanimous support from all parties in this House. I'd like to thank all members who participated, all submitters who provided feedback, and research services for their hard work on this.

Presenting Petitions

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

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today and present a petition that I sponsored in recognition of Vimy Ridge. It reads:

We, the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to make a proclamation establishing a Day to Commemorate the 100th Year Anniversary of the Victory by the Canadian Expeditionary Force at Vimy Ridge in World War One.

Thank you.

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Bill 8

An Act to Strengthen Municipal Government

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce Bill 8, An Act to Strengthen Municipal Government.

During the summer tour last year and another round of engagement over the winter we heard these ideas for how our government could make a real difference for families and communities. These amendments would strengthen how school boards and municipalities work together on school sites and provide a way for councillors to take parental leave. This bill would make Alberta a leader in how municipalities collaborate on community infrastructure like rec centres and libraries and how municipalities can strengthen relationships with neighbouring indigenous communities. The proposed amendments are a result of extensive and open engagement, which is the hallmark of the MGA review. This is yet another way that we're listening to Albertans and responding to their ideas for how our government can make practical changes that make their lives better.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 8 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert.

Mr. Horne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table the requisite number of copies of a misnumbered survey circulated by the Wildrose in St. Albert a couple weeks ago, including the question: "Do you believe global warming is primarily caused by

human activity?" I note that both the Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock and the Leader of the Official Opposition were present for this.

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today when I was asking about the new Crown corporation to handle infrastructure procurement by this provincial government, the Minister of Infrastructure made fun. You know, he wanted to know where I was coming from, so I rise here to table five copies of an excerpt from Canada's free trade agreement, which states, "Alberta gives notice of its intention to create a Crown corporation which will be responsible for all the infrastructure procurement . . ."

The Speaker: Hon. member, are you ready . . .

Mr. Panda: Yeah, I'm ready to table this.

The Speaker: Let's move it along. Let's move it along, please.
The Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table a copy of a letter from the Alberta Crown Attorneys' Association which does indicate a 36 per cent increase in charges in Wetaskiwin court as well as more than 2,100 charges that were not concluded in the last year.

Thank you.

Mr. Schneider: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to submit the requisite number of copies of an NDP-written document called Your Land, Your Rights, that talks about land rights for landowners in Alberta. I referred to it in a speech I made last week on Bill 204, the private member's property rights bill.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour today to rise and table the requisite five copies of a letter I wrote to the hon. Government House Leader on March 9, where I quote the Premier when she was in opposition. She said, "Really, quite frankly, you know, we've had lots of conversation about how this government has been using Public Affairs Bureau money to essentially engage in pre-election campaigning." This is a great letter I wrote to the minister that I hope he will read very carefully.

Orders of the Day

The Speaker: The House leader for the Official Opposition.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to seek unanimous consent to waive Standing Order 8 in order to proceed immediately to debate on Bill 202, Protecting Victims of Non-consensual Distribution of Intimate Images Act.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

The Chair: I'd like to call the Committee of the Whole to order.

Bill 202
Protecting Victims of Non-consensual
Distribution of Intimate Images Act

The Chair: Are there any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Madam Chair. It gives me great pleasure today to move into the Committee of the Whole on Bill 202, Protecting Victims of Non-consensual Distribution of Intimate Images Act. As the sponsor of this bill it is with great pride that I'm able to say that through co-operation from all parties, I've been able to get this bill to the point where we can actually start to improve the bill through adding amendments at this step here.

I will say that when it comes to the co-operation the government has shown in this, I need to ensure that they understand that while it is important that we are all working together, it is also important that we are trying to improve legislation. I will say they have done their part, and I would like to thank them.

This bill is an important piece of legislation which falls in line with the good work of the federal Conservatives, who made it illegal to distribute the intimate images of individuals.

3:20

My bill seeks to accomplish three important issues. First, it creates the tort law for victims of this egregious crime to seek reparations from a person distributing this issue without their consent. Second, it ensures that for anyone seeking to use intimate images of others without their consent for the purpose of making a profit, all financial gains can be returned to the victim. Third, it gives the principal of the school district discretionary power to recommend further punishments for a student who has chosen to distribute the images of their peers.

Last week we heard about the extradition of a gentleman, a Dutch citizen, who has lost his appeal against extradition to Canada for his role in the cyberbullying case of 15 year-old Amanda Todd, who took her own life, tragically, in October of 2012. Amanda Todd committed suicide at her home in Port Coquitlam, B.C. Prior to her death Todd posted a heart-wrenching video on YouTube in which she told her story of being blackmailed into exposing her breasts via webcam and of being bullied and physically assaulted.

It is my hope that this will never happen again and that we can protect our children from future predators. When I think about my own girls at home, I think about how they may fall victim to these predators. It is important that all parents talk honestly about this topic with their children. With the advent of new technology there is a permanence to what they do online, and actions made in a moment could last forever. It is my hope that this government will take this a step further by providing educational components about the dangers of online predators for our students and everyday Albertans. The Internet and new technologies provide us with new ways to connect with each other, but we need to remind Albertans that privacy isn't just a thing of the past. These are real consequences for respecting this fact, and this bill cements that into law.

Madam Chair, I would like to move an amendment to my bill, and I'll wait until the copies are distributed. I'd like to keep a copy if that's fine.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: This will be amendment A1.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you.

The Chair: Go ahead, hon. member.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Madam Chair. Mr. Cyr to move that Bill 202, Protecting Victims of Non-consensual Distribution of Intimate Images Act, be amended in section 7 by renumbering it as section 7(1) and by adding the following after subsection (1):

(2) In awarding damages in an action for the distribution of an intimate image without consent, the court must not have regard to any order made under subsection (1)(b).

Signed by myself today.

Madam Chair, this will amend section 7 to prohibit the court from reducing damages when a defendant has been required to account for the profits accrued as a result of the distribution of an image. In effect, this will mean that any damages must be awarded in addition to returning any profits to the victim rather than collapsing these two categories together.

With that being said, I urge all members to support this bill, I urge all members to support this amendment, and I'd like to take again the time to tell the NDP government – they had a concern forwarded to my office. This is correcting an error that had been found, and I want to thank the NDP government for asking me to move this amendment.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Any members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Edmonton-South West.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am very happy to speak to this amendment. I'm going to be happy to speak to the bill later on in committee. I think that the member opposite has done a lot of very good work on this bill. I think he's been very forthcoming and open to working with other members in this Assembly. I think that this amendment in particular does speak to that. I think that what the member said already about this amendment is very important.

I do want to touch a bit on how this amendment does indeed help victims and it does indeed help provide that closure moving forward because as we do see from this amendment, it encompasses a broader range of effects that you might become victim to. It encompasses a broader range of things that you might feel and experience and be affected by moving forward. Without this amendment and without this section a court would look at Alberta's legislation and try to determine why Alberta did not include this provision moving forward, and a likely result would be that the courts could interpret that Alberta's legislation was not keeping those items separate.

It brings us in line with some other provinces such as Manitoba, where we see the Intimate Image Protection Act, which has this section. Under Manitoba's legislation, for example, a victim would be able to recover for things like job loss or suffering or reputational damage. Someone having shared their image without consent as well as anyone being able to take profits, that person who shared their image would no longer be able to keep those profits. This would allow the recovering of those profits and any other damages such as for job losses or reputational damage.

I'm happy to see that the member has taken those considerations into account. I'm happy to see that these types of damages are going to be brought in line here in Alberta as in other jurisdictions. I think that that's something where we are able to ensure that victims are properly compensated and have all of those grounds covered, not just in one aspect but in aspects financially, emotionally, and whatever it may be, that we can close the door on all these types of things moving forward. It's only fair that when you breach someone's trust in such an intimate way, when you break somebody's most sacred and most internal being in such a way, you should not have an opportunity to reduce your own costs by profiting off that breach of trust. You shouldn't have the

opportunity to be able to further your own interests and not be able to be punished for that.

I do want to thank the member for accepting the suggestion to bring forward this amendment. I do want to thank the member for the co-operation brought forward on this amendment and this bill overall, Madam Chair. I'm happy to be able to support this amendment.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Madam Chair. This is a very reasonable amendment, and I'd like to applaud not only the member but, you know, also the government in co-operating on a very, very important bill. This is one of those bills and amendments that transcend beyond party lines. This is about certainly doing what is right for victims, and I just want to commend not only the hon. member but also the government for listening and co-operating reasonably in order to come to a positive outcome, hopefully, in the conclusion of not only Committee of the Whole but, hopefully, third reading as well. I certainly want to stand up again and continue to support this amendment and this bill.

Thank you, Madam Chair, for your time.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A1?

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[Motion on amendment A1 carried]

The Chair: We're back on the main bill.

Any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Hawkwood.

Connolly: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Just to start, I actually wanted to talk a little bit about when I was in my first year of university. Actually, it was 2012, that was exactly when Amanda Todd's case was coming out, and I remember not debating it but discussing it in our classroom and how passionate people were because in our time as youth we have all known people who've given out or sent intimate images of themselves and others. Since I was in high school was when camera phones really started getting going, so that's when we started to see more and more of these things come forward and more and more issues. Even when I was in junior high – although I didn't even have a phone in junior high, a lot of my peers did, and I remember it starting even then.

The problem is that it's not usually some random person online. A lot of the times it's someone that you're even dating. Sometimes there's a really hard breakup, and then they decide to send that out to whomever. Or it's a friend of a friend, and the intimate partner has shown it to that person, and they decide to send it to all their friends.

3:30

It's very hard to keep track of these photos, and people need to know that there are consequences to their actions. However, when you trust someone with an intimate photo, there's a sense of hope, and you assume that they're not going to break that trust. You have a trust with them, and they're not to break that. However, sometimes that does happen, so people need to make sure that if they are sending intimate photos, they are careful of exactly where they go.

I actually have an amendment to Bill 202 to strengthen the bill, I believe. Just to explain a little bit, it changes only a couple of small things. I'll wait till you have a copy, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Go ahead.

Connolly: Perfect. Member Connolly to move that Bill 202, Protecting Victims of Non-consensual Distribution of Intimate Images Act, be amended by striking out section 5 and substituting the following:

5 In an action for the distribution of an intimate image without consent, a person depicted in the image does not lose the expectation of privacy in respect of the image if that person

- (a) consented to another person recording the images, or
- (b) provided the image to another person,

in circumstances where that other person knew or ought reasonably to have known that a person depicted in the image did not consent to the further distribution of the image.

To start with, the first change, in the first sentence, is from "the person" to "a person." In a lot of intimate photos there can be more than one person depicted in that photo, so it's making sure that it's not just the one person that's distributing the photo that's in charge of it – they should be – but it's to make sure that the other people in that photo, whether it be one other person or more, are also protected under this law.

