



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, March 21, 2018

Day 8

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta
The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (NDP), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (UCP)
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (NDP)
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)
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Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (NDP)
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Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (UCP)
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (UCP)
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Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (UCP)
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Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (NDP),
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Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (NDP)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)
Vacant, Fort McMurray-Conklin
Vacant, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake

Party standings:

New Democratic: 54 United Conservative: 25 Alberta Party: 3 Alberta Liberal: 1 Progressive Conservative: 1 Independent: 1 Vacant: 2

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, March 21, 2018

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Let each of us reflect or pray, each in our own way. On this World Down Syndrome Day let us reflect on the amazing progress that has been achieved already in improving the lives of those who live with the syndrome every day. At the same time we have much work ahead of us in combating stigma and other issues that those same people – our friends, our neighbours, our loved ones – still face. Let our deliberations today aim to make their lives and indeed our community and province better than before.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you and through you the wonderful students of Wes Hosford elementary school. Today they are with their teachers, Dr. Ingrid Manchier, Ms Kristin Budney, Ms Tanya Landiak, Mrs. Jill Desmond, and Mr. Rich Henderson. I was really delighted to see that they actually also had a student teacher from the U of A with them. They are also here with their chaperones, Brendan Nimmon, Robyn Karch, Mrs. Vici McTavish, Mrs. Carrie Hohl, and Mrs. Vanessa Wilson. I would ask that everyone give them the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Peace River.

Ms Jabbour: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two school groups today that I'd like to introduce to you and through you. First of all, there are 15 students here from the Spruce View Mennonite school accompanied by their teachers, Mr. Stadel, Anita Martin, and Mr. Galen and Mr. Helbeat. If they could please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Ms Jabbour: The second one – and I should have mentioned that these are from Innisfail-Sylvan Lake. There are 30 students from the Spruce View school. They are accompanied by their teacher, Miss Michelle Long, student teacher Mr. Colby Reimer, and Helen Morgan, Shallen Sundsten, Brenda Murdoch, Mandy Betk, and Emma Spencer-Cook. If they could all rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Hon. members, are there any other school groups today?

Seeing and hearing none, the hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Mrs. Schreiner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all the members of the Assembly Morris Flewwelling and his wife, Hazel Flewwelling. Mr. Flewwelling served for many years as a Red Deer city councillor and later as mayor of Red Deer. He received the Alberta Order of Excellence in 2014 in recognition of his significant contributions to our community. Mr. Flewwelling is currently the

chair of the board of governors for Red Deer College. I will speak more about Red Deer College later today. I'd ask the Flewwellings to now rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two introductions today. First, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you Portia Clark, Gareth Hampshire, and their children Yasmin and Jarvis. They are seated in the public gallery, and I'd ask that they rise while I introduce them. Gareth and Portia have been fixtures with CBC Edmonton for many years. Portia was the host of CBC *Radio Active* while Gareth has shown a knack for finding unheard voices in his reporting. They are moving with their children to Halifax, where Portia began her career with CBC and where she'll cohost CBC Radio's *Information Morning*. Please join me in welcoming them to the Assembly and wishing them well on their next adventure in Nova Scotia.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, I do have a second introduction. It is an honour to introduce guests from the Weehelp Foundation, located in the constituency of Edmonton-Glenora, who are seated in the members' gallery. Weehelp collects items throughout the year and hosts pop-up kids shops each fall and spring at affordable prices, with all proceeds from the events donated to the Stollery Children's Hospital Foundation and other charities. Last year they donated over \$80,000. The next pop-up event takes place April 28. I'd ask that Andrea Peyton, the CEO and founder, along with volunteers Patrick and Taryn please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of our Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly my new constituency assistant Dan Thompson. Dan brings over a decade of hospitality experience to my office, which can be translated to the experience that my constituents receive every day. I'd ask that he please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to introduce a few guests today who work and study in the field of community health. Debbie Lynam is a social work student at MacEwan University, currently observing her placement at Friends of Medicare under the instruction of Sandra Azocar, their executive director, who also joins us today. Sam Akinsiku is a graduate of environmental public health from Concordia University and currently a student of community support work at NorQuest College. Alyssa Pretty is a recent graduate of the University of Alberta's women's and gender studies program. Earlier this year she took on the role of communications and administrator officer at Friends of Medicare. I thank my guests for the important work and advocacy they do, and I'd ask them now to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to introduce to you and to all members of the Assembly some of the happiest people in the city of Grande Prairie, the Grande Prairie College board of governors and senior leadership team. You know, I was in Grande Prairie a few weeks ago to announce that Grande Prairie Regional College is on the path to becoming a university. These people will be instrumental to the college's success as they complete the work to make that dream a reality. I'd ask the attendees to please rise as I say your name. We've got with us Natalia Reiman, board chair; Don Gnatiuk, future constituent of mine and current president; Blaine Badiuk, board member and president of the students' association. We also have board members Scott Roessler, Nan Bartlett, Jane Manning, Chantal Fontaine, Pattie Pavlov, Mary Ann Eckstrom, Lorne Radbourne, Laurie Nock, Gordon Pellerin, and members of the leadership team Susan Bansgrove, Angela Logan, Carmen Haakstad, Mark Evans, and Kazem Mashkournia. I'd ask the members of the Assembly to please give them a warm welcome.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Little Bow.

Mr. Schneider: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Ryan Smith, a friend of mine from sunny southern Alberta. He is a newly minted councillor at Vulcan county, my alma mater. He's in town attending the Rural Municipalities of Alberta convention over at the Shaw. This gentleman also served as my legacy Wildrose CA board chair. I'd ask Ryan to please rise and accept the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise today to introduce to you and through you two members from the diverse constituency of Drumheller-Stettler, the first being Mr. Nathan Horner and the second being Mr. Kyle Toporchak. They're two wonderful young gentlemen who are going to be taking over operations in rural Alberta, and my respect goes to them. Would they please receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Service Alberta and of Status of Women.

Ms McLean: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Esmahan Razavi, who is my new ministerial adviser for Status of Women. She is with us here today in the gallery. She is instrumental in women's rights in her own right. She cofounded Ask Her in Calgary. She's part of organizing the women's march and ran herself for municipal council. She's a great contribution to our ministry, and I look forward to working with her for a long time. If I can have her rise, please, to appropriately embarrass her, and I'd ask you all to give her the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

1:40

Members' Statements

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

Rural Crime

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. One of the biggest concerns for all Albertans lately is rural crime. That's why we as opposition as well as many Albertans were disappointed when this NDP government refused to hold a debate on the issue when we proposed it in the fall session. This continues to be a huge issue in rural Alberta, and it's getting worse as thieves become more and more brazen.

I'd like to talk to you about a recent incident in the Lac La Biche area that happened to Shawn and Bonnie McDonald. Mr. Speaker, you may remember them as I have spoken about them in the House before. They own Black Scorpion Contracting, which was one of the companies who, at their own expense, toured highways 881 and 63 during the Fort McMurray evacuation, providing gas and diesel and support to many of the evacuees. On March 14 in broad daylight and on camera, I might add, Shawn's truck was stolen from his yard. Just hours later the truck was found, but unfortunately the contents, including their son Sid's hockey equipment, were not recovered. Sid was scheduled to play in provincials in Rocky Mountain House the very next day.

One of Shawn's employees, Elson Walker, contacted Lac La Biche Sporting Goods owners Albert and Teri Moghrabi and told them about the situation. They immediately got Elson to pick up Sid from school, brought him to their shop, and completely outfitted him so that he could play in the provincials. This is what happens in our rural communities when things go wrong; we make them right. I wasn't surprised when I heard of the generosity and fast action of Albert and Teri. They care about their community, and this is why we need to continue to support our local businesses.

I do have a message for the thugs that continually harass our rural residents. You will not wear us down or break our community spirit. We'll do what it takes to change our justice system to make sure that these repeat offenders get put away where they belong.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

Mr. Coolahan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand today to recognize the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. The United Nations' 2018 theme is Promoting Tolerance, Inclusion, Unity and Respect for Diversity in the Context of Combating Racial Discrimination.

Yet racism, xenophobia, and intolerance are problems prevalent in all societies. News sources from around the world have been reporting increases in racially motivated hate crimes and a rise in organized hate groups. In Europe we've seen the rise of far-right movements protesting against immigrants and a march in Poland that was reported as one of the largest gatherings of far-right activists in Europe in recent years. In the United States we've seen right-wing racist groups become emboldened in numbers and in their actions.

And we are not immune from this right here, Mr. Speaker. In Canada last January we witnessed with horror the fatal shooting of six men in a Quebec mosque, and 17 children were left without fathers. In Alberta we have our own emboldened groups disseminating a public message of intolerance and division. In June of last year a group called the Worldwide Coalition Against Islam demonstrated in Calgary, and members of that same group showed up outside a Red Deer school in May to wave banners and spread misinformation.

Mr. Speaker, while we can take some comfort that in both of these cases Albertans stood firm and did not let the hate-mongers sway their commitment to their fellow humans, we must at the same time register some alarm that these events are happening in Alberta at all. Free speech is a cherished right; spreading hatred is not. We must be ever conscious of the difference between these two.

As a father of mixed race children who are beginning to ask tough questions, I tell them that we must be vigilant against those who use race and religion as political tools to sow division and hatred. We must be determined to continue the work of eliminating racial discrimination forever.

Entrepreneurship

Mr. Gotfried: Mr. Speaker, we live in an amazing province. Alberta, the province where I was born, the province I love, is blessed with an enviable abundance of natural resources. From flowing pastures and forests to fertile agricultural land and majestic scenery, from rich mineral deposits to the hidden bounty of Earth's energy, oil and gas, we have been handed an opportunity to not only do well but to do good.

I've seen Albertans' unique and indomitable spirit, which hearkens back to our pioneer roots: strong, determined, resilient, compassionate. That is who we are. But I also see another kind of spirit: smart, innovative, ambitious, risk takers. Yes, an entrepreneurial spirit, which I often refer to as agripreneurial, in honour of the strong foundations built by agrarian pioneers, a spirit not driven by government intervention nor policy but through determination, the quest for a better life, health, and education for family and community and the compassion and generosity which naturally comes from so many of those blessed to create abundance and wealth through their focus, determination, and hard work. That is the spirit of Alberta which I love. In my lifetime I have seen this spirit in action, creating endless opportunity, facing adversity with optimism and resolve, pulling together to seek – no, seize – our place in the global village in which we live, developing our rich resources in a responsible manner which benefits ourselves, our neighbours, our fellow Canadians, and our planet. That is who we are.

But today, Mr. Speaker, we face new challenges and, sadly, a new form of abundance, driven by ideology and the policies that follow it, in our political realm, the abundance of crippling debt, the burden of overtaxation, the shackles of overreaching regulation, which threaten our spirit and our way of life. I do not take this challenge, this threat to opportunity and the prosperity of future generations lightly and, to that end, will stand steadfast today and in the days ahead against a tax on the spirit of Alberta, which I hold so close to my heart.

Thank you.

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

Red Deer College Degree-granting Status

Mrs. Schreiner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On March 1 the people of Red Deer and central Alberta were thrilled to hear that Red Deer College was being given the opportunity to become a university. Red Deer College has been providing comprehensive educational programming to central Alberta for over 50 years. The college plays a critical role in the city of Red Deer and in central Alberta. University status for Red Deer College will provide our students with the opportunity to reap the rewards of higher education. It empowers students to attain their educational goals and fuels our economy with the knowledge and skills attained by the students.

Mr. Speaker, this announcement means more than just better educational opportunities. This announcement means that students will not have to uproot their lives to pursue their educational aspirations. It also means that they can pursue those dreams with less cost by being able to study close to home. In conjunction with the present tuition freeze, our government is making life much better for Albertans.

Degree granting provides greater options and opportunity for students all over Alberta. A greater variety of educational programs enhances options and places Red Deer in a strong position to embrace economic growth. Alberta's third-largest city will gain a competitive advantage with a highly educated population.

Mr. Speaker, Red Deer College also has the ability to draw athletic talent from across Canada. Further investment in the state-of-the-art Gary W. Harris Canada Games Centre will support programming with in-class and practicum experiences. It will also serve the health and well-being of the students and citizens of Red Deer alike.

I'd like to thank the Premier and the Minister of Advanced Education for sharing March 1 with myself and the Member for Red Deer-South. It was an important day for Red Deer, and we will continue to grow and embrace the vision of a strong and proud Alberta.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Rural Crime Prevention

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to set a few things straight about the crime epidemic that has been plaguing rural communities across the province for the better part of two years. For two years my United Conservative colleagues and I have been warning this government about the escalating crisis, and for two years the NDP have brushed these warnings off as fearmongering. Last fall we welcomed more than a hundred victims to this gallery, who looked on as this government refused an emergency debate on the dramatic escalation of crime rates in the communities.

Finally, the Justice minister announced funding to begin to address the issue a few weeks ago, including funding 39 new RCMP officers. On the surface this is welcome news, but what the minister has failed to acknowledge is that there is a national shortage of RCMP officers and that the wait for reinforcements will take years. Nonetheless, she continues to give countless rural Albertans false hope. These officers are not coming, Mr. Speaker, not today, not tomorrow, not next week or next month. We'll be lucky if we see them on the ground in our communities within two years. If the minister intends to shuffle officers to her crime units from existing detachments, I fear that that will make things even worse for our already understaffed detachments.

We've also got a very serious issue with the revolving door in our justice system, that allows offenders to be arrested, convicted, and then immediately released, free to rob the same people again. This is an issue the recent NDP announcement does not address. For this government to sit back and pretend like they have solved the problem is misleading and shameful. The Albertans who have been victimized over and over again deserve more than disingenuous lip service. The people in my constituency who have been robbed and victimized repeatedly, often by the same people, deserve more than cheap talk from a minister who can't even be bothered to take the time to meet with them.

It's clear to everyone but the NDP, Mr. Speaker, that when it comes to rural crime, this NDP government has absolutely no idea what they are doing.

1:50

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Provincial Response to Pipeline Opposition

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. About a month ago the NDP government in Victoria announced another delay tactic to try to stop Trans Mountain pipeline, a reference to the courts. They still haven't come forward with the question, and it means yet more uncertainty. That is exactly their goal. This Premier responded by surrendering, by ending the B.C. wine boycott. In Victoria their response was yet more regulations, yet more uncertainty. My question to the Premier is: does she regret having surrendered in the face of yet more delay tactics by her NDP friends in B.C.?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for that question. Of course, I would characterize the history somewhat differently. Our government worked very hard to get the federal government to approve this pipeline, and we are working very hard to make sure it gets built. When we saw a change in tactic from the B.C. government in January, with point 5, we reacted very quickly, very strategically, very effectively, and we said: pull point 5, or the wine ban stays. They pulled point 5. We stood up for Albertans, and we will not stop standing up for Albertans.

Mr. Kenney: The problem is, Mr. Speaker, yet more delays, yet more uncertainty, and after that, they introduced more draft regulations that will impose additional costs and jeopardize the pipeline. Now, my question for the Premier is: why did she not insist on playing a role, on being consulted in framing the question that the B.C. government will be putting to the courts in its reference case? Why has she given her NDP ally John Horgan a blank slate in framing a question that will obviously be tilted against the interests of Alberta and our economy?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What we will do and what we have done is to stand up for Albertans and stand up for this pipeline in every legal forum where it becomes necessary. That's what we've done up until now, and up until now we've been successful on every occasion. Our government does not have the ability to tell another government how to create a question. What we can do is work with the federal government to ensure that they enforce their jurisdiction, as I believe they will do. They made the decision, it is their authority to make the decision, and they did something those guys could not.

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, I guess what we've just heard there is that they didn't even try to have input on the B.C. reference.

Now, she talks about the federal government. Mr. Speaker, the federal government could solve this right now in removing the delay tactic of the B.C. reference by doing its own federal reference to the Supreme Court of Canada, because as far as we know, B.C. might go to the trial court, the appeals court, the Supreme Court. It could take a couple of years. We don't have time. I'm sure the Premier agrees with that, so will she join with me in calling on the Prime Minister, under section 53 of the Supreme Court Act, to get ahead of B.C. and make a reference directly to the Supreme Court of Canada?

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

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, in fact, we have been engaging with our legal counsel about what the best strategy is going forward, and we will do whatever we can to make sure that we support this project as effectively as possible. We have looked at a number of different legal strategies, not the least of which is the one that the member opposite raises, but our priority is to not actually add additional uncertainty to the issue or additional opportunities for it to be delayed, which, ultimately, is where we think that particular strategy might end up. We'll keep a very firm eye on it. We've got excellent legal counsel, and we will stand . . .

The Speaker: Second main question.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the last time the B.C. government did a court reference, it took over two years to be resolved. It had to go to three levels of court. Her NDP allies in Victoria are absolutely clear – they have been from day one – that they will use every tool available to stop Alberta's energy, to harm our vital economic interests. So why is this Premier being so passive in the face of this attack by her NDP friends? Why does she not call on the Prime Minister either to declare the pipeline as being in the national interest under the Constitution or go directly to the Supreme Court to stop the British Columbia New Democrats' delay tactics?

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, when I think of the word "passive," what I think about is being in Ottawa for nine years when there was a Conservative government in Ottawa, in Edmonton, and in Victoria and not getting a pipeline built. That's my idea of passive. Quite honestly, what is not passive is standing up for Albertans strategically, setting out very clearly what needs to happen, eliminating point 5, and getting that result. That's exactly what we did, and since then we have made it very clear that we will stand up for Albertans exactly as we need to. There will be legislation coming forward on exactly that point.

Mr. Kenney: Legislation apparently based on what we asked the government to do eight months ago, Mr. Speaker, but better late than never.

Now, she says that she got a deal out of her NDP friend John Horgan, with whom she used to work in the last NDP government in B.C., but, Mr. Speaker, just a couple of weeks after she surrendered on the wine boycott, guess what happened? The NDP in B.C. brought in yet more draft regulations, creating yet more uncertainty. Is the way she measures success on this more and more delay coming from her NDP allies in Victoria?

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, the way I measure success on this is not sitting in office for nine years and getting no outcome. That is the measure of success that those folks over there seem to think is the way to go. I appreciate that they are a bit nervous. They're a bit traumatized perhaps by their own failure over the course of that nine years. But in two and a half years in government we have an approved pipeline as a result of our climate leadership plan, we have the federal government committed to getting it done, and we are waiting for a Federal Court of Appeal decision. That is the only delay in place right now. The pipeline will be built.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the Premier can repeat that nonsense as much as she wants. She knows that four pipelines were built under the previous federal Conservative government, increasing shipments of oil by 1.8 million barrels per day, and that a coastal pipeline was approved, that was subsequently vetoed by her close friend and ally Justin Trudeau after she introduced her job-killing carbon tax, the same Prime Minister who killed Energy East, the same Prime Minister who is doing nothing to get the Trans

Mountain pipeline built. I've asked her this before. Who has moved from no to yes on pipelines as a result of the NDP carbon tax?

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, what we know is that we have a pipeline approved as part of the overall climate leadership plan and the pan-Canadian framework. The members opposite actually want to jeopardize that pipeline in the interest of serving their climate-denying ideological agenda. That is not something that we are going to do. We are going to push forward. And by the way, the Gateway pipeline was actually cancelled by the courts because of the elbows-up bullying tactics used by the members opposite. That's not going to happen here because we understand that there are multiple obligations. We are meeting all of those, and the pipeline will be built.

Carbon Levy

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, about two-thirds of Albertans consistently say that they oppose the NDP's carbon tax. My question is: why does the Premier keep calling them names? Why does she call all of those Albertans, quote, climate deniers? I happen to disagree with the Premier on the efficacy of carbon taxes. We don't need to call each other names if we have a policy disagreement. So I'd like to ask the Premier: would she please stop the name-calling, and would she please listen with respect to the two-thirds of Albertans who say that punishing consumers, telling seniors to turn the heat down at home in the middle of a cold winter is not an environmental . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, fearmongering is not an environmental policy either. The member opposite understands that 60 per cent of Alberta households have received rebates in order to ensure that, in any case, they come out ahead.

Moreover, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite has yet to stand up in this House and say that he believes that human activity is the primary cause of climate change, so I will continue to characterize that failure exactly as I have been because all Canadians need a government that will act to combat climate change, and that's what they have . . .

2:00

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, if the belief that carbon taxes can solve climate change is true, then why is the Premier not advocating for the \$300 carbon tax advocated by Environment Canada, the \$200 carbon tax advocated by her adviser Professor Leach? See, she is completely torn by a fundamental contradiction in her argument. She says that carbon taxes can help stop climate change, but she's unwilling to be honest with Albertans about the only price point that will make that happen. Why doesn't she just tell people the truth that . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Interestingly, the Harper government signed on to the same targets for carbon emission reduction as the Trudeau government, and the \$300-a-tonne price to get you there was actually information that was in front of the Harper government. So the question that I have is: were they planning a \$300-a-tonne carbon tax, or were they lying when they said that they would hit those targets, or were they planning to fail just like they did on pipelines? [interjections]

The Speaker: Hon. members.

Mr. Kenney: Doubling pipeline capacity is anything but a failure, Mr. Speaker. What we have from this Premier is a record of failure, a carbon tax that has punished ordinary Albertans, a Premier who's told people to take the bus to work when many of them simply have to drive; they can't drive less to work. Seniors can only turn the heat down by so much at home. That's exactly why the Conservative government was not going to punish consumers and hard-working people with a punitive consumer tax on energy. I ask the Premier yet again: can she identify one environmental organization that has gone from no to yes on pipelines as a result of the carbon tax?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I can identify a federal government that has approved the pipeline to tidewater and done the work that needs to be done to ensure that the decision is upheld by the courts as a result of the work that this government did on climate leadership as part of a national plan for combatting climate change. Pipeline plus climate change fighting go together. The member opposite wants to turn his back on fighting climate change, and he wants to jeopardize the pipeline as a result. Albertans and Canadians deserve better.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

The Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Government and Alberta Party Fiscal Policies

Mr. Clark: Why, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today the Alberta Party caucus tabled our fourth shadow budget. Now, we believe the role of opposition is not just to oppose the government but to propose ideas and tell Albertans what we would do differently. One of those ideas is to ensure we prepare our province for an uncertain future. The Alberta Party would increase investments in education. We would support social innovation in the not-for-profit sector and beyond. We'd commit \$100 million annually to an innovation strategy. We'd also make investments in justice, culture, and social services. To the Premier: can we expect to see significant investments in these areas, and at the same time will you find meaningful savings in health . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question and for presenting their proposed plan, which, I have to point out, had a billion-dollar reduction to health care investment, had increased revenue in the line item that I believe said fees and taxes. It sounds like the recycled, failed health care premium that Albertans rejected in the last election. That sounds like the scary politics that were proposed right before 2015 that Albertans rejected. On this side of the House we're protecting health, we're protecting education, and we aren't bringing in regressive taxation that taxes people for wanting health care services.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government assumes that the only way to save money in health care is by cutting on the front lines, and that is absolutely not true.

Another core value of the Alberta Party, Mr. Speaker, and of Albertans is fiscal responsibility, which is why I was surprised to hear the Minister of Finance say yesterday that his only hope of

balancing the budget is for the price of oil to go up. Now, hope is not a strategy. To the Premier: what is your energy price forecast, and why have you doubled down on keeping Alberta on the resource revenue roller coaster?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The reality is that we will be introducing the budget tomorrow, and I look forward to hearing the member's comments with respect to the budget tomorrow.

You know, you can't have it both ways. The fact of the matter is that you either protect your health care and your education services, or you go back to the old way of making regular working people pay for the failure to diversify that happened over years and years and years of Conservative governments. We are not going to do that. We will have Albertans' backs. At the same time, we will protect their services, and we will bring the budget to balance.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Clark: Well, Mr. Speaker, that balance, I suspect, relies on unrealistic resource revenue forecasts. We'll have to see.

Unlike my colleagues to the right, I will never cheer against Alberta, which is why the Alberta Party wants to see the Kinder Morgan pipeline built. But pegging Alberta's entire budget to a project that is at risk of failure or, at the very least, delay is incredibly risky. The Alberta Party's shadow budget uses far more conservative revenue forecasts than the NDP's, but it still balances in four years. To the Premier: do you have a contingency plan if the Kinder Morgan pipeline is delayed or, heaven forbid, cancelled?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, the member opposite will see the budget numbers tomorrow when the Minister of Finance introduces that budget. Under our leadership we have long since taken the position of introducing risk adjustments into every budget to allow for the inevitable ups and downs of commodity prices and the other kinds of things that could impact what we receive from our revenue. In every case that has allowed us to meet our targets or in many cases exceed our targets since coming into government, and we will continue that record.

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

Red Deer Regional Hospital

Ms Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As central Albertans my colleague from Red Deer-North and I share the concerns of our constituents about services and wait times at the Red Deer regional hospital. Red Deer regional hospital is now the fourth-busiest medical facility in the province, serving over 400,000 central Albertans, and is in dire need of expansion and a cardiac catheterization lab. To the Minister of Health: how are we ensuring that the Red Deer regional hospital can meet the care needs of central Albertans?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for her question as well as to both members from Red Deer for their advocacy on behalf of the people of Red Deer. Important work is happening in central Alberta and Red Deer, including the development of a cardiac care roadmap, a long-term central zone health care plan to address the needs of the region, and a refresh of

the needs assessment for the hospital. AHS expects to complete this work in the coming months, and I'll be happy to update those.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Central Alberta's population has grown exponentially over the years, but investment by previous governments has not kept pace, placing a burden on infrastructure, medical staff, and patients alike. Can the minister reassure this House that quality health services in Red Deer will be available as our community continues to grow?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Facing the worst recession in decades, we had a choice: reckless cuts that would make life worse or protecting the health care that Alberta families need. Our government believes that all Albertans deserve access to high-quality public health care. We added community paramedic teams in Red Deer last month so that people can get care in-home instead of in the hospital. We're building a new eight-bed youth addictions facility, and at the hospital we've added a new state-of-the-art MRI and new labour and delivery operating rooms. We look forward to talking about the next plans in the months to come.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Ms Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As central Alberta continues to grow, so too does its need for more complex care. While I'm thankful that this government has made investments in the hospital, I've heard from my community and from doctors that there is still significant need. To the minister: what plans are in place to expand the hospital in Red Deer?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and again to the member for the question. We are looking forward to the completion of the three AHS plans I mentioned in my previous answer. We don't know yet what the recommendations will be, but we do know that Red Deer needs health capital investments such as upgrades to the medical device reprocessing units that were neglected by the previous government over decades. We also know that once a needs assessment is complete, there will need to be a business case. We've heard from the community, the doctors, and of course our local MLAs, and we will have more to say in the coming days.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Airdrie.

2:10 Oil Sands Advisory Group Former Co-chair

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday I asked the environment minister and the Deputy Premier a series of questions about their close personal relationship with Ms Berman. Following that, in an interview the environment minister said that Ms Berman was appointed to the oil sands advisory panel at the request of industry, specifically CAPP. Minister, do you still stand by that statement?

The Speaker: The Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, the founding president of CAPP, Dave Collyer, was part of that initial process that began, as I understand it, in 2014 to find ways to get us out of the dead end that the government that the Leader of the Official Opposition sat in and successive Conservative governments here

had driven us into. So there was certainly a presence from the founding president of CAPP in addition to ConocoPhillips and Cenovus and other Suncor employees.

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

Mrs. Pitt: Okay. Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure I heard the answer there. Specifically, I would like to know if the minister can answer: does she still support the statement that she said in an interview yesterday that CAPP had recommended Ms Berman to sit on the oil sands advisory group? Yes or no?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, the founding president of the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers was in conversations with environmental groups from the very beginning, much before our government came to power, and indeed was looking for ways to make the conversation more productive because government had done such a terrible job of managing the reputational risk to Alberta's energy industry and, in fact, investor certainty for Alberta's energy industry. That's why the largest members of the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers – Suncor, CNRL, Cenovus, and others . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mrs. Pitt: Mr. Speaker, I think that's NDP for no.

We need to shut down the tar sands; we need to move away from the development of oil: these are Ms Berman's own words.

Given, Mr. Speaker, that this environment minister has yet to actually say that having and hiring, appointing Tzeborah Berman and Ms Mahon to the oil sands advisory group was a bad idea, perhaps I'll give an opportunity for her to do so now. Minister, do you admit that having Ms Berman on the oil sands advisory group did nothing for Alberta, got us nowhere on pipelines, and will you admit that it was a bad idea to have her appointed?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What I will admit is that the work of the oil sands advisory group, which concluded some months ago, provided us advice in a multilateral sort of way, from indigenous peoples, from northern communities, from energy companies, and from environmental groups. That 100-megatonne limit was part of the reason why we got the pipeline approvals. There were very robust indigenous voices on that group as well. I noticed that the hon. member is not at all interested in talking about that ever.

You know, Mr. Speaker, the record speaks for itself. We got this . . .

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

Just a friendly reminder to be cautious about no preambles in the supplementary questions.

Carbon Levy and Economic Competitiveness

Mr. Loewen: Recently the Deputy Minister of Climate Change confirmed what we all knew, that the carbon tax is harming the competitiveness of Alberta's industries and companies. Every NDP politician has been denying it, swearing it isn't true, but it is. They even have a name for it: the carbon competitiveness incentive program. Can the minister please tell Albertans the truth on the cost to Alberta industry and companies of the carbon tax in regard to loss of competitiveness?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, it's hard to find some competitiveness effects in an economy that is poised to lead the country in economic growth this year as well as last year. That is because our climate leadership plan is a carefully calibrated plan to control for any competitiveness effects in an economy that is very much outward facing and is very much trade exposed. That's why we undertook the carbon competitiveness incentives and the carbon competitiveness regulations, to replace the old system from the member's own party that was in place and to incent a green and clean development.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Loewen: Given that in that meeting the deputy minister did say that they're continuing some of those old programs but given that during the same discussion the deputy minister said that there was no sign of investment avoiding Alberta because of the carbon tax, can the minister explain to Albertans how she can be bailing out existing Alberta companies and industries that are suffering because of the carbon tax, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, expect new companies to invest in Alberta knowing they can only be competitive with taxpayer-funded incentives?

Ms Phillips: Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, last week I was at the Globe sustainable business forum, where I met with a number of Canadian clean tech entrepreneurs. Most of them, the ones that I met with, were in Alberta because things are looking up and people are looking for ways to solve problems; \$1.4 billion worth of investments and incentives and loan guarantees in order to make that happen out of the carbon competitiveness incentive regulation is helping to kick-start all of those new businesses and all that new employment and that optimism and those opportunities. But as for energy good news, we've got Chevron increasing spending in the oil patch, we've got JACOS celebrating a \$2 billion expansion, we've got Suncor filing an application for a massive new . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Loewen: Given that there seems to be a lot of kick to industry and not so much start and given that the government has implemented a damaging carbon tax on Albertans and sold it to us on the premise of rebates, free light bulbs and given that corporations are having problems being competitive in the marketplace and need government incentives to stay in business and that there are no measurable benefits to the environment, will the minister just admit that the carbon tax has been a colossal failure and cancel the tax?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Suncor took its first steps to set up two cogeneration units at its oil sands base plant recently, in addition to their application for a massive new oil sands project that could create hundreds of good jobs and billions of new investment in Alberta. Earnings are up in the oil patch. Investment is up about 60 per cent in conventional. Drilling is up, 64 per cent more wells drilled than last year. Here's what the CEO of Suncor thinks. I heard that these are companies that are at the trough yesterday from the Member for Airdrie. He said, "Bold, ambitious action is required by all of us to effectively tackle . . . climate change."