The second part that it changes is the end. A lot of the times with our new dating apps they'll save one photo, and you can send that photo to a number of different people. If somebody decides to take an intimate photo and send it to one person or multiple people, then they should still be covered under the law to make sure that that person then does not have the right to distribute that one image to other people. So person A can send it to person B, but person B does not have the right to send it to persons C, D, E, and F. That's what this amendment is supposed to do.

Actually, the idea for the amendment was brought to me by a friend named Joshua Shaw, who actually brought my attention to the problem via Instagram. It really shows that not only are our images more important now than ever, but we can find on apps where people are looking at legislation and making changes as well, not just through Twitter or Facebook but through venues that are meant more for fun and are less policy driven. I'm really glad that he was able to bring this to my attention because, quite honestly, I didn't see a problem with it before I viewed it.

I'm glad to be able to put this amendment forward. I've been able to speak with the opposition and the member who brought forward this bill, and I believe that we have some sort of agreement that it does strengthen the bill for future generations. I really hope that all members of the Assembly will support this amendment.

The Chair: Just a reminder, hon. members, that the custom of the House is that we do not use names even when reading from an amendment. I encourage you to always use the constituency name instead.

On amendment A2, the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to support the amendment and to thank the hon. member for putting it forward. It's a thoughtful improvement to the legislation. I think it covers some ground where the legislation, without it, would have been noticed and would have had to have been corrected later, so better to correct it right at the front.

Further, thank you to the hon. member for taking the trouble to speak with the sponsor of the bill to get on the same page. That will make all this go better. I think this amendment improves a bill that is timely, important, and I'm sure it will make a lot of difference to a lot of Albertans in the future. I have every intention of supporting this amendment.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A2? The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Well, thank you. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to amendment A2. You know, one of the things that I think we have seen in the House, particularly on Mondays, is a real desire to work together to ensure that we get legislation that is the best possible piece of legislation. I think we saw that in previous sessions with the Member for Calgary-Bow, we've seen that on a number of occasions around private members' business, and I think that's what we're seeing here today. I know that my hon. colleague from Bonnyville-Cold Lake would like to speak to this particular amendment as well.

I think it's a thoughtful amendment. I think that in consultation with Albertans we've seen a possible gap in the legislation, so we're closing that gap. I think that whenever we pass legislation, it's important that we try to get it as complete as possible, first past the post. That's not always going to be the case. You know, the very need for this type of legislation didn't exist a few years ago, so as technology changes, it's possible that legislation will also need to change. It's really important that we close as many gaps as possible, and this really is about the best idea winning. I think that we have that opportunity here this afternoon, certainly, on amendment A2. I intend to support it, and I encourage all members of the Assembly to do so as well.

The Chair: Any other speakers to amendment A2? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Madam Chair. I've had foreknowledge of this amendment coming forward, and I'd like to thank the Member for Calgary-Hawkwood for giving me a bit of a heads-up, if you will, on this amendment moving forward. Whenever you hear – and we'll go to the start of it – that you're going to be striking a section out of your bill, you obviously have some concerns coming up, but again it's just a part of the parliamentary procedure here. By him moving this forward, we're able to discuss it and really get an understanding of what he is trying to accomplish with this. I have to commend him for finding a gap that was within the bill and correcting that gap. That's what we're here for: to strengthen legislation, work together, and make the best possible law within Alberta.

Now, I have to say that when it comes to the expectation of privacy, it just makes sense that you would want to make sure that groups of people would be included in that expectation of privacy, not just singular photos. The fact that the Member for Calgary-Hawkwood was able to reach out to stakeholders in his own constituency on a bill that I'm presenting here is showing advocacy, and I have to say thank you to that member. It's something that we should all be doing whenever we've got a bill. Now, I do know that we go through these bills fairly quickly in the House and that we don't always have that opportunity, but with the private members' bills it does seem like we're able to have a little bit more time. The fact that we were able to have a lot of people putting a lot of effort into trying to strengthen this is something that I think everybody in this Legislature should always aspire to, the best possible legislation.

I will be supporting this amendment, and I would hope that everybody in the House would support this amendment. I again thank the Member for Calgary-Hawkwood for putting this forward.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

3:40

The Chair: I'll recognize Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wanted to echo some of the comments that have been made by the hon. members. That expectation of privacy: it's exactly right. You have that expectation. You automatically think that when you are sharing something with

somebody, that is as far as that's going to go. The fact that you were able to reach in and find some other spaces where that may not have been the common denominator: this is excellent. I just quickly wanted to say thank you so much for strengthening this legislation for our children and people and for anybody who may be impacted by this horrible invasion of privacy.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Hawkwood on amendment A2.

Connolly: Thank you very much. I'd like to thank all members of the opposition for accepting the legislation. I haven't heard from the other two parties. However, I'd like to thank both the main opposition parties for accepting the amendment. It is very important. I do hear from a lot of people, whether it be in my riding or around the province, that privacy is a large issue for them. I know a lot of apps like Grindr and Tinder and Hornet. There are, like, 16 different dating apps now.

An Hon. Member: Name them.

Connolly: I can't. Those are the only three I can name off the top of my head. I don't use them anymore. I have a partner now. So there you go. [interjection] Yeah. It's been one year now, so that's been very nice.

Anyway, beyond that, I hear from a lot of stakeholders that it is an issue for them. Sometimes they go on these apps, and from what I've heard, they send an intimate photo to someone else, and then another person sends the exact same photo back to them, saying: look what I found. Now with this amendment and with this bill, thanks to the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake, that will be illegal. It will be in law that you cannot go around and share intimate photos of somebody else with the rest of the world.

From what I hear, it's very scary, and it can be rather humiliating seeing these photos of yourself being posted, whether it be online or that a friend saw an intimate photo of you. It can be very disturbing. And like what we've seen with the cases such as Amanda Todd and others around the country and even around the world, such violence – well, I wouldn't say violence, but sometimes it can feel like violence – can lead to suicide and depression, and it really becomes a cycle.

I just read an article recently where somebody has been fighting for years. They would google videos of themselves posted online and would then e-mail these websites and say: "Take this down. This is my photo. Please get rid of it." She would do that every single day. An ex had taken an intimate video and decided to post it online, and then that video was online forever. People have it saved on their computers and can send it out to any number of websites and are able to take money from that because of those images.

I really thank the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake for coming forward with this very important bill, and I really hope that this amendment will be able to strengthen this bill. Thanks.

The Chair: Edmonton-South West on amendment A2.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's the wonderful constituency of Edmonton-South West.

I do want to thank the Member for Calgary-Hawkwood for bringing this amendment forward. I think it's something that's so important. I do want to point out that I think he can actually name more dating apps than I can. That's something that's probably quite commendable as well.

This amendment is something that I find very important. When I read it, I had one thought: this should already be implicit. This isn't something we should have to put down in words. This is something that every single Albertan should already know. But with that comes the idea that it's something that not every Albertan does know. It's something that not every single person implicitly does understand, and that's why we are making it explicit. That's why I'm so happy that every single party in this House has said that they are willing to support it.

I think it's something that does strengthen this legislation. I think it's something that does make it stronger, does ensure that if you are on one of those dating apps, if you are on your Snapchat, if you are on your Facebook Messenger or whatever it is, if you're going out there and having consensual communications with other people, if you're going out there and enjoying yourself however you would like, you should be able to expect that you are safe. You should be able to expect that what you did is safe and what you do is safe, and you shouldn't have to be concerned that there is some loophole that because once you consented, that consent is going to be in perpetuity.

We know consent doesn't work that way, Madam Chair. We know that that isn't how we work with consent, but this makes that explicit. This sets that into writing and says to us that we know what is right and what is wrong and if you choose to break someone's trust in the future, well, that is wrong and that is something that we cannot let you do.

Madam Chair, I think that this amendment strengthens the bill moving forward. I think that it creates something that all parties and all members of this House can be proud of as we move forward and will help protect people and will help protect our children as we move forward. I'm so happy to be able to rise and support my colleague from Calgary-Hawkwood. I'm so happy to support this amendment, and I look forward to seeing it pass and help move this bill forward.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any other hon. members wishing to speak to amendment A2? The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to thank the hon. member for bringing forward this amendment as well as the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake for the initial bill, too.

You know, touching on a few themes that kind of went out there, the Member for Calgary-Hawkwood alluded to victims who used to google themselves, and it really reflected back to something that we used to see in the workforce when we were hiring people and when we would do vetting, when we would do reference checks. There's a new reference check that has been established in the last 20 years, and that's us googling the employees that we're seeking to hire. I'm sure that even within political vetting some of us are probably familiar with political parties that will google members before they even move forward through the process to see if there are any issues.

This leads to revictimization. It leads to a situation where an employer can find an individual online and find unfortunate and compromising images about this individual, and it can lead to a situation where there is a small facet, a very small group of individual employers, who might have malicious intents who will hire these employees because of these things that are occurring, and it can lead to further abuse. I think that this amendment that's been brought forth here by the Member for Calgary-Hawkwood will allow us to strengthen and remove some of these opportunities that will happen as well.

You know, being born in 1986, I unfortunately am tied in with or have been told that I am a millennial. Some of the things that I've gotten to see growing up as a millennial is that technology has evolved, and it's evolved at a rapid rate. I remember that when I was entering the workforce, it was around the same time that camera phones became something, and that was really neat. How cool. I could take a really pixelated photo of my dog and bring my phone to work and show everyone my dog.

I didn't think twice about it being used for bad purposes until one time when I was at work. As an 18-year-old, to date myself again, there was an individual who actually took a compromising photo of his girlfriend at the time, and he was showing it around at the workplace. It was a very intimate photo that she was not aware that we were seeing, and I remember speaking up and telling him that this was inappropriate. But at the time the only means to share it, because data plans weren't as good and social media hadn't caught on, was for him to bring it into the workplace and share that. I felt that that was extraordinarily invasive, and it was only 10 people seeing this.

Now billions of people can have access to these invasive images. It's very unfortunate, and it's very inappropriate. With that being said, I think anything that we can do to avoid these things from occurring, any way that we can reinforce and strengthen this bill that's been brought forward, anything that we can do to make sure that this occurs is very important.

I want to thank all members who've really done their due diligence, really read this bill thoroughly, and the member who's done a lot of research to really look into this very important issue. That's why I'll be supporting this amendment.

The Chair: Any further speakers to amendment A2?