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Provincial Fiscal Policies

Mr. Barnes: Many Alberta children, including my own, receive a weekly allowance in exchange for completing chores around the house. Having an allowance teaches kids the value of work, and even more importantly it teaches them the value of saving and living within one's means. Sadly, the latest NDP fiscal update showed that these lessons have not been learned: devastating unemployment, more spending, and \$9 billion more on the next generation's credit card. To the Finance minister: when will you start applying these practical, common-sense ideas to Alberta's budget?

Mr. Ceci: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, at Q3 I was able to report to Albertans that the economy is looking up, jobs are up, and the deficit was down by \$1.4 billion. So it really goes to show that the plan is working. On the other side, the plan would be to give tax breaks to the highest earners in this province for \$700 million. The rest of us would have to pay for that with fewer programs and services. That won't work. Our economy is growing. We're doing the job on this side.

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, tomorrow Alberta families will learn how much they have to pay for this minister's reckless spending. Given that when this government was elected, Alberta had little debt and no interest payments and that after just a single term they will saddle Alberta children with a \$70 billion bill – annual interest is already \$1.5 billion – to the minister: will you please take off your rose-coloured, virtual reality goggles and start dealing with Alberta's debt disaster so our kids can once again enjoy the Alberta advantage?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Ceci: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, we saw a shadow budget from the AP over there. We saw one from the independent member. In four years we've not seen one from this group on this side. You know, there's a good reason for that. They don't want to show what their destructive policies would mean for Albertans. It would mean \$700 million going to the wealthiest people in this province. The rest of us would pay for it. Let's not go down that road. Saskatchewan has an austerity budget. They want to go there. Well, they can go there.

2:20

Mr. Barnes: Given that the Finance minister can't stand on his record and given that the Finance minister has a spending problem and is now relying on the completion of a stalled pipeline as the foundation of his plan to balance – talk about putting all your eggs in one basket, Mr. Speaker – and given that even the most optimistic don't predict the Trans Mountain will be completed before 2020, to the minister: when will you acknowledge that your plan to diversify the economy continues to be a complete failure and begin taking real steps towards balancing the budget and protecting our and our children's future?

Mr. Ceci: You know, Mr. Speaker, it's really disappointing talk about diversifying the economy. It's disappointing to hear the Conservatives talk down the start-up and tech sector in this province. Whether it's the virtual reality world or the real world, the Conservatives have no plan at all. Theirs doesn't exist in any world in terms of supporting the economy. We'll present a budget tomorrow. That budget will continue to have the backs of Albertans. It'll continue to make life cheaper for Albertans, more affordable for Albertans, and we will show how it will . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Carbon Levy and Nonprofit Organizations

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, Reverend Todd MacDonald and the Sindre ministry provide a significant amount of support and social services for our community, including things like food hampers, emergency shelter, and chaplain services for those in palliative care. The list goes on and on. He's asked me to ask the Premier the following question: can the NDP afford to pick up the community services we provide when we shut down as a result of the carbon tax? What costs more, the government providing the services that we supply or cutting nonprofits some slack on the NDP's carbon tax? Will the Premier answer Reverend MacDonald's question?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. Our government is working to make life better for Albertans by protecting and improving the things that make a difference in their lives, and we will continue to do so. In just the last two and a half years we have added \$103 million to the PDD program, almost \$100 million to the AISH program. If we were to take advice from that side, they suggest that we cut \$500 from every AISH cheque to make it equal to what B.C. is paying. We will not do that.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, that's not what I asked.

Given that Reverend MacDonald and the ministry provide a significant amount of social services for our community and have asked a simple question before this House today, what will the government do to make sure that they continue to help these nonprofits put the social safety net in our community? Charities are facing a perfect storm in our community right now: increased demand because of the economic downturn under this NDP government and a decrease in donations to provide the services. Instead of dodging the question, Mr. Speaker, could the Premier stand up and answer Reverend MacDonald's question? Can this government afford to pick up the slack that will come if these organizations shut because of the carbon tax this . . .

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. minister.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are many Albertans, including Reverend MacDonald, who are doing amazing work in their communities. To support that work, we have added \$25 million to the family and community support services program, FCSS, and we have provided almost \$29 million in grants from the family and community support program to support the work these incredible individuals are doing in their communities. We will continue to work with our community partners to make sure Albertans have the support they need in their communities.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, these people in these communities don't want to hear about how many light bulbs this government has bought. They want to hear what this government is going to do, because they're seeing a significant decrease in their ability to provide services to our communities. One charity in my community has seen 7 per cent of their total budget go towards the carbon tax, and this Premier's issues management team – and the Premier is laughing about it right now – told them to fund raise to pay for the

carbon tax. The question is very simple. Will the Premier apologize for her people telling the seniors in my community that, or is it now the policy of her government that our seniors should fund raise to pay for their carbon tax?

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

Ms Sigurdson: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, seniors built this province, and we want them to retire in dignity and have the supports they need. Like, 260,000 seniors will be receiving up to \$300 from the levy rebate, which is a significant amount. We've invested over \$3 billion in seniors' programs plus \$1.2 billion in our capital plan for affordable housing. We're making a significant difference. We have their backs.

Forest Management

Mr. Westhead: Mr. Speaker, the constituency of Banff-Cochrane has a diverse economy based on tourism, cement, ranching, and forestry, among others. Everyone agrees that these industries provide good jobs and have literally built the homes, roads, and bridges that we need as Alberta has grown. But time and time again, when a timber harvest is set to begin like the ones in the Ghost valley, Highwood pass, and now the Mustang hills, constituents express serious concerns and don't feel they've been adequately consulted. To the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry: what are you doing to address my constituents' concerns?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. As you know, forestry is an important industry in our province. A balanced approach is taken when we're developing harvesting plans to ensure that we're supporting the economy and companies operate sustainably. That being said, I have heard those concerns from constituents across the province and from the MLA, and our office has taken action. We've asked the company to redraw their operating plans to take into consideration a new site for building a bridge, for harvest layouts as well. We're taking action, making sure that those constituents' concerns are heard.

The Speaker: Thank you.
First supplemental.

Mr. Westhead: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that no one denies that forestry plays an important role in our economy, what assurance can you provide to my constituents that Alberta's forests are being managed in the best interest of the public in a way that is environmentally sustainable?

The Speaker: The hon. minister of forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With this government Albertans can count on us having a balanced, fair approach to business and sustainability. We recognize that there is a diversity of value in the landscape, and we take this seriously. Our government has shown its leadership on balancing sustainability and the creation of economic opportunities for the province today. It's worth noting that Canada and Alberta have the most sustainable forest practices in the world. We'll continue working with industry so that that maintains. We're responsive to the concerns of Albertans when it comes to ensuring that harvesting is done in a safe and sustainable manner.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Westhead: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: given that Spray Lake Sawmills has made significant investments in equipment and therefore has a vested interest in the future health and sustainability of Alberta's forests, what assurances can you provide to them that they can continue to operate in a manner that will be acceptable to the public?

Mr. Carlier: Mr. Speaker, we work very closely with forestry companies to ensure that they have access to business opportunities while clearly understanding the expectations government and Albertans have for their operations. We know that forestry companies make long-term investments in their operations, and our procedures reflect this. We are very clear. Long-term process on tenure, operating standards, and reforestation here in Alberta: our staff works very hard to ensure that companies maintain these high standards, and the industry is very open to being able to make changes where they have to satisfy those standards.

Postsecondary Education Concerns

Mr. Fraser: My colleague mentioned earlier that the Alberta Party caucus shadow budget was released today. That shadow budget talks about the need to support the growth of our postsecondary institutions. They need to be able to teach students the necessary skills to succeed in a changing economy. This includes the skills being taught in certificate programs at colleges and technical schools, and those are often a better option for students and employers. To the Minister of Advanced Education: with the number of colleges transitioning to universities, what are the plans in place to ensure that students can still choose certificate programs over degree programs?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I want to thank the hon. member for the question. Of course, I was very pleased to announce our government's investment of \$43 million over the next five years to create 3,000 spaces in programs just like the ones that the member mentioned. If he's genuinely supportive of that initiative, I anticipate that he and his party will support the budget once it's released. It includes those expansions. Of course, we are committed to promoting opportunities in higher education all across the province. That's why we're working with Grande Prairie Regional College and Red Deer College to offer a wider array of programs for students in those areas, and I look forward to continuing that work.

Mr. Fraser: Given that reforming Alberta's postsecondary institutions to meet the demands of a changing economy requires the government to work in close partnership with those institutions and given that it would be difficult to work in close partnership with someone that you accused of lining their own pockets at the expense of students and given that your government often states that they believe in negotiating wages at the bargaining table, to the same minister: why are you attacking public servant decisions and salaries in public and in media, and what does that mean for the future work with the University of Alberta?

2:30

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, I continue to meet with representatives from the University of Alberta to continue to do the good work that that institution is doing on behalf of Alberta students. You know, that member sat in the government

caucus and let executive compensation balloon out of control. Postsecondary presidents are the highest paid in the country because of the actions of his current leader and the former government. It's time for that to end. Our government is finally taking action on something that they failed to do.

Mr. Fraser: Given that the current president of the U of A, David Turpin, negotiated his contract in good faith and given that Dr. Turpin likely attracts more talent and funding than he draws in salary and given that the estimated structural deficit of the U of A, driven in part by this government's tuition fees, is \$14 million, far greater than the amount the minister claims Dr. Turpin is lining his pockets with, to the same minister: why are you lashing out at Dr. Turpin for your decisions, and should other postsecondary presidents expect similar treatment?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to remind the hon. member that Dr. Turpin actually negotiated his contract with the board of governors that was appointed by that member's government. They have a terrible record of letting executive compensation balloon out of control. The people of Alberta have had enough. They do not want to see their students pay more in tuition to make sure that we have the highest paid presidents in the entire country. It's time that our government takes action to rein in executive compensation. We've done that with other agencies, boards, and commissions. We're going to be doing that very soon with postsecondary institutions.

The Speaker: I'd just encourage members again to direct your comments through the chair and avoid making specific figurative references to other members.

The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Mr. Kenney: For the record, Mr. Speaker, that's not members on this side of the House.

Oil Sands Advisory Group Former Co-chair (continued)

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, given that the minister of the environment said last week that Tzeponah Berman was there as co-chair of the oil sands advisory group because the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers invited her, will the minister confirm that the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers invited Ms Berman to the government committee to which she was appointed?

The Speaker: The hon. minister of environment.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What I will confirm is, of course, that we were approached in the fall of 2015 by a number of companies, including the founding president of the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, with a set of discussion points around how to repair Alberta's reputational damage and the investor uncertainty that had been created by the Harper government and by 40 years of Conservative government in this province, that really let our environmental reputation languish. That is what I will confirm.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, what's languishing is that minister's credibility.

The founding president of CAPP, incidentally, given that he was Mr. Gerry Protti, Mr. Speaker, a former official, is not the organization, so I will give the minister the opportunity to stop

languishing and to actually answer a direct question directly and factually. Did the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers invite Ms Berman to be co-chair of the oil sands advisory group, and if not, why did this minister claim otherwise?

Ms Phillips: Mr. Speaker, the initiative was co-led by one Dave Collyer, who had a number of roles within the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, and we'll gladly table that information afterwards.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, something I don't understand about this government is why they can't take responsibility when they make mistakes. Given that Ms Berman, before her appointment, called for the elimination of the largest industry and job creator in this province, given that she is now participating in illegal protests, including protests that yesterday resulted in the injury of three RCMP officers, given that this minister has now uttered mistruths to the public about CAPP's involvement in this nomination, why can't they just admit that Tzeponah Berman's appointment was a big mistake?

Mr. Mason: Point of order.

The Speaker: Point of order noted.

The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let's talk about big mistakes. How about riding roughshod over indigenous people's rights to be consulted, resulting in a pipeline failure and a failure to get that pipeline to tidewater? That's actually what happened from the government that that member sat in, and now that same member goes out and insults indigenous peoples by threatening to cancel their climate leadership initiative programs and by insulting the chief of the Blood Tribe in my own area. That's a failure.

The Speaker: I would again ask that you not make physical gestures across the House. I don't think it's helpful to the place.

Government Spending **Decorum and Civility in the Assembly**

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, the hon. Premier has often proselytized about UCP members wanting to return to the ideas of the 1990s. She has said of our leader: the 1990s are calling; they want their ideas back. Well, I remember the 1990s, and there were some pretty fantastic ideas like balancing the budgets, getting out of debt, reducing the tax burden on hard-working families, and getting the government out of the way of wealth-creating private enterprises. To the Premier: does she oppose these common-sense ideas?

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I also remember the 1990s. I remember my dad, a school principal in rural Alberta, having to lay off front-line workers. I remember my dad, a school principal, going with a custodian and unscrewing light bulbs in that school. I remember hospitals being blown up by wrecking balls in downtown Calgary. I remember hospitals in Edmonton, in my now riding of Edmonton-Glenora, being shut down and sitting there to languish. I remember the '90s, too. Albertans had a chance to vote in 2015. They voted for a government that would take a different path, that would stand up for the people of this province.

Mr. Hunter: Given, Mr. Speaker, that I would like to remind the Premier of the late 1980s, when governments at that time got us into serious debt and also injected taxpayers' dollars into diversifying

the economy, and given that when the smoke settled, the Alberta taxpayer was left with \$2.4 billion in boondoggles and given that this government's new diversification strategy is eerily reminiscent of the 1980s strategy, are the NDP concerned that the 1980s are calling them and want their ideas back?

Mr. Ceci: Let's fast-forward, Mr. Speaker, to 2017. Ninety-thousand jobs were created in this province. GDP growth of 4.5 per cent led the nation in this country. Small-business confidence is up. Manufacturing is up. Housing starts are up. Why don't you get with the present and stop looking at the past? [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Hunter: The minister forgets to say that debt is up every time he says that.

Mr. Speaker, given that many of the NDP MLAs have commented on how much they appreciate the new level of civility and decorum shown by this side of the House since our new leader took office and given that that civility is the classy thing to do, whether you're in the '80s, '90s, or in 2018, through you to the Premier: are you willing to instruct your caucus to raise the level of decorum, as our leader has, so that we can focus on debating this government's deplorable financial records versus slinging insults and heckles? I think that Albertans deserve that much.

The Speaker: I want to just advise, you know, that the supplementaries are intended to be to the original question. The supplementaries encourage that.

The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I remember the '80s, I remember the '90s, and I do enjoy the tone that's being set by having Conservatives in the opposition instead of in the government. We're happy to have that maintained and to have that continue as we move forward. We are very proud of our record standing up for the people of Alberta. Feel free to sit there nice and quietly while we do the job of governing this province and taking care of what matters to working families.

2:40

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

Calgary Southwest Ring Road Construction Concerns

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The southwest ring road is a major project with significant impacts on the quality of life of nearby residents. My constituents in east Discovery Ridge, The Slopes, and Springbank Hill noticed early on that the plans for the multilane freeway did not include sound attenuation, but they were thankful when the Minister of Transportation agreed that they deserved safety and sight and sound barriers. Minister, respectfully, do you still agree with the residents' concerns?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, you know, we have worked hard to mitigate the impacts of the construction of the ring road. The construction of the ring road and its alignment were determined in an agreement that was signed with the Tsuut'ina by the previous government and the hon. member's colleague. Unfortunately, it passes quite closely to some residential neighbourhoods. We've been working very hard to mitigate the dust and the sound and other nuisance effects of construction, much of which is, unfortunately, inevitable given the . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

First supplemental.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. Given that the department maps and detailed plans displayed at recent open houses indicate that the province has no intention of building a sound barrier for the neighbourhoods I just mentioned and given that the department staff at these open houses confirmed that the anticipated barrier is not part of the design for the project – Minister, the residents had the utmost confidence that the final plans would reflect your direction for the sound attenuation – are you aware that this important quality-of-life feature is not included in the most recent designs?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the hon. member for the question. As I said, we've been working hard to make sure that we mitigate the impacts of construction, which is very close to these populated areas.

With respect to further sound mitigation I'm always open to have further conversations with MLAs. Certainly, MLAs on this side of the House have been very strong advocates on behalf of their communities, and I've also met with some of the opposition MLAs with respect to some of their constituents' concerns, and I'm going to continue to do that, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Minister, I certainly do appreciate the meetings that I have had with you, but given that residents of Calgary-West have had years of distress over the construction plans and that they are really disappointed, to say the least, about this latest turn of events and given that they deserve a direct answer, with all due respect and on behalf of the constituents of Calgary-West will you please provide firm direction to your department to include sound, safety, and sight attenuation for these neighbourhoods?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll remind the hon. member that the alignment was established by his colleague two seats over when he was the Minister of Transportation, and we're working hard within those constraints to protect those communities. I'm going to be continuing to be open to talk to representatives of those communities and to do whatever possible we can to mitigate sound and dust effects of the construction.

The Speaker: Hon. members, we'll go to Members' Statements in 30 seconds.

Members' Statements

(continued)

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

Climate Change

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday I think I heard the Leader of the Opposition finally say that human-caused climate change is real. After weeks of uncertainty and after repeatedly being asked by our Premier to make his position clear, his response on this issue is so refreshing and, no doubt, is a relief to Albertans all across the province. I can't help but wonder: if he did say it, has he

given some clarity to the rest of his caucus? For example, how is the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat feeling?

Mr. McIver: Point of order.

Mr. Sucha: Will he still be allowed to take his colleagues out for dinner with climate deniers? I'm sure that the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon is relieved. He has long since made it clear that he understands the science of climate change and supports the reduction of emissions. Well, what about the Member for Drumheller-Stettler? Does he still think that markings on rocks in Drumheller mean that climate change isn't real?

Mr. Speaker, carbon dioxide levels in the air are at their highest level in 650,000 years, 17 of the 18 warmest years on record have happened since 2001, in 2012 arctic summer sea ice shrank to its lowest extent on record, and satellite data shows that the Earth's polar ice sheets are losing mass. The fact of the matter is that companies from Suncor to Staples recognize the science of climate change, and if we want to remain a competitive jurisdiction, we must have policies in place that will address this problem.

Perhaps the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka enjoys the warm days in the dead of winter, Mr. Speaker, but I, for one, hope to hear the Leader of the Opposition say again that climate change is real and that it is caused by human activity.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake, I believe you have two.

Mr. Cyr: I do. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the chair of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts I am pleased to table five copies of the 2016 report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, covering its work during 13 committee meetings for the period from January to December of 2016, during the First Session and Second Session of the 29th Legislature.

I am also pleased to table five copies of the 2017 report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, covering its work from January to December of 2017.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to highlight the ambitious meeting schedule of the committee during this period. Twenty committee meetings were held in 2017, during the Second Session and Third Session of the 29th Legislature. This is the greatest number of Public Accounts Committee meetings held in a calendar year during the last decade. I want to recognize the hard work and commitment of the deputy chair, the committee members both past and present, as well as the LAO, the caucus staff, and those who provided support to the committee.

These reports will be posted to the external committee website, and copies are also available through the committee offices.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Tabling Returns and Reports

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

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite five copies of the Alberta Party Caucus Shadow Budget 2018, a document that balances in four years while making increased investments in education, justice, social services, and innovation.

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

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today is a day with a lot of alternative budgets around here. I rise today to table five

copies of my Alternative Budget 2018-2019, balancing Alberta's operating budget by the date that the government committed to in 2019-20 and balancing the overall consolidated budget by 2020-21, including a 5 per cent rollback for all core government employees, including every member of this House.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table the requisite number of copies of an article out of the *Edmonton Journal* that I referenced yesterday when I was doing some of my questions.

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

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have eight letters I'd like to table from pharmacists within my constituency. This one here is from Mandy Davey. I just want to quickly quote from her. "Stop the wastage in the system and let us help. We are a phone call away."

Curtis Conrad is quoted as saying, "These are my concerns with the proposed pharmacy funding framework. Once again, I applaud the effort in reducing healthcare spending, however cutting front line services is not the answer to saving healthcare dollars."

We've got Paul Tellier. "The highlights are 6 different cuts to the profession, some of which have good logic behind them that we do not take exception with, especially in the current economic state of the Province."

I have Peter Davey. "We are here to help."

Paige Shiller: "Stop the wastage in the system and let us help."

I have Denis Lavoie. "Alberta Health's new proposed pharmacy funding has a number of drastic cuts which [will] significantly impact [the] ability to deliver care."

Carter Wagner goes on to say, "Alberta is in the middle of an Opioid Crisis. Pharmacists are stepping up to the plate and providing comprehensive opioid assessments in an effort to prevent addiction."

The last one is Tanis Bremer. "We are the most accessible health care professionals providing the best care for Albertans."

Thank you.

2:50

The Speaker: Any others, hon. members?

Hon. members, I believe we had at least one point of order today. The Government House Leader had raised a point of order.

Ms Ganley: I apologize, Mr. Speaker. We will withdraw that point of order.

The Speaker: Thank you.

I believe that the Member for Calgary-Hays had a point of order. Hon. member, if I might, I would just advise that in the future when you raise a point of order in Members' Statements, I've suggested you wait until the end of the two minutes and then raise it.

Go ahead.

Point of Order Members' Statements

Mr. McIver: Thank you, and I'll compliment you on that, Mr. Speaker. I completely agree with that. I think all members, as you've acknowledged yourself many times, deserve to be able to give their members' statements uninterrupted. I did my best to call the point of order without interrupting, and I would compliment you on doing your part by not interrupting while acknowledging the point of order.

Having said that, under sections 23(h), (i), and (j), imputing false or unavowed motives to another member, abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder, and making allegations against another member, you yourself, Mr. Speaker – and you’ll have to forgive me. At least I hope you will because I don’t have the Blues available to me because it was just about two minutes ago. But the member chose to make several suggestions against other members, referring to them using terms that you’ve said yourself are not appropriate in this House, things like “climate change denier” against our leader and other members of this House that he mentioned.

You know what, Mr. Speaker? I think it’s fair game for members to stand up and say that the other side is wrong on every policy and that they’re wrong about everything in the world. In this House I think that’s appropriate debate, but I think we’ve agreed as a House and I think you’ve ruled that using a member’s statement to make personal attacks is not appropriate, and I would hope you would call the member to account for so doing.

Let me also say, Mr. Speaker, that we’re largely at your mercy because I don’t expect we’ll ever be perfect. We’re committed to raising the level of decorum in the House, so we are not likely to respond in kind. We’re kind of depending upon you to uphold that standard of not using members’ statements as personal attacks but rather as policy attacks.

The Speaker: The Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Sorry. I apologize. I don’t have the benefit of the Blues, but I do have some understanding of what the member had said. I’m failing to see where there was any allegation made against a person. It is a policy to decide to deny the existence of human-caused climate change or to decide that we ought not do anything about it. That’s not, I think, a personal decision; it’s a policy decision, much like we make policy decisions on this side of the House to do something about climate change. So I’m failing to see where this is a point of order.

I certainly do understand that the members are probably not happy to hear our members, you know, calling out things that they’ve said in the past. Ultimately, Mr. Speaker, it is the policy of this government that climate change is real, that humans are in a large part responsible for climate change; therefore, we ought to do something about it because it is a real threat that faces the population. Obviously, that’s not a policy shared by the other side of the House, but to say that that’s a personal attack is incorrect.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I think, as noted by both members, we’re all at a disadvantage in timing. We don’t have the Blues in front of us. I am advised, though, that members have stated several rulings on this in the past, that you ought not use members’ statements for personal attacks against other members. Since I don’t have the Blues, nor do you, I will simply use this as an opportunity or reminder that past precedent and practice has in fact directed that you stay away from any personal attacks. If they were made, let’s just use this as a reminder that it’s not going to happen again.

I think we also have a point of privilege to deal with. The Government House Leader.

Privilege Misleading the House

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I’m rising to address the purported matter of privilege raised by the Official Opposition House Leader yesterday. The facts, as I understand them, are these. The complaint of the Official Opposition relates to comments made by the Minister of Environment and Parks on

Monday in question period. At that time the minister was accused by the Official Opposition House Leader of not consulting with the public regarding regional planning in the member’s constituency. In response to these allegations the minister stated, “I met with the mayor of Rocky Mountain House a couple of weeks ago and discussed the economic development and tourism opportunities that are available through the regional advisory council’s advice.”

I’m advised by the minister that on March 5 she hosted an event coinciding with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change conference in Edmonton. The mayor of Rocky Mountain House, Tammy Burke, attended the minister’s event. I understand that upon seeing the mayor, the minister took the opportunity to tell Mayor Burke about the impending release of the North Saskatchewan Regional Advisory Council recommendations for the area, which have subsequently been released and are open for public comment. I’m advised that they spoke for about 10 minutes at this event.

Now, yesterday the hon. House leader for the Official Opposition raised a purported matter of privilege indicating that he had received a communication from the mayor indicating there was no such meeting, just a brief, light conversation. It’s clear that a formal meeting on this matter between the minister and the mayor did not take place, but that is not what the minister had claimed. Members opposite and the mayor are entitled to say that the minister’s discussion at the minister’s event did not constitute a formal meeting. They are entitled to argue that it did not constitute adequate consultation on the issue. But, Mr. Speaker, that is a matter of debate, not a matter impacting the privileges of a member, nor does it come close to being contempt of the House, which has been alleged.

What constitutes misleading the House? Allegations of misleading the House are very serious, as has been discussed in this Assembly many times. Page 85 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, sets out the following requirements for someone to be found to have misled the House.

One, it must be proven that the statement was misleading; two, it must be established that the Member making the statement knew at the time that the statement was incorrect; and three, that in making the statement, the Member intended to mislead the House.

Mr. Speaker, rulings by yourself as well as your predecessors on December 12, 2016, November 20, 2014, November 24, 2011, and November 7, 2007, have all applied the same test based on these three elements, and it’s clear that these conditions have not been met.

To review, it must be proven that the statement was misleading. Mr. Speaker, I would submit that the statement was not misleading. It was a statement of fact. The fact that the minister and the mayor spoke at this event is not in dispute. The minister did not state that there had been a meeting out in Rocky Mountain House on the matter, nor did she imply that there had been a thorough discussion or a consultation involving officials. She merely stated that she had met with the mayor, and this issue had come up.

Secondly, it must be established that the member making the statement knew it was incorrect. Again, the minister knew that she had in fact seen this individual at an event and raised the matter. She knew this for a fact because she was one of the participants, Mr. Speaker.

3:00

Thirdly, the guidelines state that the member must have intended to mislead the House. In fact, the minister of environment had no such intention. She was merely updating the House about a discussion that took place.

In terms of a dispute over the facts Speaker Zwozdesky made a ruling on March 12, 2014, on a purported matter of privilege that I believe is relevant here. At that time he indicated:

Frequently we'll find that one member sees an event or an activity or a statement one way, hears it one way, and another members hears it and interprets it in a different way... quite often it's really a disagreement on facts or a matter of interpretation.

Similarly, *Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules & Forms*, citation 494, on page 151 states:

It has been formally ruled by Speakers that statements by Members respecting themselves and particularly within their own knowledge must be accepted... On rare occasions this may result in the House having to accept two contradictory accounts of the same incident.

That is clearly what has happened here. The minister states that she discussed a matter with an important stakeholder when they met. There is no attempt to dispute the fact that this discussion took place. The minister in good faith has stated that this took place. What is being disputed here is whether or not this constitutes a meeting. There may be differences of opinion as to whether this meeting was a meeting. There may be legitimate differences of opinion as to whether this meeting or nonmeeting was sufficient consultation on the matter being discussed. Those are legitimate differences of opinion, but they do not constitute a contempt of the House. They merely constitute what Speaker Zwozdesky called "a matter of interpretation" and what *Beauchesne's* calls "two contradictory accounts of the same incident."

Rulings in other jurisdictions, Mr. Speaker, are relevant. In conclusion, I'd like to reference a ruling by former Ontario Speaker Carr in June 2002, which was cited by Speaker Zwozdesky in a ruling he made on November 20, 2014. In that ruling the Speaker stated:

The threshold for finding a prima facie case of contempt against a member of the Legislature on the basis of deliberately misleading the House is therefore set quite high and is very uncommon. It must involve a proved finding of an overt attempt to intentionally mislead the Legislature. In the absence of an admission from the member accused of the conduct, or of tangible confirmation of the conduct independently proved, a Speaker must assume that no honourable member would engage in such behaviour or that, at most, inconsistent statements were the result of inadvertence or honest mistake.

I believe that what was stated by Speaker Carr is directly applicable to this case. For such a matter to actually constitute contempt, there must be an overt attempt to intentionally mislead. That did not happen here. Mr. Speaker, what we have is simply a difference on the meaning of the word "meeting." What did happen is a genuine disagreement over how extensive a particular discussion was. In the Official Opposition's argument yesterday they likened the discussion to briefly saying "hi" and shaking hands and to idle chit-chat. The minister's view is that the conversation was more than that.

I understand that the opposition would like to make the argument that not enough consultation took place. That, Mr. Speaker, is a legitimate point of debate, which members opposite have every right to make. In fact, I understand that the minister herself spoke with the mayor at lunch today and clarified the concerns around this important issue. However, that simply does not constitute a matter of privilege or contempt.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

You'd like to speak to the matter?

Mr. McIver: Yes, I would.

The Speaker: Is there something substantive in the comments?

Mr. McIver: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What's substantive actually references what the hon. Government House Leader said just now. He actually acknowledged there was no meeting and tried to suggest that the minister had only said that they'd met when, in fact, the minister was quite clear. The hon. Opposition House Leader was chastising the minister, as is appropriate in question period, about not making the effort to contact the municipality. The minister, to defend, I suppose, her embarrassment on having not done so, said: I had a meeting with that mayor...

The Speaker: Hon. member, something more substantive. I've heard that on both sides already. Is there something, a precedent, that you could speak to?

Mr. McIver: I just think if you look at the two arguments, it'll be quite clear to you which argument is credible, and the government's side is not, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Nixon: I have information, Mr. Speaker...

The Speaker: Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, since you have already spoken to the matter, I cannot allow you to speak to it.

Is there a point of order you want to make?

Mr. Mason: It's not point of order, Mr. Speaker. I would hope that we wouldn't allow endless debate. The normal practice is that one person stands, makes their purported privilege, the other side responds, if other parties want to participate, but it shouldn't be a back and forth, in my view.

The Speaker: That's the reason, Government House Leader, why I asked for something substantive.

I will plan to make a ruling on this matter tomorrow morning at 9 a.m.