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A2 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:50 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Fitzpatrick	Nixon
Anderson, W.	Goehring	Piquette
Babcock	Hinkley	Pitt
Carson	Horne	Rosendahl
Clark	Jansen	Schneider
Connolly	Kazim	Schreiner
Coolahan	Kleinsteuber	Shepherd
Cortes-Vargas	Littlewood	Sucha
Cyr	Luff	Sweet
Dang	Malkinson	Turner
Drever	McIver	Westhead
Ellis	McKitrick	Woollard
Fildebrandt	Miller	Yao
Totals:	For – 39	Against – 0

[Motion on amendment A2 carried]

The Chair: We're back on the main bill. Any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm delighted to speak about this bill, and once again I really wanted to thank the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake for bringing this bill forward and for his acceptance of the amendment from the Member for Calgary-Hawkwood. Unlike the two previous members who've spoken, I'm from an older generation, but I do have two sons who are of the age of the Member for Calgary-Hawkwood, so this whole issue of images that may have been taken against their consent, images that may make their way onto the Internet and through various social apps, is one that has really preoccupied me as a mother because I just know how easy it is for these images to be used in ways that are either meant to dishonour the person or sometimes just – as a lot of young people do, they enjoy joking or enjoy teasing each other. I was very, very concerned about this.

Fortunately, one of my sons is a teacher. During his schooling in university they were told about the challenges if teachers do post things or are involved in any social media activity that discredits their role as teachers. Having talked a lot to my son, whom I'm hoping members will get to meet because he's coming back from teaching overseas this year – we've had many conversations about how careful he is in using social media and that he goes overboard in terms of protecting any images of himself that could be construed to be offensive to the role of teachers. But as we all know, those things happen, and I'm so glad that the member has thought to protect young people. Also, I think that the bill is really a cautionary bill for all of us, especially for young adults who, even though they're above the age of 18, may not really understand how they need to continue to protect their own images.

4:10

The other thing I wanted to mention in the House is that this bill also clearly gives victims some path for them to seek compensation and some path for them to feel that their victimization has been heard. I think that as we pass this bill and as we discuss it, we really need to remember the victims. As we mentioned in this House before, in Canada we have had a number of young persons who've been victims. I'm assuming that there are probably hundreds more who have been victimized by the inappropriate distribution of intimate images but that we don't know about because they've never gone to the police, have never gone to an adult or to others to let them know.

As I am going to vote for this bill, I'm going to remember not only the past victims, but also I'm going to really think about how this bill is going to prevent the victimization of other young persons in the future because it's going to be a caution to everyone to ensure that they do not get involved in any activities that inappropriately distribute intimate images of anyone that they know. I think that's really important, too.

Madam Chair, I am so delighted that the member has worked with all members of this House on this bill, and I'm also very delighted that as an Assembly we've recognized the importance of protecting victims from this kind of behaviour. I'm really looking forward to the enactment of this bill if the House decides to vote in favour and to how any kind of public media, any kind of communication is going to ensure that it's made very clear to people that this kind of sharing of inappropriate images is going to result in some serious punishments and some serious consequences.

I want to thank the member once again, and I'm looking forward to the House voting in favour of this bill. Thank you.

The Chair: I'll recognize Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Madam Chair. First of all, I would like to thank my friend the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake and all of

the members that have contributed to this bill. There's been so much great work that's been done in the House. It's very, very heartening.

I fully support this bill. I think it adds a critical component to online safety for all Albertans. This bill allows someone to sue a person who oversteps personal boundaries by publishing private pictures, and the bill will establish provincial tort law to allow the individual to sue another one who distributes intimate images without consent. The tort law provides compensation for people who've been injured or whose property has been damaged by the wrongdoing of others. This goes anywhere. It's a vast area of private law that has evolved into technology and social issues and has been used by a growing number of victims of crime to help them seek justice against perpetrators. It's also been at the centre of recent high-profile Canadian cases involving the abuse of children, the liability of governments for failing to protect citizens from contagious diseases and from defective medical devices.

The focus here with the tort law is that it will support both the federal and other provincial laws that address cyberbullying and in general the distribution of pictures without consent. The penalty under Bill 202 brings home some of the reality of the impact of publishing pictures without consent, and there will be fines attached. The victim could seek damages for harm done.

The School Act will also be amended by adding a clause which will allow teachers and principals the discretion to suspend a student and seek various forms of punishment. The school trustees still retain the authority to hear appeals from the student and their parents.

Of high importance for me – and the Member for Calgary-Hawkwood had also mentioned this. He was speaking about how the removal of these images is very, very difficult. So Bill C-31 at the federal level amended the Criminal Code to provide for a new offence of nonconsensual distribution of intimate images, which includes “complementary amendments to authorize the removal of such images from the Internet,” but as we know, that is still very, very difficult to accomplish, and also “the forfeiture of property used in the commission of the offence.” As you can imagine, as these pictures are published and sent out into the world, it is very, very difficult to find out where they've gone and to actually have that property returned. Well, not even returned to the person but removed so that it can't be used over and over again. It's a very important part of this legislation.

If we're teaching our youth early on about the consequences of this, we'll have a much better opportunity to make sure that at the monetary level they're hit in the pocketbook initially but will also understand the consequences should a person be able to google their name and see that this horrible piece of their personal life is still distributed across the Internet. We have to make sure that that stuff comes down.

Bill 202 is also consistent with recent legislation passed in Manitoba, which I think was brought up by one of the other hon. members. Just to be clear about that, the Intimate Image Protection Act created new tort law to address nonconsensual distribution of intimate images. This will allow a person whose intimate image was distributed without consent to sue the person who distributed the image. The Manitoba law also includes provisions similar to the federal law in that it requires the government to make supports available to assist people who have an intimate image distributed without consent.

Very, very importantly, especially with regard to what I had just mentioned previously, is that there are people who may even believe that their image is about to be distributed. That's also very important. With the instantaneous outreach of Snapchat and the various other apps that were mentioned, that I have, truthfully, no clue about, this is instant – instant – information that's put out there.

So if a person is concerned that their image may be put out there, that is a very, very important aspect of this legislation as well. This is highly proactive and allows a potential victim to head off potentially damaging situations. Assistance under the Manitoba legislation can include having an image removed from the Internet as well as information on some of the legal remedies and protection for persons concerned about the distribution of this intimate image.

What this legislation does is that it brings the focus to a new form of victimization that is no longer localized. I say “new” because it’s newer to me. Other generations it’s not so new to, but for those of us who are just wading into this with our own children and with the complexity of this, it’s really, really important that we understand that this information can go viral and can go universal in nanoseconds and can follow a victim around the world for the rest of their lives.

Can you imagine that for a young person in a developing part of their life, to have this image follow them for the rest of their lives no matter what they do? If an employer is looking up things about them, this might be a central facet of what is to learn about them in this area. So it’s one of the more important pieces of this legislation. Of course, to again mention the tragic consequences we’ve seen through digital victimization, we have people committing suicide, and we continue to mourn with their family and friends.

The other thing, Madam Chair, is that our laws have to keep pace with our world, and Bill 202 provides all Albertans with a way of seeking restitution that will hit the victimizer in the wallet. If we can start there, there’s ample opportunity to fix the other things that follow.

Madam Chair, the bill is about protecting victims, people who are having face-to-face consequences of having intimate pictures of themselves shared across the Internet. The Internet is a 24-hour ability to bully somebody, 24 hours and no safe spaces ever. I’m hoping to see that the consequences of this legislation are discussed amongst Albertans at home, around the water cooler, while you’re shopping, whenever people have conversations, that people will talk about this and have discussions about what constitutes acceptable behaviour in today’s digital world. I’m hoping that shining a spotlight on digital victimization will spark conversations to destigmatize being a victim of digital exploitation.

4:20

We all have the right to expect that what we do in private remains private unless and until we give specific permission to share. When private actions are shared without consent or knowledge, as we have seen with Amanda Todd and Rehtaeh Parsons, the consequences can be absolutely tragic. My hope is that this bill will raise awareness of the pervasiveness of the dangers of cyberbullying by actually describing specific actions that are offences under the law.

Again I’d like to thank my friend from Bonnyville-Cold Lake and the other members who have provided amendments to this legislation to strengthen it so that we can provide mechanisms of restitution to victims.

Thank you.

The Chair: I’ll recognize Calgary-North West, followed by Calgary-Elbow.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Madam Chair. This is a bill that feels very close to my heart. When I was associate minister of family and community safety, I had an opportunity to go to Vancouver and meet with Carol Todd, Amanda’s mom, as she was going through the period before they found out who the suspect was at the time in Amanda’s case. I was just out in Vancouver a week and a half ago

and went for lunch with Carol. We’ve had many opportunities over the last number of years, as we’ve become good friends, to talk about what happened with Amanda, to talk about what we need to see in this country in terms of legislation, and to talk about kids and what kids go through.

You know, as the mom of a 16-, almost 17-year-old now, for those of us in the Chamber who have kids somewhere in that age group, if you’re anything like me, your kids are much smarter than you and not always interested in taking your advice. So when it comes to warnings that we have about who you’re chatting with on the Internet, often our kids will say, “Oh, my God, mom; I think I would know if I was speaking to a 40-year-old man,” except that it’s not always that easy. Our kids think they know all these things, but we need to make sure that we have these additional protections in there because, as we saw in the case with Amanda, she didn’t know who she was talking to. She assumed it was a young person. Therein lies the danger of the Internet, something that my generation didn’t have to deal with. [interjection] Exactly. My generation certainly didn’t have to deal with this.

I look at, you know, what they have to deal with now, and it’s not just the propensity of cyberbullying that happens within their own peer group that can happen in schools; it is the fact that these sorts of things then have no global boundaries. So you have no idea if someone chatting with your 16-year-old daughter is another 16-year-old girl or boy or a 50-year-old-man who lives halfway across the world. We have to really think – and I like this piece of legislation because I think it encourages us to really spend time and think about what kids face when they’re on the Internet today.

You know, if there’s one thing that I feel grateful about, it was the opportunity in my former position to speak with a lot of people who had experience in this area, who talked about the effects it had on their families and how important it was that governments listen to the families who have gone through this and understand that when we take the time to make sure we have these added protections for our children, we make our kids safer and we make our communities safer and we give parents peace of mind in knowing that this is on the books and is something there to help.

It’s also a piece that encourages us to sit down and have a conversation with our kids and to talk to them once again, even though sometimes they get very tired of having the conversation, to layer in the conversation about where they spend their time on social media and the choices they make and how those choices can end up being very scary. You know, when I look at this, I applaud this, and I applaud the member for bringing this forward.

If it does anything to spur a new conversation for those of us who are parents and our kids – and some of us are parents who have kids that aren’t quite at that point where this is becoming a discussion, but certainly it’s going to be a discussion for a lot of folks in here maybe in the distant future or the not-so-distant future. I hope that it gives these parents a better understanding of what’s happening out there on social media and the risks their children could face in the future and do face right now and that they will use that opportunity to sit down and have that conversation with their kids. Maybe the conversation at a younger age is as simple as: remember that the people that you talk to on social media aren’t necessarily who you think. Then as they get a little older, layer into that conversation not only about making sure that you make good choices but also about knowing that you have rights yourself. Whether you’re 10 years old or you’re 15 years old or you’re 18 years old, you have rights yourself.