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Bill 2

Growth and Diversification Act

[Debate adjourned March 20: Mrs. Littlewood speaking]

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the bill in second reading? The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to Bill 2, Growth and Diversification Act. This government and this minister are continually looking for ways to position themselves as the great diversifiers because, of course, before we had an NDP government, every single Albertan worked in oil and gas and the economy was a hundred per cent focused on one industry and the Alberta advantage was just some odd fantasy dreamed up by Conservative spin doctors. But funny how almost every Albertan knew what it, and by that I mean the Alberta advantage, meant to them. It meant something different to almost every Albertan, but it did mean something.

Ignoring, of course, that from 1986 to 2016 Alberta's GDP grew from \$59.6 billion to \$314.9 billion and that during those 30 years oil and gas and mining decreased as a percentage of total GDP from 23.2 per cent to 17 per cent and that without oil and gas Alberta still represents the third-largest economy by GDP in Canada, ahead of British Columbia – Alberta was able to grow in part because previous governments worked extremely hard to make Alberta the most business-friendly environment in Canada and perhaps in North America and one of the few debt-free jurisdictions in the world. Corporate tax rates were reduced, personal income tax rates were reduced, yet the economy continued to grow and the tax base with it.

Just yesterday we heard the minister of economic development say that “because Alberta has not had these programs previous to our government, it left Alberta and Albertans at a competitive disadvantage. So what we've done is levelled the playing field.” Minister, this is curious to me as, if I recall correctly, in 2013-2014 Alberta created fully 87 per cent of all of the new jobs in Canada, in fact 82,300 new jobs, and all of that with a supposed competitive disadvantage and an unlevel playing field. I think that unlevel playing field was once called the Alberta advantage, but so I digress.

Alberta had the highest median wages in the country, not the highest mean, the highest median, indicating that the data was not being skewed because of a select few who were making an inordinate amount of money. A growing economy isn't all that valuable if everyday, hard-working, work-seeking Albertans are unemployed and if we cannot generate the wealth and thereby the tax revenues to balance our budgets without reaching deeper and deeper into the pockets of hard-working Albertans. Kind of like what we have right now, where the Minister of Finance says that things are looking up, up, up while Calgary has the second-highest unemployment in Canada among major cities, and Edmonton is tied for third.

Madam Speaker, as Edmonton is fully represented by government MLAs and hence might be considered a stronghold, I would just like to read a quick quote from the CEO of the Edmonton chamber of commerce. I quote: “Some might say the tide has turned, that we're on our way back to prosperity, but has it? Are the difficult times truly behind us? That's not what I hear. Things on the ground appear to be still as much of a struggle as ever. The news people read gives them hope and encouragement, but as a bottom line impact there's another story.” Unquote. Not exactly what we hear from the Minister of Finance, is it? Green shoots and sunny ways, indeed.

3:10

So the government has decided that to turn the tides, they will introduce Bill 2, the Growth and Diversification Act. This bill builds on Bill 30, Investing in a Diversified Alberta Economy Act, which introduced two tax credits, the Alberta investor tax credit and the capital investment tax credit. During the debate on Bill 30 members of the opposition continuously told the minister the scope of the AITC was too narrow and would result in reduced uptake. Well, lo and behold, if you go on the government website as of March 20, you will see that roughly 5 per cent of the money designated for the AITC program remains unallocated, almost as if the scope could have or should have been expanded, not to narrowly pick winners and losers that align with a specific world view.

As a whole I think both Bill 30 and Bill 2 are focusing on the trees at the expense of nurturing a mighty forest. Both bills are basically applying what I would call a Band-Aid to a critical injury or perhaps throwing candy at us after taking away our plate of meat and potatoes. Madam Speaker, choose your own metaphor. They

all paint a picture of trying to undo a failure of economic, regulatory, and fiscal fundamentals. We wouldn't even need programs like this if this government had not so severely damaged Alberta's attractiveness for business and investment and business and investor confidence.

Madam Speaker, the University of Calgary School of Public Policy issues a number of excellent publications throughout the year. One of my recent and personal favourites is an October 2017 paper co-published by former Saskatchewan NDP Finance minister Dr. Janice MacKinnon. In this paper they highlight the importance of real economic growth as a key factor in reducing government deficits, growing the economic pie, as it were, instead of trying to find new ways to slice it in many different ways and to reach deeper into those slices. They state that to grow the economy, you need to consider important factors like the right tax mix and the creation of a positive environment for investment.

First, they briefly looked at the Saskatchewan NDP of the 1990s. To spur economic growth, this incarnation of the NDP abandoned traditional NDP policy, which supports raising taxes on businesses and high-income earners in the name of tax fairness. However, as this paper notes, raising corporate and personal income taxes discouraged investment and economic development. In the interests of being pragmatic and doing what is best for the citizens of their province at that time, the Romanow government, perhaps counterintuitive to their ideology, actually lowered business taxes, royalties, and reduced income taxes for high-income earners. This led to economic growth and eventually balanced budgets.

MacKinnon then contrasts this approach with the approach taken by the Alberta NDP. They state:

In contrast, the Alberta NDP has raised taxes for larger businesses and high-income earners, increased environmental and other regulations, imposed a carbon tax, significantly increased the minimum wage and has run large deficits, raising the prospect of future tax increases to balance the budget. Taken as a package, the message to potential investors is that doing business in Alberta is becoming more difficult and more expensive. Hence, changing some of these measures and creating a more investment climate would promote more economic growth and enhance government revenue.

My favourite line from that paragraph is: “Taken as a package, the message to potential investors is that doing business in Alberta is becoming more difficult and more expensive.”

That is the crux of this issue and the issue with the government bringing in legislation like Bill 1, Bill 2, and Bill 30. The government has gone out of its way to erode the Alberta advantage. They have introduced cost after cost after cost, and they wonder why the Minister of Finance's talking points and debt tolerance are so different than the experiences and priorities of everyday, hard-working Albertans. If the government had not implemented all of their negative policies in the first place – dare I mention the all pain and no gain carbon tax – there would be no argument, no justification nor need for programs like these because Alberta would have no hurdles or issues attracting and retaining investment or worries about competitiveness in all market sectors and industries, including capital markets. If you drill 20 holes into a bucketful of water and then plug them with one, two, or even three – plug those holes, your economic bucket is not going to hold a whole lot of water. That is essentially what this government has done. They took a bad situation and made it worse. Now they're turning around and pretending like everything is rosy and that these Band-Aid, candy-like, hole-plugging programs will save Alberta and attract back the investment we truly need for robust and sustainable economic recovery. Those arguments and your bucket, Minister, do not hold water.

Madam Speaker, what Alberta needs is to recommit to becoming the most business- and investor-friendly jurisdiction in North America. We need to get back to making sure that the world knows that Alberta is open and looking for business and welcomes new investment and that we respect investors, the risks that they take, the jobs they create, and that we do not jealously covet the profits they might earn. Unfortunately, this government has demonstrated little promise in this area. Sadly, I think we will be seeing the impact of that negligence, the product of a misguided NDP world view, for years to come. Again, these Band-Aid, candy-like programs are simply not good enough. The NDP world view, quite frankly, is failing Albertans, and it is quite clearly failing Alberta business when it is clear that our economy requires large-scale, fundamental, and some might say ideological change to get Alberta back on track for a bright, prosperous, and sustainable future.

With that, Madam Speaker, I move to adjourn debate. Thank you.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Government Bills and Orders

Third Reading

Bill 3

Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2018

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's my privilege today on behalf of the hon. Minister of Finance and Treasury Board to rise and move third reading of Bill 3, the Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2018.

This interim supply bill will ensure that the normal course of government business can be carried out for the first two months of the 2018-19 fiscal year as the Assembly takes the necessary time to discuss and debate Budget 2018 through the Committee of Supply process. By passing this interim supply bill, we are ensuring that government can continue to fund the programs, services, and infrastructure Albertans rely on as Alberta begins a new fiscal year on April 1. The full details of the budget will be presented tomorrow, March 22, and the estimates will be fully debated in the Legislature in the coming weeks.

In the meantime, Madam Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board I encourage my colleagues on both sides of the House to support this bill.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Do any other members wish to speak in third reading? The hon. Member for Little Bow.

Mr. Schneider: Very good. Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's indeed always my honour to stand in this House and speak and today to speak to Bill 3, the Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2018, a whopping five pages – a whopping five pages – that ask this Legislature to vote in favour of defraying certain charges and expenses of the Legislative Assembly and the public service of Alberta, charges and expenses of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta that were not otherwise provided during the fiscal year ending March 31, 2019.

Just let me see here for a minute. How many numbers have we got? Let's start with schedule 1, Legislative Assembly. It looks like \$29,420,000. Now, of course, that's like a lottery win to just about anybody on the planet. Things start to get a little vague after we are able to read that number of \$29,420,000 under the heading of legislative supply.

Turn the page on this – I hate to say large bill, but the numbers in it are large. If we turn to page 3 of the five, we see a breakdown of

what the money is actually going for. But wait. There is quite a bit of money under this heading. I believe there are nine – yes, nine – headings, but they're just headings, basically, with a number that follows behind.

3:20

Let's look here at the very first heading under Legislative Assembly, support to the Legislative Assembly. That's what it says, Madam Speaker: support to the Legislative Assembly, \$13,528,000. That is where most of this \$29,420,000 under the heading Legislative Assembly goes. Now, if I were to want to take a shot at what that \$13 million is going to, I wonder what I would refer to. What document, which I certainly don't have, tells me what the \$13,528,000 to the Legislative Assembly is actually for? You know, I don't know. We're doing some work over at the Federal Building. I don't know if we're doing a facelift on the Legislature Building. Maybe the Federal Building is considered a part of the Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Mason: Point of order, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Schneider: I could be corrected on that. You know, I can't quite throw a rock from here and hit it.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, we have a point of order. Go ahead, hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm not certain of my point of order, so I certainly stand to be corrected. It is my understanding that support to the Legislative Assembly is actually determined in the Members' Services Committee. It has been delegated to the Members' Services Committee directly and is not normally debated in the House. Now, what I'm not sure of is whether this applies as well to interim supply. In the past in opposition I was ruled out of order by the Speaker for attempting to debate support to the Legislative Assembly precisely because that has been specifically delegated to the Members' Services Committee. I guess I'm asking more for direction than making a definitive point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: I don't have the exact answer to that at the moment, but I suspect that you're on the right track. Perhaps, let's hear a little more.

Did you wish to speak to that?

Mr. Nixon: Yeah. I would like to respond to that, Madam Speaker. While the hon. Government House Leader may or may not have a point – I don't know the answer – he himself indicated as he rose that he doesn't even know if he has a point of order. Of course, with due respect to you, Madam Speaker, you've indicated that you don't know if there's a point of order. I'm not hearing anything from the table officers that we pay to let us know if there's a point of order. So I am a little troubled about the instruction to a member of the Legislature to not continue a line of questioning to the government during interim supply or supplementary supply debates on a hypothetical rule that may or may not exist.

Madam Speaker, with due respect, I think that the member should be allowed to continue unless we confirm that that in fact is true.

The Deputy Speaker: My sense on this one is that it's the nature of what you were discussing. You weren't really directing specific questions to the government, looking for answers. You were more articulating what your thoughts were on this. I guess, be careful that we're not put in that position where you're actually questioning some expenses that maybe are more appropriately dealt with in Members' Services.

Go ahead, hon. member.

Mr. Schneider: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. That certainly is something that I wasn't aware of, and I appreciate the hon. Government House Leader bringing that forward. I guess in response: I can't ask a question in this House on what support to the Legislative Assembly is about?

The Deputy Speaker: Just to clarify, hon. member, I don't believe that's the direction that the Government House Leader was going in with that, but there is a past precedent regarding asking questions in the House about matters that are under the purview of the Members' Services Committee. I believe that's where the issue lies.

Mr. Schneider: Okay. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I won't ask any questions about it. Basically, I guess I did ask a question of where the money came from. Okay. Fair enough.

I guess I can't ask these questions. All the things that I was going to bring up, Madam Chair, that talked about, you know, that maybe we were going to hire security: that's just something that weighed in the back of my mind. Or maybe the rugs needed replacing, you know, something like that. All that sounds a little ridiculous, admittedly. But, folks, I guess we have a committee that understands what the money that goes to the Legislative Assembly means. I guess a question I have is: would the backbenchers of the NDP government have any idea what that means? Would they have any idea what the \$13,528,000 is to be spent on, or would only the committee members?

I mean, when the NDP government has a caucus meeting – like, let's talk about the last caucus meeting before interim supply was presented in this House. Were all the members on the other side of the House given a binder explaining what this amount of money was for in this very first item under Legislative Assembly, and did it kind of say where the dollars were split up and where they were heading? I guess that binder wasn't available to this side of the House. I'm sure that it wasn't available to the members sitting where I could hit them. These guys didn't receive anything that says where that money is being spent.

I guess the point here is that the government, Madam Speaker, has asked this House to approve Bill 3, a bill that at the end of the day is asking us to approve a supply of money from Albertans to cover shortfalls in the budget that this same government put forward in March of last year, a bill that is asking this House to approve somewhere north of \$8.5 billion, basically, with not enough information, certainly, in this five-page document to appease, well, I guess something like a grade 6 accounting class. No context, not one word of context that would tend to give a hint as to what the millions and millions of dollars that are sprinkled throughout these pages are being sent to, some 30 headings on these five pages. Well, maybe the front row knows. Maybe the front row was involved in knowing all those numbers.

Anyway, I guess the point here is that it's grossly apparent that this government is chronically underprepared. Chronically underprepared. What that invariably leads to is a government that is less transparent and accountable to Albertans. Albertans: remember those folks? They're the ones that pay the freight around here. Try to remember who those folks are. They're the ones that are asking where all this money is going, this \$8.5 billion.

I mean, I'm just not sure how to answer that for the councillors, all the councillors over at Rural Municipalities of Alberta this morning. How do I tell those folks that were asking me this morning where the government is spending \$8.5 billion, based on what's in this document of five pages? You see, Madam Speaker, those councillors and their CAOs that were also present over there today are from all over rural Alberta. Those folks are family members and family people, too, just like all of us in the House here. They have

children that they are just trying to get through high school or elementary or junior high school or university, the point being that they have children that at some point in the future will be having children themselves who will be faced with the kind of reckless spending that this government has imposed on Alberta. Our children's children will be trying to pay down the debt that this government has incurred.

When interim supply was introduced in this building, it was the morning of March 13. On the morning of March 14 we started debate. As you know, Madam Speaker, I think my colleagues did a pretty good job. They asked some pretty good questions of the Finance minister, considering that they had 24 hours to prepare to ask the Finance minister about an \$8.5 billion expense with, really, no information whatsoever, a five-page document that the best accountant in town would have trouble deciphering because there's no information other than a huge 10-digit number that most calculators won't even recognize.

3:30

Madam Speaker, my colleagues that asked those, well, what I would consider pretty good questions even though they had no information to work from were stonewalled at every turn. I guess that's the best, most appropriate comment I can make. When my colleagues asked really good questions that sought more specific information about where interim supply was actually being spent, the Finance minister and the rest of Executive Council – I mean, seriously, if they could actually find another member of Executive Council to answer a specific question – basically did the same thing. My colleagues were stonewalled by those that were attempting to answer the serious questions that they were putting forward, well-thought-out questions, even though they were only given 24 hours. They were stonewalled, or Executive Council members just plain failed to provide any specific information on the questions that were being asked.