I want to thank the member for this. I will certainly be supporting his bill and hope as well that it encourages a new level of conversation between parents and their kids about what’s happening out there on social media. Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow, followed by Calgary-Shaw.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and thank you to the Member for Calgary-North West for sharing her comments. Thank you in particular to the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake for bringing this forward and to the Member for Calgary-Hawkwood and others for bringing forward your amendments and sharing your stories.

It's been nice to be here this afternoon as we work together as legislators across party lines, within and between different caucuses, working together for something that's very important and something that's bigger than any one of us or any of our partisan differences. It would be nice if we were able to do this a little more often, actually. I think this Assembly would work a little better, and I think Albertans would think more highly of the political process. It's nice that we're able to do that today, and let's hope it will continue for a long time to come.

Just this past weekend my daughter celebrated her 13th birthday. She celebrated with a few friends and celebrated with her first electronic device, that she now can take to school and text, I'm guessing, 3,000 or 4,000 times a day with her friends. That's just the way of the world these days. That's just the way it is. We've talked a lot in the months leading up to her birthday and her getting this new device about what is appropriate and what is not appropriate.

Now, I have a great deal of faith in my daughter. I think she, luckily, takes after her mother and is a very, very sensible young woman. She's incredibly bright, and I couldn't be more proud of her. I could spend the rest of my 10 minutes here just talking about my daughter. She might not like it, but I think she really is a remarkable person. I don't worry that she might make bad choices because she is a sensible young woman, but things happen. Things happen that are beyond the control of individuals. Certainly, things happen in school, and I'm not so naive as to think that someone in my own family might not make a poor choice at one point.

What if some things happen that are beyond your control? We all carry our phones. We all have these cameras on our phones. You know, what if images are taken that are not consensual? What if images are taken without the knowledge of the person who's in the image? Now, we know that's illegal. There is federal legislation that says that that's illegal, but what are the consequences for the people who would not only take intimate images but distribute those images without consent? That is what this bill seeks to address and why I'm such an enthusiastic supporter of this bill because it allows for civil action to be taken against someone who has distributed intimate images.

The amendments that have been brought have covered off some of the potential gaps in the legislation, and I think it's a very positive thing that we've been able to work together to do that. It also allows for school principals and others in the education system to bring consequences upon anyone who is in the school system who would distribute intimate images. I think that brings some real consequence to what is a very, very difficult thing to properly police.

4:30

I hope this bill gets sufficient media coverage, that we get sufficient coverage on social media in particular so that people know about it, so that people will think twice before they would do such a thing as sharing intimate images in spite, as a way of getting back at someone, for profit or personal gain or even just as a joke, thinking it might be sort of funny to get this out there. As we've heard in some of the stories here from other hon. members, once an

image is out there – the Internet is forever – it is almost impossible to get rid of it. The only way to really, truly avoid these images being shared around is by not having them online in the first place. So knowing that there's a consequence should you do that, I think, is a very, very important way of ensuring that people maintain control over their own images and that we don't end up in these very difficult situations where people are bullied, where images are shared without consent, and people will no longer have to fear suffering the consequences. Unfortunately, some of the benefits that modern technology has brought have also brought some substantial risks and downsides and negatives.

With that, I'll again thank the hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake for bringing this important bill forward and will enthusiastically support it at all stages of the bill. I encourage all of my hon. colleagues to do the same.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Calgary-Shaw.

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Madam Chair. You know, I want to reflect back, first, to kind of how we got to this bill here and to thank the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake, who brought forth this bill. From the roots of it, how I sort of see why this came about, and something that I can deeply understand is that, like myself, he's a father. As much as he and I may disagree on certain principles in this House, I can acknowledge that from what I've seen, he's a great father. I reflect back to when we were in ethics and accountability and he brought his daughter in and she watched him from the gallery last summer, just kind of that bond that he likes to have with her. So I can kind of reflect back to that.

It kind of reminded me of this weekend. Actually, on Saturday I was thinking of taking my kids to Nanton because, you know, my kids have seen a lot of work the government has been doing in promoting rural Alberta, and they've seen a lot of the promotions there, so I was going to take them down to Nanton and visit the candy store and see some of the tea shops. But I found out about a sort of meeting we were going to have at the Women's Centre of Calgary to talk about Bill 2 with a lot of stakeholders. I felt it important to go, so I actually brought my kids with me. My daughter got extraordinarily shy when we were there, and she wrapped her arms around my neck – she's about two and a half – and she wouldn't let me go because she knew I would keep her safe. Now, having a nine-year-old now, I know those moments don't last forever, and it's going to be harder to keep our kids a bit more safe because they're experiencing the world, and we need to allow them the opportunity to make mistakes.

Which brings me back to, you know, where we are at with technology and alluding to the fact of the millennial, which I've talked about before. You know, I love technology. I love the fact that I can go onto the WWE Network and watch any pay-per-view for just \$9.99. I enjoy the fact that I can listen to any songs I want to on Apple Music or watch Netflix and see any movie that I really want to. I can go online and search about Ukrainian history here in Alberta if I want to, and I can use my smart phone to do all these things. But the unfortunate thing around that smart phone is that as much as it's a tool, it's almost a weapon.

You know, I reflect back to when Alfred Nobel invented dynamite. He did it for the right reason. He did it because glycerine was highly volatile and people were dying transporting this material, that was used for mining, so he invented dynamite because it was more secure and people wouldn't die. In return, unfortunately, people started using it as a weapon, even though it was something that was invented for good.

As government it's our duty to ensure that we move forward with reasonable legislation that allows us to protect the citizens and our youth that are in this province. Unfortunately, technology can be used for things like voyeurism, revenge porn, nudes leaks that happen. There was a high-profile one recently with, you know, the iCloud leak. There was another high-profile one, that's been all over the news media, which was when former professional wrestler Hulk Hogan had a leak that was leaked on Gawker. Actually, some of the legislation that was in place in the United States allowed him to sue Gawker, and he actually won. So that lawsuit has finished, and I think he was able to get a big settlement and was able to get all of that information taken down, which shows that while he's still a victim of those leaks, he's able to start the healing process.

We've already said that, you know, here in Canada we've seen the high-profile case of Amanda Todd. It hurt a lot of us when we heard about this because we all think about how that could be our child or someone we love, and this led to new legislation that we saw from the federal government, moving forward to protect from these online crimes that were happening as well.

Moving forward, looking at this legislation allows us to have five main things which create a tort, or grounds for civil lawsuit, which is something that I alluded to earlier. That allows people to redeem themselves over the situation because, you know, as I've talked about, a lot of employers now are doing online searches of individuals before they hire. So I could understand that a person could have trouble seeking a new career if there was a leak, even if it happened 10 or 15 years ago, and they're a qualified professional but can't find a job because their name gets Google searched. You know, if you Google search my name, you're going to find out everything about me because mine is a pretty uncommon name.

You know, it creates broad powers to award remedies related to distribution of these images. It allows parents the power to take civil action if their children are under 18. It's important to recognize that these parents can have that opportunity to really try to protect that child long term because, as I've alluded to, there are going to be challenges for that individual in potentially seeking employment. It will allow the courts to issue bans on identifying information as well, and it will allow them to try to really pull back on some of the information that's been released online that can be very damaging to that individual.

Furthermore, it allows schools and school boards to have some disciplinary measures because a lot of these mistakes, unfortunately, happen with a lot of youth. Sometimes there are situations where someone has made a mistake and has shared this information, and the person who has shared that explicit photo doesn't fully comprehend the impact that it's had.

While our work is not done with this legislation – there's important work that we need to do educating youth and educating our kids about this – I think this is a very important step that we're taking, and I want to thank all members of this House who have contributed to it as well.

The Chair: Any other questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to rise to speak to Bill 202, put forward by the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake. I want to thank him for bringing this bill forward as well as the Member for Calgary-Hawkwood for his helpful addition to the bill.

Today is one of those sometimes too rare days where we actually manage to find agreement among all parties and work fruitfully for the people of Alberta. We seem to have had a few of those lately, and it certainly is a pleasant change in tone from the usual

combativeness of this place that we all love so much. This bill is the kind of thing that Albertans want to see as a concrete step forward for protecting people, in particular young people, who are most likely to fall victim to the nonconsensual sharing of intimate images.

This bill will create a tort, giving people the power to sue and seek compensation when intimate images are taken of them and are shared, normally online, without their consent. A lot of people have stood here and raised their own experiences as mothers and fathers as reasons for wanting to support this bill, and as someone who has recently joined the club, I can appreciate more than ever where they're coming from.

4:40

You know, I'm the youngest member on the opposition side of the House, which makes me significantly older still than the youngest member on the government side of the House, but our generation, those of us in our early 30s, grew up with lots of opportunities to get into trouble where cameras were more readily available than any generation before us. Younger people today are in a whole other category when it comes to the availability of cameras and the ease with which images can be distributed online now. I can only imagine the trouble that members of this House would be in if we had easily accessible cameras on us 24 hours a day as kids and the ability to redistribute images. We can just imagine that one day there'll probably be a President of the United States who has very embarrassing photos of parties and drinking while they were in college. In fact, we may have already had those.

The hon. government whip actually spoke very well to this at an early stage of the debate, where it was not the exact kind of case, you know, but where he perhaps imbibed a bit much as a teenager and found himself the object of hurtful hilarity. I think many people can sympathize with that and how hurtful that was on a smaller level. But a video like that taken in our generation: as hurtful as that might be, it's not on the Internet.

As the hon. leader of the party stated, what happens on the Internet stays on the Internet. When young people get into trouble either consensually or nonconsensually with these kinds of things today, it lasts forever. When people put this kind of thing online – we colloquially refer to it as revenge porn – for whatever reasons they have, it's not a temporary laugh at someone's expense. It is deeply hurtful and stays with them forever and can seriously affect what they do going forward. You can just imagine that if a young girl was fearing that this was out there, she might be much less willing to take big risks in life and do something like run for public office knowing that someone could take those images and use them against her. So she might not reach her full potential in life.

We need to create the strongest disincentives possible against exactly this kind of action. You know, once something is posted online like that, there are ways to try to get it taken down, but the process is long and expensive and arduous and never truly and fully complete, and the damage is done. We have to build our laws in such a way as to prevent this from happening in the first place.

I'm so pleased to see that members of the government, the Official Opposition, the third party, and the two independent members are in unanimous agreement about this bill. In fact, we've had a friendly amendment from the Member for Calgary-Hawkwood which I think improves it. We're going to make sure that those who share these images and distribute them are also subject to penalties in addition to those who post them originally.

So I won't belabour the point too much. Members on all sides have spoken adequately to this bill. I want to thank the Member for

Bonnyville-Cold Lake for bringing it forward and all members for supporting it.

The Chair: Any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill?

Ms Fitzpatrick: Madam Chair, I stand in support of this bill. How could I not? I'll begin by thanking the member, first of all, for having the conversation with your daughter and then for putting the bill forward.

As the member is aware, in my previous career I worked in the field of corrections for over 30 years, and this was a topic of conversation with a number of my colleagues on a number of occasions. We discussed how easily it could happen and how devastating it would be to the person being victimized. We discussed the difficulty previously of knowing that these images were being shared without consent and recognized that now it's a little easier to track and find out that they're happening, because I come from that older generation.

Now I'll share a little story about my childhood and how one perceives things. This is a good story but shows how easily young people can get caught up with the stories of others. I think often about myself as a child. I grew up in a family that had many members, all of whom had what Newfoundlanders call the gift of the gab. All of my uncles were renowned storytellers. I remember several of my uncles coming from away to visit the family back in Newfoundland. When they visited, there was always a conversation around the kitchen table, which went on for hours. It really was a kitchen table party. We as children were absolutely hanging on every word of the stories that were being told. Bed was out of the question because even if we were sent to bed, we would very quietly arrive back on the stair to listen to the rest of the story.

I realized, as I grew older, that each uncle tried to out-storytell his brothers. We were certainly entertained, but having said that, I realize that the stories were certainly embellished. There was always an element of truth in the story, but it was stretched to the very limit to make a more interesting story.

I've led with this story because, as I learned through my own life experiences, whether we meet others in person or online, the story that is told is most often accepted as truthful. We expect others to act as we would act. I've also learned that, in fact, many others do not act in this way. As an adult, if I could be taken in by a story that was shared with me, leading me to trust another person, then how much more easily are children and younger adults taken in?

Once taken in, it is but a short step to sharing intimate things, whether that is about your feelings, intimate details about your life, or perhaps pictures. At first those pictures may be just a picture of you and the dog, but eventually the sharing may move to more intimate pictures or pictures or videos taken without one's knowledge. Sharing something, especially something intimate, would be with an expectation of privacy. You would not even think of asking that it not be shared because that's your expectation, that if you're sharing something private, it will remain private.

However, if it is shared, your privacy is breached. You have been violated even if you're not aware of it. Now, with the advent of the technology we have available at our fingertips, this violation becomes public very quickly. The level of damage which is done through the commission of this offence is unfathomable. If you are an adult and this happens to you, how do you feel? When you are e-mailing or Facebooking with a friend, is it your friend, or has your account been hacked?

4:50

I would suspect that you are reasonably careful about what you say or share on any electronic device. My grandson is about the same age as the Member for Calgary-Hawkwood. Perhaps he is sick of me harping on him to be careful about what he says, receives, or shares on social media. Like the Member for Calgary-North West, all I can do is share with him my cautions. I have shared the stories of other persons who have been drawn into this quagmire of violation.

The question for me is always: why would somebody do this? However, they do. Certainly, one can take action when you find out this is happening. Punitive consequences are one response. Any monetary gain by the perpetrator must be removed, and it should be used for the plaintiff. One may never heal from such a violation as the images remain in the Ethernet forever.

I absolutely applaud the member for bringing this forward, and I certainly support it with all my heart. Thank you.

The Chair: Any other questions, comments, or amendments on this bill?

Seeing none, you're ready for the question?

Hon. Members: Question.

[The remaining clauses of Bill 202 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

Mr. Westhead: Thank you. I move that the committee rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Mr. Rosendahl: Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports the following bill with some amendments: Bill 202. 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?

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

Written Questions

[The Acting Clerk read the following written questions, which had been accepted]

Urban Indigenous People

Q1. Mr. Hanson:

What progress has been made on the research project on service delivery models and best practices to urban indigenous people who are transitioning to urban centres, as referenced on page 17 of the Ministry of Indigenous Relations annual report 2015-16?

Urban Transition Strategy

- Q2. Mr. Hanson:
What progress has been made on the development of an urban transition strategy, as referenced on page 17 of the Ministry of Indigenous Relations annual report 2015-16?

Highway Resurfacing

- Q7. Mr. van Dijken:
As of March 1, 2017, what is the cost to resurface one kilometre of highway with gravel at both 11-metre and 13-metre widths?

Highway Resurfacing

- Q8. Mr. van Dijken:
As of March 1, 2017, what is the cost to resurface one kilometre of highway with asphalt at both 11-metre and 13-metre widths?

Alberta Innovates

- Q9. Mr. Panda:
How many new businesses have been created or financed by Alberta Innovates, Alberta Innovates: Bio Solutions, Alberta Innovates: Health Solutions, Alberta Innovates: Energy and Environment Solutions, and Alberta Innovates: Technology Solutions in each fiscal year from 2014-15 to 2016-17?

Alberta Innovates

- Q10. Mr. Panda:
Was any technology commercialized by Alberta Innovates, Alberta Innovates: Bio Solutions, Alberta Innovates: Health Solutions, Alberta Innovates: Energy and Environment Solutions, and Alberta Innovates: Technology Solutions in each fiscal year from 2014-15 to 2016-17, and if so, what revenue was generated for each product?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to seek unanimous consent to call it 5 o'clock and proceed immediately to Motion 504 on the Order Paper, notwithstanding the order as set out by the draw provided for in Standing Order 41(1), and that Motion 503 be called for consideration on the next available Monday.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Motions Other than Government Motions

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

School Nutrition Programs

504. Ms Miller moved:
Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to consider expanding the number of communities that are served by school nutrition programs.

Ms Miller: Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to rise today and speak to a concern that families in my constituency and Alberta have, access to nutritious food for their children. I would also like to thank the hon. Minister of Education for his announcement last week regarding the expansion of Alberta's school nutrition program for the 2017-18 school year. The additional investment of \$10 million for this program is yet another

example of our government's commitment to improving the lives of Alberta families and children. We are all aware that Alberta's economy has been in a difficult position, and this side of the House is keenly aware of the effect this is having on Albertans. Let me be clear. The previous government's failure to diversify our economy after 44 years in government is adding pressure to Albertans' pocketbooks. That's exactly why investments in programs such as expanding Alberta's school nutrition program are so vital.

Back in the early '90s, when my children were in school, was when I first observed the large number of children coming to school with little or no lunch. I was part of a nutrition committee for 120 kindergarten students. Our budget was 12 and a half cents a day per child to provide a small snack. The problem was that about a third of the children were relying on that snack to substitute for both breakfast and lunch. Through generous donations from the community we were able to provide a substantial meal for the children.

During this same period my six-year-old daughter came home from school one day quite upset. She asked me if it was okay to tell a white lie. I asked her to explain, and she told me that one of her friends had brought the same carrot for lunch and didn't eat it. She said that the carrot was black. My daughter asked if it was okay to take extra lunch every day and share with this girl. She said that the girl was embarrassed when she was sent to the office to get a sandwich. My daughter wanted to tell a white lie. She wanted to tell her friend that she would be in trouble if she didn't eat all her food and that her friend should help her. The next day and every day that my kids were in school, they all took double lunches to share with other students.

That's why this motion is important. It is my goal that every community and school in the province have access to this program because on this side of the House, Madam Speaker, we are ensuring that life is more affordable for everyone. On this side of the House we are making practical changes that are making life better for Albertans. The opposition would cut \$9 billion out of the budget, meaning that vital programs like this would be on the chopping block along with increases in school fees and larger classrooms. That is why I'm standing here today. I am advocating on behalf of all my constituents who have reached out to me and have shared their concern with me to ensure that all children who are unable to receive healthy, nutritious foods have access to them.

5:00

I was pleased when the pilot program was introduced not only because it addressed another campaign promise our government had made but because the pilot program was potentially the start of a larger framework. As I've seen the program roll out, I am confident in supporting not only the recent announcement but in urging the government to continue measuring its progress, successes, and challenges so that this program becomes accessible to all children and families who need it, because on this side we want to make life better for Albertans.

Madam Speaker, let me tell you why I'm confident in supporting the school nutrition program and why I want the government to consider continued expansion. Numerous studies have shown the link between students having access to nutritious food and their success. We have a duty as members of this Legislature to ensure that our children have the tools they need to ensure success. Given that the first year of this program is expected to see approximately 520,000 breakfasts, 530,000 lunches, and 490,000 snacks for students, I am confident that many families and children who need the support are receiving it.

As I mentioned, with the expansion to the remaining 46 schools our government is fulfilling a campaign promise. Not only are

children receiving food that is improving their outcomes, but many families are learning about nutritious foods that they can prepare easily and cheaply at home. I am pleased to see that this aspect has been incorporated into Alberta's school nutrition program because establishing strong health promotion and healthy dietary habits is vital to promoting long-term health for families and communities.

This is why this program, which follows the Alberta nutrition guidelines for children and youth, is so important. It ensures that the food students receive is the right food for their growing bodies and minds. We are holding schools accountable by having school boards demonstrate that their program follows the Alberta nutrition guidelines to ensure effectiveness and protection of public dollars.

We are aware that Albertans are resilient and hard-working, so by providing families with information on nutritious foods, families are becoming empowered. Participating school authorities are required to include a nutrition education component as part of their program. The fact is that when parents are involved in nutrition programs, it has a lasting effect on children, so we need to ensure parents also have the tools to support their children by engaging in healthy eating.

We have already seen examples of children and youth empowerment because of this program. For example, the culinary arts students at J.A. Williams high school prepare and deliver lunches for the Vera M. Welsh elementary school in Lac La Biche, which means students are earning credits, gaining valuable work experience, and learning about healthy eating habits.

Our government is making life better, even in a tough economy, and ensuring programs like Alberta's school nutrition program remain vibrant. As the hon. Premier stated last week, we know students can't focus in class if they have an empty stomach. Giving students access to a daily nutritious meal not only ensures they have the fuel they need to get through the school day; it also helps develop the skills that ensure lifelong healthy nutrition. That's how we are working to make life better for Alberta families.

While the opposition doesn't share our priorities and almost always opposes policies that will make life better for Albertans, I encourage them and all members of this Legislature to support this motion and ensure all children in Alberta have access to nutritious, healthy foods.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member for Red Deer-South, could I just confirm that you are moving this motion?

Ms Miller: Yes. I am moving this motion.

The Deputy Speaker: Motion 504, correct?

Ms Miller: Yes.

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

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I rise to speak in favour of the motion. I will be interested to hear what my hon. colleagues from the Official Opposition have to say as well. It would surprise me very much if there's a member of this Assembly that doesn't support expanding the number of communities served by school nutrition programs. It is something, I think, that is essential and fundamental.