You know, Madam Speaker, it really is unacceptable for the members of this House to be told that they will have to wait until the budget is announced on Thursday before they can actually find out where the money is going. It seems like that is backwards, in my line of thinking. You know what that is? That's politics. Politics is getting in the way of legitimate questions to the Finance minister and/or Executive Council on behalf of – remember the folks that actually pay for the stuff around here? – Albertans, on behalf of those folks.

With little or no information to substantiate or describe or explain the numbers in this five-page document that would hardly make a good paper airplane, this Legislature is being asked to provide this out-of-control spending with not quite a blank cheque but a cheque for \$8.5 billion without having the foggiest idea of where the money is going. Madam Speaker, there isn't enough information here to even begin to suggest what the money is for, and \$8.5 billion is no insignificant amount of money, as we all know.

Even when we had the opportunity to ask questions during interim supply debate, all we got were generalities, lots of "Wait for the budget" and "That will be answered in the budget." Heck, you know, between interim supply and supplementary supply questioning, we'd be lucky if the minister in charge of that ministry was around to answer the question, not that any of the answers, to be perfectly honest, were in any way forthcoming.

But \$8.5 billion being asked for over and above is very telling, very telling indeed. I guess the question would be: how is it that this government can't get somewhere near what they budgeted prior? Being \$8.5 billion short is no small number. Don't get me wrong; I understand that governments before have done the same thing. We've heard the folks from the other side say over and over that

they've got Albertans' backs and that they're going to do a better job with accounting. I guess that if this government had been prepared with a budget on time, interim supply wouldn't have been required.

Now, it was my understanding – and I'm always prepared to be corrected – when I got here in 2015 that in normal years the fiscal year-end of government was March 31. I'll repeat that. If the government had been prepared well in advance of that March 31 deadline, it's unlikely that we would be having this meeting at all. Estimates would have been within a week of being completed by now. Certainly, we would have come back to the House earlier than we tend to, and who would have an issue with that? I mean, we're getting paid to come to work. I'm sure we'd all be prepared to come to work. Or, once again, is it that this government is underprepared by such a huge margin that getting the budget, let alone bills – they sometimes are delivered to our desks still warm – actually done on time is a hurdle too high to jump?

That kind of gets back to the root of the problem. Why do we need interim supply? I know why the government says that we need interim supply: because we need to keep the lights on and pay the bills and keep the front-line staff working and collecting paycheques. Once again, if we had determined that we should come back to the House early, probably sometime in February, and had the budget and estimates passed in March – well, you get my point. It's feasible. It seems common sense, but as I said last week, I think, here in the House, Madam Speaker, common sense just ain't so common any more.

Madam Speaker, it's unlikely that most average, common-sense Albertans, that see a 10-digit number as something that is just about incomprehensible, would continue to support a government whose spending is so remarkably out of control. Every budget since this government took office has been extreme. Albertans have been watching for nearly three years now, and folks that didn't used to worry about such stuff, people that walk up and down Main Street, Alberta, and that we run into, are asking us questions all the time. Albertans are worried about their and their children's children's future. This government is putting those futures at risk, and I think that's wrong, and so do those average, everyday Albertans that walk up and down Main Street, Alberta.

That being said, I appreciate the opportunity to stand in the House and speak today. Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the bill in third reading?

Hon. Government House Leader, on behalf of the President of Treasury Board do you wish to close debate?

Mr. Mason: No.

[Motion carried; Bill 3 read a third time]

Bill 4

Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2018

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. On behalf of the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board it's my privilege to rise today and move third reading of Bill 4, Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2018.

The Deputy Speaker: Any members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Mr. van Dijken: Yes. Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my honour to speak to Bill 4, Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2018. It's a bill that does concern me, with the abilities of this government to be able to properly budget and set priorities for the coming year and be prepared for what their priorities and what Albertans' priorities should be for the fiscal year that is before us. So we take a look at the budget process in the previous year or the current year, that we're in, that we're just finishing up, and here we are.

We're seeing a government that wishes to increase spending by approximately 1 and a half billion dollars, and we have to ask: why? Is there a good reason? I would suggest that on a few files there were some unexpected expenses, but also I would suggest that on the vast majority of it, it was decisions made by this government to increase spending, it kind of looks like, because there was more revenue available to spend.

I find it interesting that on my ride home to my constituency on Thursday last week the media was contacting me and needing to get a better understanding of why the Official Opposition decided to vote against certain items within this supplementary supply. I believe that what needs to be recognized is that the Official Opposition is voting against the ability for this government to ensure that they keep their spending under control. It's very important that they recognize, before a budget year starts, that priorities have to be set at that time and not that all of a sudden, because there's extra money available, they're going to spend some more money.

3:40

The media was asking me relative to the spin that one of the other MLAs in my region was putting forward, the fact that the Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater put into the local paper an article with regard to rural crime. As part of that, his comment was: "So you can imagine how surprised I was when on March 15 every UCP member in the House voted against \$37 million in much-needed funding that would help fight rural crime all across the province."

What surprises me, Madam Speaker, is the fact that rural crime was highlighted well over a year ago, close to two years ago as a significant concern, so the priority should have been there already. Yet this government failed to recognize that that was a priority and failed to fully recognize the need to put in place what is necessary to help alleviate some of the difficulties we're faced with in our rural crime.

It's also concerning to my constituents. You can imagine how surprised my constituents were when a couple of years ago we had a government that said that there were not enough resources to put into more judges at that time. My constituents were incredibly surprised when this government set their priorities to spend \$10 million on advertising for the carbon tax, for their climate leadership plan. My constituents thought that that was a complete waste of money and that it would have been much better spent on some of the priorities that this government needs to focus on, and that is enforcement of the rule of law. You can also see that that was wasteful spending.

But we also see a government that is going down a road, in certain aspects, of inefficient spending. When the Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater is highlighting that there was \$37 million needed in an ask from Justice and Solicitor General for increased spending for rural crime and he's surprised that we voted against that, we also recognize and my constituents recognize that this government has wasted or spent inefficiently \$200 million on AHS laundry/delivery services. Madam Chair, \$200 million, \$200 million that could have been spent on other priorities. But their ideology decided that it was time to remove a privately held

contract and move that in-house, so they decided to spend \$200 million extra on laundry.

For the Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater to think that the UCP was voting against \$37 million to help fight rural crime is a spin that I believe all Albertans see through. All Albertans recognize that this government has been in the practice of not only wasteful spending but also inefficient spending, and when they do a budget – and the budget is coming down tomorrow – we have to ensure that the priorities of this government are recognized at this time and that we don't have to be faced with a situation where now the government is requesting another 1 and a half billion dollars of spending.

I would suggest that this government has a spending problem, and when we start to see several requests throughout the year for increased spending for many of the departments, then it does become a concern that they were not able to properly budget at the beginning of the year. I would encourage them to do better this time – and, hopefully, they will do better – so that when we do see revenues in excess of \$2 billion higher than expected, this government doesn't find themselves wanting to spend it.

The Finance minister said this morning at RMA that money was put towards MSI funding. Why? Because they recognized that it's necessary funding. But at the same time, was that not recognized last spring when the budget was developed? Why was there all of a sudden a change of heart that now we just about double MSI funding? Is it because we can, because there was increased revenue? Yes, I would suggest the Finance minister led us to believe that this morning. The minister said that because we had the capacity to increase funding, they decided to. But it's all borrowed money. The capacity was the same last spring as what the capacity is today. It's all borrowed money because this government is running a colossal deficit.

The decision to spend \$800 million more in MSI funding was a decision based on: well, we had the financing in place, so let's use it. Is that wise fiscal prudence? I don't get to see all the numbers, but I would suggest that when you're out on a budget item by just about half of what you're going to spend on it now, \$800 million, that's a significant miss on the ability to budget properly. Albertans expect governments, when they put a budget in, to try their level best to follow their budget and not to just make decisions on the fly because they had capacity.

You know, Madam Speaker, opposition members have been raising the issue of rural crime for over a year. It was known last spring when the budget was put down that this was a serious problem, and the government decided not to recognize it at that time. It does give me some comfort that they've now recognized it. I hope they've recognized it for what it is because in a country and a western, developed society that is able to enjoy peace and security from rule of law and protection from others, not only protection from other citizens but also protection from government, rule of law enforcement is critical to ensure that our citizens feel that they are safe to enjoy life in Alberta. It is one of the highest priorities, I would suggest, of any government in this land.

Obviously, UCP supports additional police officers for rural Alberta; however, the NDP has repeatedly refused to answer when Albertans can expect to see these new officers in their communities. I believe it may be some time. At RMA this morning there was also concern on the backlog, that we don't have the officers in place that are being fully funded, so there's a whole other discussion to be had there. But we have to ensure that our citizens can feel that their safety and their ability to feel safe at home is a high priority of any government.

Supplementary supply is riddled with spending that we absolutely cannot support because I do believe that departments need to live

within their means. If we get into situations where departments can easily move from living within their means, then, really, what confidence do we have that this government will live within their means and protect the fiscal well-being of this province and of Albertans? This government proves that they are not protecting taxpayer resources in a manner that gives Albertans the impression that this government really cares for fiscal responsibility.

3:50

The problem is that this government has a spending problem, which supplementary supply completely fails to address. The deficit went down from \$10.4 billion to \$9.1 billion, so what does the NDP plan to do? They have decided to spend 1 and a half billion dollars more than originally planned. You know, we saw where revenues were up well over \$2 billion, and now because revenues are up they decide that: well, we're going to spend 1 and a half billion dollars more. But your capacity to spend wasn't any greater because you're in a position where you have to borrow the 1 and a half billion dollars that you propose to spend. That doesn't make Albertans feel any better. The people that are feeling good about this are the guys on Bay Street, the guys on Wall Street, the guys that we've got to go to to finance this kind of a spending habit. I believe that government can do better.

I have concerns when MSI funding all of a sudden doubles, and it begs the question: what changed? The only thing I can come up with is that revenues went up. So we're in a position to now spend more? I suspect that the money isn't even going to be able to be spent by the end of the year. So are we playing games now with Albertans and putting in place what the government wants to put in place as spending into this fiscal year? Can the money even be out the door by the end of the fiscal year?

I don't know those answers. Only the government knows those answers. I would suggest that, yes, the government has to sleep at night, too, so probably best not to be playing games with Albertans, especially on sums of money such as this, large, large sums of money. Most Albertans, I would say probably 99 per cent of Albertans, have very little understanding or can really get a good feeling of the size of that amount of money, 1 and a half billion dollars, can't even imagine what that feels like.

But the other thing it also does do is that when we see that a government proposes to spend a certain amount and then now moves into discretionary spending and decides to spend more, it makes credit agencies reassess the ability of the company, the government, to do proper budgeting, that they can feel confident that the board of directors, the government in this case, that this company is under good management and that they can and they know how to stick within their means and they know how to budget properly. Credit agencies look at this and they say: "Wow, I don't know if I can trust that. I'm not sure that this is good, sound planning." Do we put ourselves at risk of another credit downgrade?

Now, thankfully, my critic department, Infrastructure, is not asking to spend more money this fiscal year. I'm thankful for that. That says to me that they're living within their means, and that's a good sign. But 37 times departments went to Treasury Board asking for more money last year. Some examples: Agriculture and Forestry went back seven times; Labour, four times; Service Alberta, four times; Transportation, four times; Municipal Affairs, three times; Environment and Parks, three times; Culture and Tourism, twice; Justice and Solicitor General, twice; Advanced Education, once; Seniors and Housing, once.

Economic Development and Trade wants to transfer \$10 million from the expense vote to the capital investment vote for a capital grant to Alberta Innovates Corporation for the Alberta carbon conversion technology centre. It sounds like possibly a good idea. I

heard about this place down near Calgary that's going to pull CO₂ right out of the air. But I question whether or not this is a sound investment based on a company in Squamish, B.C., called Carbon Engineering, which already is doing much the same thing, maybe even the same thing that we're spending the \$10 million on. This side of the House and Albertans would like to know, need to know: is this \$10 million being directed in a way that we can feel confident that it's not lining the pockets of government friends? I suspect that will be a question in estimates. Is that wise spending?

Incorporated in 2009 and privately owned, Carbon Engineering is funded by private investors, some of them well-known names: Bill Gates, Murray Edwards. Most people in this place would recognize those names. Carbon Engineering grew from academic work conducted on carbon management technologies by Professor David Keith's research group at the University of Calgary and also Carnegie Mellon University.

So this technology has been invested in, and possibly we can see where Alberta Innovates is seeing research going in another direction, and that might be helpful. But, you know, I'm thinking that Albertans would like to know if that's a good investment. Otherwise, why are we investing in technology that has already been invested in and proven? That wouldn't make sense.

United Conservatives are talking about common-sense solutions to problems that Albertans face. We are committed to defending Alberta. We are committed to defending its industries against a host of ideological policies from not only the Alberta NDP but also from its cousins, the British Columbia NDP, and their close friends in federal government in Ottawa that threaten our long-term prosperity. This is a significant concern of many Albertans, that our industry is being threatened by ideological governments that are closely aligned with our NDP government here.

All of this spending from supplementary supply means that the government fails to address the issue of increasing debt and deficit. As I said, Madam Speaker, the 1 and a half billion dollars, every dollar, is borrowed money. We've been borrowing money for probably the last few months because we haven't been able to bring in enough. The realization that this growing debt is a concern . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the bill?

Mr. Cyr: I've heard extensively about this government's inability to spend responsibly, but I'd like to hear more about the growing debt that this government is putting onto our children and our children's children for generations to come. I would love to hear more on that.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, 29(2)(a) doesn't apply. You'd be speaking directly to the bill. The member's speaking time has expired.

Mr. Cyr: I apologize. I thought it was 29(2)(a), and I believe I spoke on this one already.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you. I'd like to speak a bit about the debt that our kids and our grandkids and future generations are going to have, never mind the clogging of our economy for our job providers, our wealth creators and how that's going to reduce our competitiveness, you know, in our economy.

My goodness, three years with this government and we're already at \$50 billion of debt, estimated to be at least \$71 billion, Madam Speaker, in just another year. It seems like every time they find a little bit of saving, it gets spent and more, more again.

I think back to when Canadians had to face some tougher times, you know, a few years ago and when Albertans had to face some tougher times a few years ago and how Albertans were willing to bear down and pull their weight and make things happen. But it wasn't easy. It wasn't easy to have to have those hard-earned tax dollars go to pay interest and go to pay debt.

4:00

You know, I look at the \$1.5 billion that this government just borrowed for supplementary supply, and – what a coincidence – this government also spent \$1.5 billion in interest last year, interest that, of course, we've heard many times, just goes to pay the rich, pay bondholders in New York and Switzerland and around the world. The big concern with debt, of course, is that that's what it is at the end of the day, the poor and the middle class just paying the rich. So that concerns me greatly.

I wonder at this government's way out of this because I think back to what we just saw, Madam Speaker, in the Q3 update, where even this government, who drastically raised personal income tax rates, who raised corporate tax rates 20 per cent at the same time that major competitors of our commodity markets are reducing their taxes 40 per cent – and what happened? You know, you like to think that when a store raises its prices, it actually has more revenue. You like to think that when a government raises their tax rates, it could actually maybe go to reduce the deficit or provide some policemen for rural crime or something to make Albertans' lives better.

But, Madam Speaker, the exact opposite happened. In the last quarter, personal income tax revenue was down \$322 million from what they budgeted. Corporate tax revenue was down \$66 million from what they budgeted. We have a situation where revenues are down and expenses are up and spending is up, so when this government comes to us and asks us to write a blank cheque for interim supply because they didn't get their budget done on time and now for supplementary supply because they overspent by a billion and a half dollars . . .

Mr. Gill: How much?

Mr. Barnes: A billion and a half dollars.