You know, we're here on private members' day to talk about private members' business. We've just come from, I think, a very productive discussion about Bill 202, very cohesive, from the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake, and I think that we agree as members that together, irrespective of which side of the House we

sit on, which party we represent, we are going to work together to do things that are important for Albertans.

While I do absolutely support this motion, I would say that I am disappointed in the partisan tone that the member took, repeatedly taking shots at the Official Opposition and those of us on this side, repeatedly parroting the government's catchphrase for this particular budget cycle. I think that that really doesn't serve the public interest in terms of what we're trying to achieve here. It takes away from the important issue of school nutrition.

While I support the principle behind this motion – and I will vote in favour of it – my question is: is the government's path the only possible path to follow to achieve the outcomes? Is the government's sole job to build community? I think and I would argue that government typically doesn't do a great job in building community itself. I think it can create some of the structures to allow that to happen, but ultimately it's about community, and it's about the people in the community that make it happen.

Let me just get to first principles here, and that is that I think it is remarkable the impact that going to school hungry has on the ability of students to learn, which exacerbates and furthers a cycle of poverty, which means certain groups of students do not learn as well as others and therefore find themselves, as they become adults, in a situation where they do not have the educational tools that they need to succeed, to break that cycle of poverty.

School nutrition is really, really important in ensuring that every kid in this province has the equality of opportunity, has a chance for a great life. That's why I believe in public education. I think a high-quality public education system allows for that equality of opportunity, not equality of result, necessarily. Ultimately, everybody needs to carve their own path, and you ought to be rewarded for your own honest efforts, but that's the whole idea behind the social contract that I think we represent here in this Assembly, that everyone ought to have the same chance in life. Making sure that you don't go to school hungry, making sure that you have a great education system: that is our job.

But the question is: how? How do we go about doing this? When the government comes in with a plan that's \$10 million for pilot projects, which works out to, as I understand it, roughly \$250,000 per school per year, when you have organizations like Brown Bagging for Calgary's Kids – they provide 3,200 meals a day across 205 schools in Calgary and area. Using the metric of \$250,000 per school, if we were to multiply that by 205 schools served by Brown Bagging, that would be \$51 million per year. Brown Bagging for Calgary's Kids serves 3,200 students a day in 205 schools, and they do that for \$1.3 million, one-fiftieth, literally, of the cost that this program would take.

Now, that isn't to say that there's no place for a government-funded program. It isn't to say that there's no place for ensuring that gaps are filled. It isn't to say that the Brown Bagging model would work perfectly everywhere else in the province. But I think it's incumbent on government to understand that there are volunteers willing to step up to help their neighbours, to help their community. That is community building.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Organizations like Brown Bagging for Calgary's Kids – and there are others; I Can for Kids is another one that I know about in Calgary, and I'm sure that there are other organizations elsewhere in the province that follow a similar model – meet a need. They identify who needs help, and they provide that help. They don't create a need; they meet a need. They understand who needs that help, and they provide it, and they provide it in a way that engages further community members in solving a problem. There are

hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of volunteers for Brown Bagging who put together the lunch packages, there are school nutrition education programs – and that is highly, highly successful – and they do all of that without a dime of government support.

Now, there are cases – and I think this is one of them – where there's a role for the government to play in helping ensure that these sorts of programs are applied equally throughout the province. I applaud the government for going down the path of at least trying to address this issue.

5:10

There is a need to address this issue so long as what the government does actually addresses the problem and is focused on addressing the issue, not on furthering a particular world view on how things ought to work, not about just creating more jobs for government workers, not just about creating a larger footprint of government. You have organizations that work well in the not-for-profit sector relying on volunteer effort to help bring costs down and keep quality high. Those are models the government ought to be looking at. Be very, very careful about displacing with government services any of these sorts of models that exist because they're incredibly efficient, incredibly effective. They do tremendous work, and not only do they solve that problem of child hunger, but they build community. They build capacity in our community. They channel that natural, true Alberta instinct of helping our neighbours. They are remarkable people doing remarkable things in our community.

I will support this motion because I would be surprised if any member of this House would vote against a motion that resolves that the Assembly “urge the government to consider expanding the number of communities that are served by school nutrition programs.” That should be an imperative of this government and of any other. The question that is essential here is on how we go about doing that. My answer to that question is that it's not either/or. It is not just community and not just not-for-profit, and it is not just for government. It should be both.

There is a need for both, but I urge the government to be very careful in how you go about doing that, to not cause structures that are expensive and clumsy and bureaucratic that may not fully solve the problem when you have very, very efficient and highly effective organizations that are doing this work already in Alberta that have been created by hard-working, dedicated, thoughtful, community-minded people. Ask those people their opinion and their perspective. I hope the government has done that. If and when you are asking for the opinion and perspective of people who are already doing this work, I really hope you're listening to those folks because they're tremendous people, and they do great, great work.

I hope that we don't get bogged down in too much partisanship. That's part of this job that bothers me, that we get caught up in this stuff and the partisan side. I really urge the government to make sure that your focus is in the right place, that the focus is on building community and making sure that we're actually solving the problem in the most efficient and effective way possible.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms Luff: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I really want to start off by just thanking the Member for Red Deer-South for bringing this motion forward. I've had many conversations with her over the course of working with her, and I know that she's been a tireless advocate and volunteer. She's worked in schools, she has volunteered in schools over a very long time, and she has seen the effects of hunger on children personally. That story that she told in her speech was not

the only one that I've heard her tell. I know that she knows that this affects students personally every day, so I thank her for her work in putting this motion forward.

I wanted to speak to this motion because all three schools that are currently participating in the pilot in Calgary are in my riding. The three schools that are in my riding are Holy Family school, St. Peter school, and Marlborough elementary. I've had the opportunity to visit those schools and see the lunch program in action and see that it is really making a difference in the lives of students. I was speaking to one grade 6 class at Holy Family about government, and, you know, one of the things that the students brought up – it wasn't me – was, “Hey, isn't that lunch program that we are getting now part of something that you are doing?” and I was able to answer, “Yes, it is.”

I did have an opportunity just to shoot a quick e-mail off to the principal of one of those schools to ask him how it was going in preparation for this motion today, and he sent me back just a quick response. He said:

Things are going great . . . There have been minimal issues which have been easily resolved. We are holding a Family Cook Night on Tuesday so hopefully that will be a success. We continue to have a fantastic relationship with Meals on Wheels and their food is well-received by our students. By all accounts, the food is good, children are eating more nutritious meals at school, they are seeking fruits and veggies at home that they never had before, their behavior at school is more settled and focused. Everyone is happy! As we do our year-end assessments in the coming weeks, I am hopeful we will see big gains. I look forward to comparing the students' achievement from year to year.

Thanks for checking in.

That was from the principal of one of the schools. By all accounts it's going very well, and I hope to be able to drop by soon to see how it's going further.

I do just want to mention in this, prior to what the Member for Calgary-Elbow said, that many of the school nutrition programs are partnering with local nonprofits to be able to deliver the programs in an effective way. I know that in Calgary there have been lots of nonprofits who have been working with schools all along to be able to provide these kinds of services. When looking at the pilot program and looking at the most efficient way to do things through this extra spending and to be able to bring nutrition programs to more schools, many of the school programs have partnered with nonprofits such as Meals on Wheels, which is one of the partners in my riding. Really, these nutrition programs in my riding are part of what I consider and see to be a burgeoning interest in food and in food security and in healthy eating because people are recognizing that the more we eat healthy, the better outcomes we're going to have for everyone.

In my community I'm seeing more community gardens popping up. The Albert Park, Radisson Heights community has a community garden. It's a neighbourhood that has a high population of renters. A community garden is helping them to grow food and be more food secure in their neighbourhood.

The Alex Community Food Centre is a wonderful establishment in the Member for Calgary-Fort's riding that encourages healthy eating, healthy cooking. It teaches people to cook healthily. People can come and have community lunches on Wednesdays.

Also, the Mosaic primary care network recognizes that food security and nutrition is an issue in east Calgary. They have a lot of programs that help teach people to cook and eat healthily and have nutritionists on staff.

The school nutrition program is really a piece in a whole movement of food and food security and recognizing that people are better off when they're eating more healthily.

One other really important thing that I think the Member for Red Deer-South mentioned was the nutrition curriculum that comes along with this program. Part of the program is ensuring that kids are learning about healthy eating in addition to eating healthily. Now, I know as a teacher that for years we've had healthy food, nutrition programming in school. You know, you learn about the Canada food guide, and you learn what you're supposed to be eating every day, but to have lessons about healthy eating separated from actual healthy eating doesn't always balance out particularly well. The nutrition curriculum component is really important, but seeing the food happening and kids being able to eat and learn how to cook healthy foods and things like having a family cook night really work together to create the environment for students to be able to eat healthier in the long run.

I was a former junior high school teacher. The kids know what's healthy. Kids know. You can ask them. They know what they should be eating, but quite often they come back at lunchtime with, you know, a Slurpee, like, a very large Slurpee, and a bag of ketchup chips, and that's what they were planning to have for lunch. It's delicious, absolutely. But when you have to try and teach math after a bunch of 13-year-olds have just consumed that much sugar, it can be really problematic. Any teacher knows this. They know that the kind of nutrition kids have fundamentally affects how they're learning in class.

You know, I used to . . .

The Speaker: Hon. members, do you suppose we should continue to serve the sugar in the coffee shop back here before coming to the Legislature?

Ms Luff: Maybe that's the problem. Maybe we need to be consuming healthier beverages here at work.

Yeah. There's really a limited window of when kids learn well. I was always happy on days when I had PE first thing because kids would come in and we'd exercise for 45 minutes, and then I'd have two periods of math and science right after exercise, where kids were, like, really focused, and they learned really, really well. Then that same two periods of math and science that I had after lunch, after kids had spent 45 minutes drinking pop and other, you know, unhealthy things – the difference between the learning that the kids in the morning did and the kids in the afternoon did was profound.

I would like to just mention that I think moving this program – and when we expand it, expanding it into junior high schools and high schools to give kids a reason to stay at school over the lunch break, to eat a healthy meal. It might encourage them to eat more healthily, and also they will be able to learn better after lunch. You know, just from personal experience I think that's important.

5:20

Also, I really appreciated that the focus of this pilot was on areas of high socioeconomic need. We really do have an amazing public school system in Alberta, and it educates all of our children in an incredible fashion, in an excellent fashion, but it's absolutely no secret that some schools deal with more difficult circumstances than others. There are schools with high ESL populations, schools with higher populations of students on IPPs. There are schools in my riding that don't have parent fundraising societies, that aren't able to provide those extras that so many schools have. We also know that there are schools where higher proportions of students are hungry, schools where the lunch that a student gets at school might be the only healthy and nutritionally balanced meal that they get all day.

It's no secret to me the inequalities between schools have very little to do with curriculum, they have very little to do with teacher

quality, but they have a lot to do with student poverty. It has a lot to do with issues that arise from poverty, and this is the main reason why every year when the Fraser Institute comes out with its school ranking report, it drives me absolutely crazy. I have to explain all of the things that they don't include in that report when they're ranking schools.

It's also the reason why this government is committed to addressing root inequalities that lead to a cycle of poverty. The school nutrition program is one in a series of things that we're doing to try and address root causes of poverty. We have created the Alberta child tax benefit. We're raising minimum wage. We're freezing university tuition. We're piloting affordable quality child care, which I'm also getting in my riding, which I am also excited about. And, yes, we are also providing school lunch. These things in concert are things that really help to lift children out of poverty and help to improve their outcomes.

Numerous studies link quality nutrition to the ability to learn because if you're hungry and if you don't have the right vitamins, you can't learn. Many differences in outcomes for kids are linked to poverty, and when you address poverty, you improve outcomes because the truth of the matter is that social issues affect economic issues, and a thing like a nutritious lunch can make all of the difference. In concert with all of the other initiatives that I mentioned, school lunch can make a big difference.

So I'm absolutely in support of this motion to expand the school nutrition program. I've seen how it's working in schools in my riding, and I anticipate that schools all across the province will begin to see the benefits from this. We are working in concert with nonprofits that were already providing this service to be able to do it in the most efficient manner. If it helps kids to learn, it's going to improve their outcomes. It's going to lead to a better future for all of us.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to read out the motion. "Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to consider expanding the number of communities that are served by school nutrition programs."

I, first of all, wanted to thank the Member for Red Deer-South for bringing this forward. Thank you very much. I'm honoured, of course, to rise and speak to Motion 504 regarding school nutrition programs. Just to be clear, there's a lot of misleading commentary with regard to feeding hungry children, and I'm pretty sure that I can speak on behalf of everybody in this Chamber that we understand the importance of ensuring that children are well fed. Let me be clear.

Many of us here are parents from all sorts of socioeconomic backgrounds. We all want the same things for our children and as parents the ability for our children to grow up healthy, safe, and overcome challenges, reach the potential that is inherently within them to do so. Research may suggest all these things; so does parenting. When children go to school with a full belly, they will obviously perform better, and this in turn will help them achieve in school and in life.

As an adult, even in this space working in this job for the last two years, I can't tell you how many times I've come into this Chamber hungry, right? That's not because somebody didn't give me the opportunity to eat. I just didn't find the time. I think I'm pretty much common sense. I could probably figure it out, to go and have an apple but just didn't do it, to my own detriment. Even with that, absolutely, the imperativeness of making sure that children

understand that they don't fall into the cycle of the things that I do to myself and my body – my own son is like that, too. We are the kind of people that once we get a project in our minds, we'll just go the entire day without even looking at food, let alone hydrating. These are life skills that are very important, that can be taught at a school level with regular intervention, with making sure food is there in between classes and, like you were saying to the member, not having pop necessarily versus other good choices. There are lots of things that we can do. But let me be clear. We are all in agreement here about that.

One of the things that's important when we talk about the role for the province in this issue is actually not only just talking about nutrition and about what it is that children need, but we need to also be part of the solution that empowers local school boards, as the hon. member had mentioned earlier. Now, local school boards already to a large degree – and kudos to them – explore various ways that children and youth may be helped, especially when it comes to nutrition. There are so many school boards that are already doing these kinds of things, and I would like to thank them and also the other community organizations that rally around families in all sorts of areas of socioeconomic distress.

For example, we've heard stories about the money being used to enable high school students to learn how to cook while at the same time providing nutritious meals to other children within the school system. Now, these programs are not necessarily about food and bellies. If I understand this correctly, the dollars that are going into this are to expand the number of communities that are served by a nutrition program, not necessarily putting food in bellies. So if that's what we're talking about, we have to make sure that communities, school boards, and everybody is involved to make sure that we rally around these kids. This is an excellent example of how we can use funds to meet several different needs, from ensuring that children who need a meal in the morning are fed and ensuring that the youth learn about these healthy choices and learn about becoming more self-sufficient by teaching them how to cook.

As far as I understand it, too, the money can also be used to fund partnerships with communities and organizations in order to best meet the needs of children. These partnerships that are involving the community are an inherent part of how we make sure nutrition programs are working and providing what it is that we're wanting to get into the school system.

One organization – I'm sorry to repeat it again, but I will for the sake of this amazing group that I have a great deal of admiration for – is the Brown Bagging for Calgary's Kids. They work in partnership with Calgary schools every day to make and deliver free healthy lunches to students who would otherwise go hungry. This is an excellent example of exactly what this motion should entail and should promote. That cost every single day is one dollar, one dollar per meal, and is supported by literally thousands of volunteers. When you have community buy-in into an area of need, where children need food, where it's absolutely necessary to make sure that those kids have food in their bellies, you will have a sustainable amount of people, community buy-in, involvement, and dollars to make sure that those kids aren't only getting fed this year but for 15 years down the road if that's what's necessary.

When the government works as a partner to support a community and to strengthen society, that's what makes Alberta better. Food in the bellies: this is what we're talking about, and there's no reason for government services to compete with the community services when collaboration, obviously, would mean best results. This would also further empower these organizations to meet the needs of the communities that they're so invested in and have knowledge of. By collaborating with the communities that are actually showing that they have this ability, you already have insight into communities and

what their needs are. This is an efficient use of dollars, an efficient use of manpower, and making sure that kids are getting fed.

There is such a great potential with this motion, Mr. Speaker, and I have some questions, like always. These revolve around the government's recent announcements last week. I think we just need some answers. For example, the 14 school boards that were part of the pilot were receiving \$250,000, but the remaining 46 school boards are going to get a reduced amount of \$141,000. Why is there this disparity of funds? Is this based on socioeconomic? Like, how was that decided? One school board may have more schools than another, so I'm very interested in understanding why there is a disparity in those funds. Obviously, a good meal will help our children in their studies.

I also have a question about whether or not the Ministry of Education is the right place to run this program. Would it be more feasible or even more efficient if the program ran out of, for example, Health or Children's Services? I'm just thinking out loud as to whether there is an opportunity to also look within other ministries to continue ideas on how this funding would work and be sustainable.

5:30

I also mentioned before – and I will reiterate this as many times as I can through this debate – the ability to collaborate in supporting community organizations and nonprofits, not work against them, to continue the good work that they're already doing on this issue.

Another question I have is: what mechanisms are in place to ensure the integrity of the program? The hon. member had mentioned that there is a humongous amount of oversight to make sure that the dollars are going to where the program is going. How are you ensuring the integrity of the program, and are you collecting data on metrics to make sure that these children are actually being helped out in the manner that we want to see them helped out?

Also, the studies and assessments that have been done and are being done to ensure that the assistance is being allocated where it's most needed: is that a priority of this program? As the other hon. member mentioned, these pilot programs were put into high areas of need. Is the idea to continue on with that process, or is there a larger mechanism that's going to come out as a result of this?

How do you look at incorporating parents into this program and ensuring that they also have tools and resources as well? The member was saying that children were coming into the school and having these nutritious meals and then going home and demanding that at home. Well, for a parent that may not be able to afford that, it is a tremendously difficult thing for a mom or a dad to potentially be able to say: I'm sorry; we can't afford that in our household. As we all know, there are many families out there that are struggling right now. Are you going to also incorporate into your programs making sure that parents are involved with that to make sure that this is a collaboration between children and parents so that children and parents also understand what they're able to do within the means that they have in place?

Mr. Speaker, I also wanted to reiterate what I said at the beginning. All of us here want what's best for our children. To say anything else is nothing less than divisive. We all care deeply about them not only just because they're our children, but this represents the future of our province. I mean, obviously, I support the consideration requested in this motion. I hope and trust that some of these questions that I raise today will be thoughtfully considered by the government should this motion be passed, and I hope that all hon. members here will be encouraged to also ask additional questions so that we have a truly robust conversation and that we can actually have a conversation. I'm saying this. If the government chooses to politicize this issue, ultimately that's the government's

prerogative and you can take responsibility for that, but I would hope that this motion is ultimately about the children and less about politics.

Thank you.

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

Drever: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank the Member for Red Deer-South for putting forward this motion. I'm so proud to be part of a government that is making life more affordable for Albertan families. By expanding the school nutrition program, our government is fulfilling another campaign promise and ensuring that children and families struggling to have access to nutritious food will have it.

I don't think that any child should have to go to school hungry because if you're hungry, it's hard to focus, and that would affect your grades and overall learning. As the Member for Red Deer-South has mentioned, there have been numerous studies that have shown the links between students having access to nutritious food and their success. We have a duty as legislators to make sure that the children of this province are healthy and are enjoying their educational experience.

I would like to talk about how this has helped my constituents in Calgary-Bow. Back in February I was happy to visit a school in my riding that was approved for the school nutrition program. The Member for Calgary-Hawkwood also joined me at Bowcroft elementary school to chat with the students and faculty about the benefits of this program. We sat down with the students and talked about how the food was not only delicious but also helped them stay focused.

There was one particular student that stood out to me, Trinity. She is a grade 5 student at Bowcroft, and she was telling me that she is very passionate about helping others in Bowness. Bowness is very community oriented. There are many volunteers that help with many different things. There is something going on every day in Bowness. One of the things that I love is that we have an annual Christmas dinner that feeds around 500 to 1,000 people, so it's quite impressive. Trinity actually saved up all her Christmas money that she got and donated it to the Bowness Community Association. I just thought that was amazing, and I just want to thank her again for her efforts on that.

You know, I think that not only is this nutrition program helping feed our students, but it's also teaching them life lessons. I think that seeing the government come through and help others and having volunteers come in and help feed students every day shows Trinity that it's important to help others, and I think that's why she did what she did.

I've also had conversations with Principal Rudy Stein about how this program has made a difference for the students at Bowcroft. She was telling me that there were many times where students would come to her office and ask if she had any food for them, and oftentimes teachers would have to buy food with money from their own pockets to make sure that students at least had something in their stomachs. She was extremely grateful for this program and thanked our government for putting this pilot program forward.

I would like to commend the principal for her actions to help students at Bowcroft stay healthy. They actually just put in 17 stationary bikes, or Spark bikes, with the intent of helping kids who are feeling restless or frustrated. Students have said that hopping on a stationary bike for about 10 minutes makes them feel calmer and helps them focus better on their studies. I think that maybe that's something we could try here in the Legislature. That aside, Bowcroft is actually the only school in Calgary that has tried this initiative, but I really hope that other schools will follow along.