Mr. Gill: Is that a "b" or an "m"?

Mr. Barnes: It's with a "b," a big "b," a capital "b."

Unfortunately for our kids and our grandkids and our economy, they're the ones that will have to endure this, and what a problem that'll be down the road as this money has to go to interest instead of to services.

Another problem, though, that I have with the supplementary supply is what it doesn't talk about. My hon. colleague from Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock talked about the MSI and how there's an astonishing \$800 million for our municipal partners, municipal partners that have many needs and are faced with the economic slowdown, that this government has managed. They're looking at, you know, linear taxation being re-evaluated and brought down, which, as the value of those assets falls because of the layers and layers of burden that this government has added to our good industries – it probably only makes sense that these companies come back and look for a fairer taxation level. But at the end of the day, it comes out of Albertans, and it comes out of the services that can be provided.

I wasn't clear myself on the answer that the minister gave today. The question was clear: is this \$800 million that you're using for MSI a shell game? Is it just borrowing the money in this year's budget to put into next year's to make it look like the deficit will be lower next year? I didn't hear a clear answer from the ministers. I'm

very, very much looking forward to estimates, when we have the chance to see if this \$800 million is, in fact, a shell game to make it look to Albertans like they do have a plan to, you know, get closer to balance, although the reality is – you know, for Albertans, thank goodness that the Official Opposition is here to ensure that money, hard-earned tax dollars, money taken from job creators, is spent as efficiently and effectively as it can be. I look forward to the actual budget. I look forward to the estimates. I look forward to getting answers on what is really happening with that \$800 million of MSI, that we really had one day to research and look at before it hit our desks.

But while we're talking about \$800 million, the other thing that this government doesn't like to talk about and which was in the Q3 update is \$771 million that was put into the budget, put into our expenses to pay the cost of their failure on the Balancing Pool and the power purchase agreements . . .

Mr. Nixon: Secret agreements.

Mr. Barnes: Secret agreements.

. . . money, Madam Speaker, that is coming directly out of Alberta families, directly out of Alberta communities all around Alberta, money that with a little bit of foresight, with a little bit of oversight, with a little bit of acumen, with a desire to ensure that Alberta's competitive advantage of low-priced electric generation was maintained – instead, this government, for ideological reasons, threw all of that away, threw it away in a way that, again, our communities, our kids, and our grandkids are going to have to pay.

What I'm surprised I didn't see in the supplementary supply that was in the Q3 update: I think I have a number of \$230 million from the climate leadership plan in surprise grants.

Madam Speaker, I guess what I'm talking about is transparency and the failing grade that this government has earned on this one. We have a situation where MSI money looks like it's part of a shell game. Even though, in my six years in here, I and others have stood up many times and said, "Let's budget properly for floods, for wildfires, for natural disasters," no government has listened to that. Of course, the money still has to come from the taxpayer or be paid back by our kids and our grandkids. Shame on not being transparent and open to the Albertan taxpayers as to what that's going to cost.

I'm dismayed at how this was presented, with a day's notice. I'm dismayed that in the Q3 update we had a \$9 billion deficit but no mention of the \$5 billion borrowed for capital funding. Obviously, the taxpayer, the future generations of Albertans cannot pick and choose what debt they pay back and which debt they don't pay back.

Madam Speaker, I will close with the burdens, the layers of rules and regulations that this government has put on our economy, our wealth providers, our job creators, on their opportunity to work hard, to build Alberta families and communities. They're faced with a 20 per cent higher tax. They're faced with a provincial tax that can be as much as 50 per cent higher now. What this government is seeing is a failure to generate more revenue from these huge increases.

So the prudent thing to do would be to address your spending. The prudent thing would be to look for savings and efficiencies. Instead, this government has put our kids and our grandkids approximately \$71 billion in debt in just four short years, a number that is per capita easily – easily – I think, or even not per capita, Canada's biggest provincial deficit by miles right now. It's a burden that our kids and our grandkids don't deserve. It's a burden that only together, through the skills and the quality of our good people in the commodity markets, whether it's oil and gas, forestry, or agriculture, we'll be able to get out of.

Madam Speaker, I am pleased and proud to be voting against this government's big-spending ways, and I will ask all of my colleagues to do the same.

The Deputy Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) now comes into effect if there are any questions or comments.

Seeing none, are there any other members who wish to speak to the bill?

Hon. Members: Question.

The Deputy Speaker: You're ready for the question?

Hon. Government House Leader, do you wish to close debate?

[Motion carried; Bill 4 read a third time]

4:10 **Government Bills and Orders** **Second Reading** *(continued)*

Bill 1 **Energy Diversification Act**

Mrs. Pitt moved that the motion for second reading of Bill 1, Energy Diversification Act, be amended by striking out all the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 1, Energy Diversification Act, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship in accordance with Standing Order 74.2.

[Adjourned debate on the amendment March 20: Ms Ganley]

The Deputy Speaker: Any members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate this opportunity to get up and speak on Bill 1. Now, this bill is regarding energy diversification. I always like to see exactly the intent the government has got when it comes to their bills, so I like to go to the press releases. The press release I'll be referencing is Investing in a Diversified Energy Future. It was released on March 8, 2018. Now, the first paragraph here is: "New initiatives would create thousands of jobs, attract billions of dollars in private investment and secure Alberta's energy future through diversification and innovation, under legislation introduced today." That's very impressive. Getting into the fact that I believe that this legislation should be referred to committee, I will go through this press release as well as some of the other things to show the importance of making sure that we get this right.

Now, with the fact that this is the second round of money that's being put out, my big question is: did the first round work? I don't think that's unreasonable, and I don't think it's unreasonable to see if the committee can investigate that and come up with whether or not the first tranche of funding worked as had been anticipated. Do we just take the government's word that it's hugely successful and everybody is happy? Or do we actually do our jobs and look at something as important as making sure that we diversify our economy?

Now, I'd like to talk about a quote that the Minister of Energy put forward:

We're taking bold steps to help the energy industry innovate and diversify. These measures are not one-off fixes – they're part of our made-in-Alberta plan for a more diversified and resilient economy that's built to last . . . no Albertan is left behind.

wouldn't we want our MLAs to be able to make sure that they get input to be able to make sure that the viability of Alberta moves forward?

Now what I'm going to go on to is the throne speech. We've talked a little bit about the press release, but I think that the throne speech is something that actually sets the direction here. On page 6 of the throne speech, under the heading *Diversifying Our Economy*, the first line is:

Albertans want off the resource royalty roller-coaster.

If that is the case – and I would say that nobody wants to see our economy tied to oil and gas royalties – then why wouldn't we want our Resource Stewardship Committee discussing the best way to get off this roller coaster?

What happens here, to move further down under this point, is that it says:

The first bill will focus on diversification within the energy sector. As we work to diversify the markets our energy resources can access via pipeline, we will also do more to add value to our resources right here at home.

That's Bill 1.

Bill 2:

The second bill will focus on diversification across [the] economy.

And

The third bill will focus on laying the groundwork for new renewable energy jobs and an [energy] system [that has] more stable prices.

So we've got a minister or ministries that are putting forward bills that are saying that our goal here is to diversify. It is so important that they've come up with three separate bills to do that. Why cannot our government accept the fact that we really need to move something this important to committee? I don't think this is unreasonable, especially with the fact that we are looking at this government's inability to be able to consult with its stakeholders.

Now, what I'd like to start off with here is to show that the government hasn't been perfect in its rollout of past diversification bills. There's a Bill 1, coincidentally, from 2016-2017, the *Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act*. This was put forward by the Minister of Economic Development and Trade and was arguably one of the largest failures that this government has put forward. Now, it was in the end so much of a failure that we don't even see the Economic Development and Trade minister in this first bill announcement. This announcement is only done by the Energy minister.

We've already had something move forward that flopped, so we're trying it again. The first time, I believe, it flopped because they didn't use committees to actually identify how to get this right. We need to go back to basics. We need to start using these committees as they were designed for, not throwing through legislation that is arguably just as important. But what we need to start doing is saying that if this is the keynote of the Premier's vision for the province, why is she not including all the Alberta MLAs in this vision?

Now, I'm going to read the preamble for the other Bill 1, just parts of it because I don't want to go through the whole bill.

Whereas Albertans desire a prosperous and vibrant economy that offers employment opportunities for Albertans of different skills and backgrounds;

Whereas all areas of Alberta, from rural communities and indigenous communities to the largest cities, will benefit from a stronger and more diversified economy;

Whereas the Government is committed to supporting working people and their families and supporting businesses in their efforts to create and retain jobs and to diversify the products and services Albertans sell and the markets Albertans sell into;

Whereas by harnessing the opportunity for diversification and investment, Albertans can realize additional jobs and benefits from Alberta's many resources; and

Then this last one:

Whereas accessing additional markets will give Alberta exporters and manufacturers more opportunities, choice and certainty.

That was the preamble from Bill 1 from 2016-2017. I'm going to read you Bill 1 right here:

Whereas Alberta's bitumen production can realize better overall value for upstream producers through large-scale partial upgrading technologies;

Whereas Alberta will benefit from a stronger and more diversified economy if it takes full advantage of the opportunities its hydrocarbon feedstock provides to create value-added processing and the production of secondary and tertiary non-energy products.

You'll find that these statements from both of these bills are very close to each other. One is, overall, saying that we need to manage our entire economy for Alberta. One is being very focused on saying that we need to address some of the upgrading that we're doing here. Both are saying that they're out to diversify the economy.

You know what? I do believe that the NDP are looking to diversify the economy, but we're spending a lot of money doing it, which is why it is so important that we get this right. We've heard from the minister already, saying that this is a long-term vision. Well, let's get everybody onboard with this vision. I don't believe that's unreasonable to say.

4:20

I want to go into the panel that has been set up by the minister. Now, this panel was the Energy Diversification Advisory Committee. What we ended up doing was that we created a committee to start to review the best ways to create diversification in Alberta. Now, we ended up with some committee members – and I would like to thank the committee members for their hard work. You can see that this 167-page report they did had a lot of thought put into it. I do understand that there are concerns when it comes to the members themselves, but again giving some, I guess, leeway to the government, I do believe that they're trying to find ways.

When I looked through the report, what I saw was that this committee met a total of six days. We've got March 13 and 14, March 28 and 29, May 2, and June 12. Six days. Then we've got one-on-one meetings with the stakeholders. Now, my curiosity in all of this is: who met with these stakeholders? Was it the committee members, or did we have government officials? Now, again, this is why it is so important that this get referred to a committee. We need to know these intricate facts that are coming forward.

We have two committees which, I would argue, would fit in this, the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future and the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship. You can't tell me that one of these two committees could not find the best route to go. We've got billions and billions of dollars on the line when it comes to making sure this gets done right.

According to the Alberta Industrial Heartland Association there is a potential for \$30 billion in new capital investment in the heartland by 2030 with potential infrastructure, a skilled work force, and government support. This is the press release again. We're talking billions and billions of dollars, which is why I talked to my colleagues across the aisle. It's important that we get this right. We don't know if the first tranche of actual investment worked. We should look at it and make sure this is the right direction. You know what? If it worked, I will give credit to the government.

The first time Bill 1 flopped. But you know what? The fact that they're willing to go to industry and say, "What works for you?" and actually seeing that result that we're hoping for is a win for all Albertans, and that includes the opposition.

I would like to move on, and I'd like to say that what we're seeing here, it appears, is an exercise of this government trying to distract from their current record. Now, what we've seen with this government is that right now they're trying to deflect us from the current size of our deficit. We've heard about this. What's problematic about this is that if we put billions and billions of dollars forward to these projects potentially through government guarantees and tax credits, we are putting our children on the hook for a ton of money.

The whole function of our government is to make sure that we discuss everything that goes through this House, especially when it comes to large sums of money or protecting our citizens or making sure that in the end we always are debating what's important to Albertans. But right now it appears that we're ramming legislation through this Legislature on one committee who met six times with it looks like multiple different businesses, which is good. I have to say that this is a step up from what we saw from Bill 6.

What we're looking to do here is say: let's review this report. We have 36 recommendations. Why not sit down? It could be that the Minister of Energy may have chosen the wrong direction to follow in this report, but we'll never know because in the end it was not debated. What we're looking at here is a report that – I looked at the PDF date on it, and it appears that the report was put out in February 2018. Now, if I'm incorrect, then the government can feel free to correct me, but that shows that we've had a very small amount of time. Now, I do know the government had it probably before it was released.

The Deputy Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a). Any questions or comments? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I just wanted to make a few comments about what my colleague here is saying around the referral. I'm hearing a couple of different things from him. One would be that there's a concern that we haven't done enough consultation, so I would just like to, you know, put out to the hon. member that these are some of the different places that we have consulted with.

First, we had the Energy Diversification Advisory Committee, that was responsible for the overviewing and writing of the report. They consulted with Cenovus Energy, Dow Chemical, NOVA Chemicals, Suncor, Inter Pipeline, Mega Energy, the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, the Chemistry Industry Association of Canada, Methanex, Seven Generations Energy, Shell Canada, Sherritt, ARC Financial, AltaGas, Imperial Oil, capital region board, the MD of Greenview. There's a list that goes on and on about the different organizations that were consulted with in regard to making sure that we were actually looking at what potentials we had.

The other thing that I also find really interesting is that over the last few years since we've been elected, the Official Opposition has continuously said that we don't support the oil and gas industry, that we haven't been having conversations with anybody about the oil and gas industry, and, you know, that it's the driver of the province. Well, they're absolutely right. The oil and gas industry is the driver of the province. We acknowledge that. We are working with them. This is a very clear sign to investors in Alberta, to investors across the world that we are extremely serious about looking at the oil and gas industry, not in the context of how it exists today but in the context of how we can look at diversifying it so that

we can get even more production and even more value out of our industries.

It's interesting because on one hand they're saying that we're not listening to Albertans, yet when we respond with a bill that is very clearly listening to what Albertans have been telling us, then they say: well, you haven't consulted enough.

Although they could send it back to a committee, although I don't support that because I find it interesting – I mean, I would be very curious to find out from the hon. member who he feels that we've missed talking to, who he sees outside of this list that he feels is more important than talking to everyday Albertans, than talking to our constituents. We all door-knock in our party. We are all out there talking to people. I represent the heartland, so I'm talking to people that are working in the heartland all the time about different options that we can do. So I'm not quite sure what piece we're missing here.

The other component that I think the hon. member also was speaking about was, you know, the money that's being spent. Let's be clear. There has been an offer put out by the government to provide some investment dollars. The commitment around those investment dollars is very clear, that the product has to be built and that the product has to be in production before any dollars will leave the province. Like, the government is not giving any money until they can actually prove that these industries are viable. There's that piece.

There's also the piece of the fact that the opposition says that we are driving industry out of the province because we're not incentivizing enough, and then we come forward and say, "Well, we're going to incentivize so that we can keep industry here and give them a very clear message that we want them to build in Alberta." They say, "Well, don't do that." But the reality of it is that anywhere internationally, whether it be the United States in Louisiana and Texas, whether it be overseas, every single government is supporting the oil and gas industry in their upfront development costs. It's the reality of it. We are competing right now with Texas and Louisiana, the United States, our biggest competitor. They are subsidizing and supporting their industry to build new refineries, to build new industry, to build new manufacturing, and now the opposition is saying: well, let's refer it; let's stall it; we don't want this bill to go forward; we want more consultation. What it really sounds like to me is that they just want to refer it so that they can stall us out because heaven forbid that the NDP, the new diversification party, actually has a good plan, that makes sense, that's going to get us what Albertans need.