I think it's safe to say that exercise and eating healthy helps children do better in school, and it also strengthens our communities. I'm just so proud to stand here and say that our government is making life better for all Albertans, even in tough economic times. Our government won't cut vital services like this one, unlike the opposition, that would have cut \$9 billion out of the budget. Not only would that have increased school fees; it also would have cut this program. I'm glad that our government has Albertans' backs.

I would like to again thank the Member for Red Deer-South for putting this very important motion forward, and I encourage everyone to vote for it.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Mrs. Schreiner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I would like to thank the Member for Red Deer-South for bringing forward Motion 504, urging the government to consider expanding the number of communities that are served by school nutrition programs.

Mr. Speaker, I was very happy that a school in my constituency of Red Deer-North, Fairview elementary, was a recipient of the school nutrition pilot program. I believe that the first provincially funded lunch in that school was served on December 12 of last year. I have been very fortunate to be able to visit the school over the lunch hour once a month since the program was first rolled out.

I have spoken with the principal and staff, who shared how pleased they are with the program. They talked about the difference in the children's lunch hour and their school day. Some of the students in this elementary school did not come to school with a lunch, and we all know that we cannot learn when our stomachs are hungry. Absenteeism numbers are now better, and the staff believe that the reason is directly because of the school nutrition program. They believe that some parents felt that they would get into trouble for sending their children to school without a lunch, so they kept their children home. Now that students are attending more days in school, grades are up. Mr. Speaker, it cannot get any better than that.

I have thoroughly enjoyed spending lunchtime with the students at Fairview school over the past few months. The students love the program. They love trying something that they have never been served before. Some of the students had never tried spaghetti or even celery. The program is teaching the students about the Canadian health food guide and the importance of healthy choices. Mr. Speaker, the children tell stories of going home and teaching their families about healthy and inexpensive choices. I polled the students and asked them what their favourite menu items are, and I was told: boiled eggs, green peppers, and, by far, smoothie days. All healthy choices, I might add.

5:40

Mr. Speaker, I couldn't be more proud to be part of a government that is making life more affordable for our province's families. As a government we have an obligation to ensure that children and families struggling to have access to nutritious food will have it.

Again I thank the member for bringing this motion forward, and I encourage all in the House today to vote in favour of this motion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

Cortes-Vargas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to get up to speak in support of the motion. As many members know, I was an educational assistant for many years. One of the jobs that I oversaw in a lot of the different schools that I worked with was nutrition.

That wasn't because it was mandated by the IPPs, which is part of the individualized support programs that you do for students with disabilities to make sure that their learning is there, but it was because the nutrition aspect prevented that educational work from being conducted. It usually looked like a behavioural outburst or something like that, in which case I knew that that child needed to be fed before we could even talk about being educated.

I know that a program like this, especially when it comes to expanding it to other communities, allows the parent groups and the involvement of community to really be about the enhancement of education for the needs of communities. Food is a basic need that everyone has, and we know that from Maslow's hierarchy of needs. We know that in order to make sure that everyone has opportunities and has equal access to those opportunities, we need to put those resources in place.

I know there are many organizations that help with the nutritional supports in schools. But in many cases and in many situations throughout my experience as an educational assistant it came down to creative solutions. It came down to sometimes funding it myself with teachers. It came down to recognizing that sometimes those students did have food from home, but sometimes it was mouldy, and sometimes they would hide it because they didn't want to eat it.

At the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, something like this is incredibly important. I think for communities that experience multiple, various pressures of marginalization from being immigrants, from being a person of colour, or for indigenous communities, there are a whole lot of reasons why it's important to make sure that the public school board system and the boards have the ability to address the local needs. Putting a program in and expanding the nutritional support program does that.

I've heard throughout the debate, you know, to not create in this a partisan issue. I think, from our perspective, that it's not about creating a partisan issue out of it. But the reality still exists that in the vacuum of information that we don't have as to what would not make the cutting block in the opposition's cuts, we don't understand what the priorities would be. I think that no one here would argue that everyone has good intentions, that the intention of feeding kids is important. But what does that beat out? And would it make the cut?

Those kinds of things require an actual perspective because protecting those services is what members like myself ran for, to protect those things. Because austerity budgets of the past have done exactly that. When budgets were cut, the operational funding for school boards was cut. When issues like these presented themselves, they had fewer resources to address the auxiliary needs of the students outside of the educational practices. So the principals were put in a very difficult spot where they recognized that, yes, that child can't eat, but at the same time it's not the responsibility of the school to feed them. They don't have the funding for that, so what can they do?

Then educational assistants, teachers, speech pathologists, all groups of people that could be focusing on supporting the educational needs of that child, are thinking about how to feed that child. It's not the best use of those funds for those specialized services whereas if we could find a program and put those things in place, that time can actually be best utilized by educating the child and making sure that when they're sitting in that classroom, they're not losing focus because of lack of food.

The thing is that programs like this require funds, and the commitment from the opposition to fund these programs is questionable. That is questionable because we don't have a shadow budget to look at. We don't have a firm commitment. We have a history from the past; even last week their position on GSAs

switched in the middle of the week. We have an opposition that continuously thinks of public services as, you know, inefficiencies. We don't know what's going to make the *Dragon's Den*, and I think it's of utmost importance to discuss those things in this House.

This is where these things need to be discussed because those are the political ramifications for the positions of austerity budgets. I think it is imperative for members of this House to respect that we have differences of opinions, but that doesn't make them wrong to express it. You might not want to hear it, but the members opposite still need to know the other side of the effects of your positions.

The Speaker: Hon. member, through the chair.

Cortes-Vargas: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker.

I think this program in a lot of ways speaks to the importance of expanding those nutritional supports throughout the province. I think it is of utmost importance. Making sure that we look at what programs are in place and what works efficiently is something that we have been committed to doing this entire time, making sure that those programs are supported through community initiatives but also recognizing that, likely, the communities that experience the issue of a high need for nutritional programs such as this also have a variety of other issues that they could work to support instead of the nutritional values.

They could make sure that – it's a group, I think, of some of the classrooms I work on where it was a high population of immigrant communities that were just getting adjusted and food was one of the problems, but if they didn't have to worry about that, they could really focus on increasing the supports for learning English in the classrooms. That could go incredibly further in making sure that there is enhancement to those things. By saying, you know, that it might not be the province's responsibility to do those things – we need to make sure that we work in partnership, absolutely, and we need to make sure that the programs we put in place are accountable to the people that they serve. We need to make sure that they are the best programs for that situation, but we also need to understand that the communities that will experience a high need for the nutritional supports that these programs would address would also be the ones that would have issues with fundraising in order to make those things possible.

There are absolutely exceptions, and there will always be exceptions to those rules. I forget the name, but we were at Ben Calf Robe in Edmonton. They actually have a fantastic nutritional program. They have a focus on local food, and they've partnered with different organizations, but just that was tremendously difficult to put in place, took hours and hours of parental work. They're also working on many different fronts to confront the experiences that are produced from the cycle of poverty.

At the end of the day, we need to recognize, in order to make sure that everyone has equal opportunity, that these programs are a vital solution to that. The thing is that we are making Albertans' lives better when we put these things in place. It's in the same light as the perspective of a budget that could look much different than this. Cuts to operational funding or cuts to programs like this could have a very negative effect on those very people. I think we're all very conscious of that within this Chamber, but I honestly think that it's hard to say, that from our perspective of listening to the opposition, their intention might be good, but we don't know what that would look like and to what limits that would go.

I think there are different ways of going around things. There are always ways to look for solutions, and we're always open to working together. I think we saw that earlier today as we worked through the first bill. I think it's important with issues like this, that are important to all of us, to make sure that we are looking for those

solutions and that we are clear as to what our positions are. I think that creates an atmosphere of stability for Albertans to know that this is an issue that is important to all of us and that everyone is committed to addressing it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

5:50

The Speaker: The House leader for the opposition.

Mr. Cooper: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to Motion 504, "that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to consider expanding the number of communities that are served by school nutrition programs." It's an absolute pleasure to rise and not only speak to Motion 504 but speak in favour of Motion 504.

Mr. Speaker, you know and I know and members of this Assembly know that we all have a role to play in ensuring that in a province like ours, with the abundant resources that we have, there should be no reason why there are children who are attending school who don't have access to the food that gives them the ability to learn and to function in such a capacity.

As we've heard today, there's no doubt that the government has a role to play in this, and there's no doubt that there are great programs that exist all across the province. It's my hope that in the projects that the government announces, we will see a partnering with those great programs that are happening all across the province. If there's one thing that I know for certain, Mr. Speaker, it's that a one-size-fits-all model isn't often the best to meet the needs of individual communities and individual schools.

As the government increases access to school nutrition programs – I met with the school division just during the constituency break, and I know that one of their concerns was that a program might come from Edmonton but not specifically address the needs in that school division. It's so critically important that as we move forward, we ensure that those who are on the ground, the best deliverers of those programs, are in fact delivering those programs.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 8(3) provides for up to five minutes for the sponsor of a motion to close debate. I would invite the hon. Member for Red Deer-South to close debate on Motion 504.

Ms Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to all members of the House for the debate here today. You know, I am proud to be part of a government that is making life more affordable for Alberta families. By expanding the school nutrition program, our government

is fulfilling yet another campaign promise. Our government's program not only ensures that children receive food that is critical to improving their education outcomes, but it also allows many families to learn about nutritious foods that they can prepare at home. By proposing this motion, my hope is that every community and school in the province will someday have access to this program so that all children and families in Alberta struggling to access nutritious food will have it.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that it is our job as elected representatives to make life more affordable for Albertans, and that is why I'm standing here today. I am advocating on behalf of constituents who have reached out to me and shared their stories to ensure that all children in the province have access to healthy, nutritious foods. As I have already stated, Mr. Speaker, evidence has shown a link between students having access to nutritious food and their success. I believe that it's our duty as members of this Legislature to ensure that our children have the tools they need to ensure success.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I encourage all members of this Legislature to support this motion and set the goal for ourselves to make sure that all children in Alberta have access to nutritious, healthy foods.

Thank you.

[Motion Other than Government Motion 504 carried]

The Speaker: The Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

Cortes-Vargas: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, seeing the progress today, I move that we call it 6 o'clock and come back tomorrow . . .

Mr. Cooper: At the appropriate time.

Cortes-Vargas: . . . at the appropriate time, 1:30. Sorry. It's estimates.

The Speaker: The legislative policy committees will convene this evening and tomorrow morning for consideration of the main estimates. This evening Families and Communities will consider the estimates for Health in the Rocky Mountain Room, and Alberta's Economic Future will consider the estimates for Economic Development and Trade in the Parkland Room. Tomorrow morning Alberta's Economic Future will consider the estimates for Labour in the Parkland Room, and Resource Stewardship will consider the estimates for Energy in the Rocky Mountain Room.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:56 p.m.]

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