4:30

I think it's time that we all just look at what we're doing, recognize that this is in the best interest of all Albertans, get this bill passed, and stop talking about referrals. Let's actually start diversifying because that's what we should be doing. That's what's going to bring revenue into this province. I would love to hear from the hon. member on who he thinks we've missed.

Mr. Cyr: I would make a correction. I think it's the new debt party. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other hon. members to speak? The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today on Bill 1 and the amendment. I absolutely support the referral amendment to the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship. This is absolutely the place to discuss this bill, this is absolutely the place to make this bill as good as it can be, and this is absolutely

the place to ensure that all Albertans have their chance to come forward to be heard.

Madam Speaker, I think back to my time on the Resource Stewardship Committee in 2012 and 2013. Two of the interesting proposals that we looked at were high-speed rail and the opportunity for an alternative of more electric generation ideas, run of the river principally, in three Alberta rivers. My goodness, I was very pleased. I was very impressed with the process. All kinds of experts came in that understood those two dynamics and had an opportunity to talk to both sides, the government and the opposition. Through us and through the transparency and how that gets put out to all Albertans, it was really an ideal opportunity for them to speak to all Albertans. It gave an opportunity for a report to be written. It gave an opportunity for everybody to have a second thought and to have their input.

At the end of the day, you know, we're transferring hard-earned tax dollars, taken from a family, taken from a productive individual, and giving that to another participant in the economy. It's crucial that everybody has their say and that everybody has the opportunity to ensure that if this is going to happen, it is happening in the best way forward.

I'm always surprised at how it works in Alberta. Although I'm not very familiar with it directly, my understanding is that in Ottawa, in our Parliament, almost every bill goes to a standing committee. There are a couple of permanent standing committees. Instead of Committee of the Whole, in Parliament everything goes to a standing committee, where Canadians – experts, people with a vested interest, people with the best ideas – have an opportunity to come forward. Why in the world wouldn't we do that, Madam Speaker? Why in the world wouldn't we look at the opportunity and put the call out there to hear from all Albertans, especially when it comes to energy diversification?

Madam Speaker, we have seen so many jurisdictions get this wrong. We have seen so many jurisdictions burden families, their communities, and individuals with utility rates that have to be subsidized by the taxpayer, adding hugely to the deficit, a similar position that the Alberta NDP has put us in here. We have heard horror stories of utility rates going through the roof. We've heard of people in Europe, my goodness, seniors that have to make a choice between heat or eat, as I've heard it described. Here's our opportunity to ensure that we explore all the good ideas, all the best options for Alberta going forward. Again, this government, based on their ideological belief that they somehow know better than 4.1 million Albertans, people that spend their whole careers, all their time, in industry, in business, understanding how these things work, is not wanting to talk about it.

I'll also say that I don't know that the first one worked very well. Some information I saw showed that not all the money was picked up. Perhaps this government would have been a lot smarter, a lot further ahead, Madam Speaker, to have put that bill to the standing committee, where good ideas could have come out and made it happen. I talked to people that wanted to be part of that but weren't because they felt there were other problems, other roadblocks in the way of doing business in Alberta. How good would this be if at our Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship we got to hear from some of these people what the other reasons were that Alberta wasn't on the favoured list?

Of course, we've heard and talked about how prior to this government being elected, Alberta was the most favourable jurisdiction for oil and gas. It potentially led to a diversification of the economy by 40 per cent. We've all read recently, Madam Speaker, where we're 15th in North America just amongst the oil and gas producing jurisdictions, never mind all the other jurisdictions, the ones that don't provide that. Wouldn't it be good

to hear what this government did well, what this government could have improved on, what our last government did well, and what our last government could have improved on from those Albertans that live it, those Albertans that every time this government does something, it changes their ability to make a living, to care for their families, to send somebody to university or to take a holiday? Who better to hear from about what might be the best thing going forward?

You know, I heard a question earlier about: we have to provide these incentives; we have to do this to stay competitive. Madam Speaker, I do hear that a little bit when I'm out talking to constituents and wealth and job providers, but mostly what I hear is that what we have to change is all the damage that this government has done to our economy, all the damage they've done. The number one thing I hear about the most is the tax increase, increasing corporate taxes 20 per cent. You don't have to look very far or very hard to read that corporate tax increases are so easy to pass down to consumers and families. So good work. You just raised the cost of living for all Albertans, and you drove business out.

Somebody was telling me that the new Rural Municipalities yesterday about a project that somebody wanted to do in Texas, something to do with oil and gas – it was quite technical – and it took 24 hours to get approval. Twenty-four hours. Everything I've heard about in Alberta is two to four years. Everything I've heard about in our neighbouring province, a neighbouring competitor in this case, Saskatchewan, is around a week. I also understand that Saskatchewan and B.C. both took definite, direct action to reduce regulatory red tape and make it so that safe, environmentally responsible job and wealth producers could do business on a timely basis. Madam Speaker, that is maybe the number one thing we have to do to bring back investment.

If we talk about investment for a sec, we heard the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers mentioned earlier today in question period. I wasn't there, so this is a little bit of second-hand knowledge, but I understand they made a presentation showing how oil and gas investment in Alberta has declined by 40 per cent since this NDP government was elected. Forty per cent is just a number, but that's probably 50,000 or 60,000 jobs, Madam Speaker. That's probably why the people in Cypress-Medicine Hat and around Alberta are only making 60 per cent of what they used to earn, working hard in the middle of winter, 10 miles from the Arctic Circle, all those things that we all value so much. At the same time that we've dropped 40 per cent, oil and gas investment is up in America 70 per cent. So what is the difference?

If we destroy billions and billions of dollars of investment and value and we throw a billion dollars at it and we're not doing it in the right way, Madam Speaker, I would suggest to you that we're not earning our salaries. We're not doing the best job for our constituents. What a shame that is. Of course, every four years we have the opportunity to be held accountable by our constituents.

4:40

I hear time and time again how that hundred megatonne cap on oil sands production has let oil and gas companies turn back oil sands leases bigger than the province of Prince Edward Island. My goodness, maybe we just haven't got that right. Of course, at different times oil and gas companies paid millions of dollars for those leases. It makes me wonder – what has to change in our rules and regulations; what has to change in our taxation system? – that somebody would walk away from \$10 million, \$20 million, \$40 million because the economic environment has changed so much. Madam Speaker, these are the very kinds of things that the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship could hear about and could

maybe make a suggestion to this government on a better way to bring back jobs and bring back wealth producers.

Second to the 20 per cent increase in corporate tax, the number one thing I hear about is the carbon tax, one of the reasons that people are not prepared to invest in Alberta, not prepared to create jobs and create wealth. Madam Speaker, it's layered into every bit of our costs. We live in a wonderful, great big province, you know, but I've heard that everything that gets manufactured or touched here on average gets transported five times. If there's a carbon tax five times layered in and marked up 6, 8, 12, or 20 per cent every time, my goodness, how much longer before our families and communities will be facing even more hardship?

Madam Speaker, these are the very things that the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship should be hearing about, should have the opportunity to at the very least make sure that the NDP corporate welfare is directed to where it's going to do the most good.

The other thing I really liked about the time that I was on the Resource Stewardship Committee was how Albertans were able to be engaged. While I was on that committee as one of the opposition members – I think there were 10 or 11 of us – I received a number of e-mails from around Alberta, you know, the pros and cons of why people wanted us to look at high-speed rail, the pros and cons of why people thought we should look for more hydro opportunities. At the end of the day, when we're here as Albertans' representatives, it's an ideal way for us to take an extra two or three months and get it right. I think that in getting it right, that is where it starts. Let's involve and engage as many Albertans as possible.

I'm so grateful to represent Cypress-Medicine Hat, but probably my greatest joy is that you never know where the good ideas are going to come from. I can't count the number of, you know, young people that I bump into that say something to me that, holy smokes, would be a wonderful idea. Or I'm just out knocking on doors or I'm at a social event, and somebody will come forward with an idea that can really make Alberta better for our families and communities and really give all Albertans an opportunity to be more involved. Again, if we put this out, if we invite experts, if we invite Albertans, if we invite everyone who has an interest, an idea, and some expertise to be involved, this will make this bill better, not just better for the NDP, but it will make it better for all Albertans. At the end of the day, of course, that is why we're here.

Madam Speaker, let's not lose sight of the fact that we are blessed with the job of stewardship of Albertans' tax dollars. The top tax rate now – by the time we add the NDP 15 per cent provincial tax to the federal tax of 33 per cent, some of our people are paying 48 per cent of their income to income tax. At the very least – at the very least – we owe it to them to magnify that money so as many social programs are available and are as widespread as possible.

Of course, with Rural Municipalities here today, it's always a reminder of the challenges that people outside of metro Alberta have. The quality of life is fantastic, the independence is well loved and wanted, but it's hard to provide services. It's hard to do things in a cost-effective way. That's even more reason why we have to give these good Albertans the opportunity to come forward, the opportunity for them to be involved in how their money is being spent, the opportunity for them to be involved in the future of Alberta, and the opportunity for them to be involved in diversifying this economy.

Madam Speaker, I absolutely cheer for this economy to diversify. I absolutely cheer for more opportunities for all Albertans. I was reading a few months back about how something like 300,000 . . . [Mr. Barnes' speaking time expired]

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

Mr. Ellis: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to support my UCP colleague's motion to refer Bill 1, the Energy Diversification Act, to the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship, where in-depth consultation can occur with experts. Let me start by indicating our caucus's support for diversifying Alberta's economy and expanding our petrochemical sector as a means to do so. You know, as this NDP is learning, there are no quick fixes for diversifying. That's one of the reasons we need to scrutinize Bill 1 carefully.

This bill is proposing to use a mixture of incentives, also called taxpayers' money, to encourage the petrochemical industry to develop in Alberta. The NDP has claimed for years that it is doing wonderful things for Alberta's petrochemical industry, but this bill is its first effort to do so in three years. In the meantime it drove business out of Alberta with, you know, a 20 per cent tax hike, added rules and regulations, and, of course, the carbon tax, all of which had been mentioned by my colleague from Cypress-Medicine Hat. Have investors, Madam Speaker, swarmed to Alberta when other jurisdictions are lowering taxes, cutting red tape, and refusing to impose a carbon tax? Of course not. But having said that, we in the UCP don't want to reject this bill out of hand. Perhaps it has some value, but until we actually run it by, you know, the various businesses that it's aimed at, we just can't know.

So I support sending this bill to a committee for a full review. The Resource Stewardship Committee can invite stakeholders – in other words, those companies wanting to invest in Alberta – to discuss, you know, what kind of support they are looking for to invest right here in Alberta. Now, that all-party committee can consult with stakeholders to determine if the direction set by the proposed legislation offers a common-sense approach that will work for them. Why serve up hundreds of millions of dollars of taxpayer funds before understanding if there are simpler, more basic ways of encouraging economic diversification and development? Let's get in a room with members from all parties, compare notes from our constituencies, and meet with the developers that we are wanting to help.

Alberta's economic development has been stymied for three years, you know, since 2015, because approval processes just appear to be dragging on and on and on. Now, there are easy fixes. We can get everyone in a room to discuss publicly what works best for their industry and, quite frankly, Madam Speaker, just get it done. That's how you really do economic development. We would like to see companies lined up to come to Alberta, for it to be the land of opportunity. They just need a common-sense regulatory environment, infrastructure that will sustain their projects, and fast government processes. These are the things that are out of their hands but are in the hands of government. Since government has not listened to them, let's use the committee forum in order to do this.

4:50

Now, the standing committees and legislative policy committees have proven their worth time and time again. We in the UCP want to use them more to connect with Albertans and to help inform government about the most efficient ways to move forward. This bill, for the reasons I have already outlined, is a perfect example of one that contains concepts we need to run by the affected industries first.

Since I'm talking about the value of committees, if we're going to refer Bill 1 to Resource Stewardship, we have to unfetter the committee to allow it to take as many consultations as it wants to do. Our UCP members have been urging the NDP to allow our committee to perform other tasks. The Legislative Assembly has sent them a piece of legislation, of course, for them to review currently. When we're doing these reviews, we often wait for weeks for the public to provide submissions and then for presentations to be co-ordinated. Now, during those times the UCP members have been seeking the ability to continue to meet with many stakeholders, which, of course, is very, very important. We're sending in requests to the chair to speak with the committee. We'd also like to initiate our own consultations on issues pertinent to the committee.

Let me provide an example. The Resource Stewardship Committee has a lineup of six organizations, some of which have now been waiting for three years, Madam Speaker, to meet with its members. Our UCP members have made motions in committee to create working groups to meet with these patient stakeholders. These motions, sadly, have been rejected. We have even made a motion to change the standing orders to allow the committee to perform other business when the Legislative Assembly has handed it a task, because committees can and should be able to multitask, but the NDP members of the committee vote it down, sadly, each and every time.

So let me stress that they're voting against meeting with Albertans. In supporting this referral motion for Bill 1, I just want to take the opportunity to note the importance of changing the standing orders to allow the committee to work on as many different tasks as it wishes while also performing the work that the Legislative Assembly is requesting it to do. The NDP members of committees are using the standing orders, sadly, as an excuse not to meet and won't even let us set up working groups in order to meet.

Madam Speaker, we're stymied. At the last Resource Stewardship meeting the chair immediately shut down our UCP member and would not even entertain his motion. It is time that we free up the committees to truly work on behalf of Albertans, as they did prior to 2015. Let's send Bill 1 to committee because this government is going down a path that industry can help with and correct if we do consult and consult properly. Let's change the standing orders to avoid the NDP, you know, hampering the Members of the Legislative Assembly in listening to Albertans just because the government wants to take its own route on every issue.

Madam Speaker, to get back to the motion to refer Bill 1 to committee, let's not lose this opportunity to take the right steps for Alberta, for the very businesses we want to affect. I, of course, encourage all Members of this Legislative Assembly to support this referral motion.

Thank you for your time.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have to say that that was a very interesting discussion and reasoning that my honoured colleague brought forward. You know, when it comes to making sure that our committees are run appropriately, I have to say that if something is truly not working correctly, then it needs to be addressed. I think that's where my honoured colleague is really trying to go to here.

What we're seeing here in this specific case, though, is that this is a good example of a bill that should move forward to committee. This is a good example of changing the – I'm going to use it again from the throne speech: "Albertans want off the resource royalty

roller coaster." I would say that many Albertans would agree with that statement in the throne speech. Why wouldn't we want to make sure we get this right, make sure that we have the experts in place to ensure that we're able to fully review this legislation? I understand, again, that when it comes to our government, they're hesitant to move things to committee because that could potentially mean that it changes the bill from what the intended results would be. But if this bill is not a good bill, then it should be identified within that process, and if you go back to my honoured colleague, he is very clearly stating that right now that process doesn't seem to be meeting the needs of Albertans that are trying to get in front of that committee.

Now, I would say that we've got a government that appears to put committees together with no intent to actually involve MLAs for their feedback on exactly the best route to go. We've got to remember that the energy resource committee, the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship, is a nonpartisan committee, like all of our committees are. It's us working together. When the government makes it sound like we're there to stall or take other means to be able to prevent this bill from moving forward, that simply is not the case. What we're doing is that we're trying to move forward a clear idea of direction for this province. Yes – you know what? – our committee can only sit so many times, so we have to prioritize, but if this isn't a priority, then why is it Bill 1? Why is it clearly being labelled as a priority in the throne speech?

It's not unreasonable to say that we need to bring this legislation to a committee. We need to review it. We need to go through the consultation process to make sure that it is done fully. We need to bring experts in to make sure that this has been done correctly – that means sitting with stakeholders – and then ensure that it is done right. You know what? In doing something right for the long term – we're talking 20, 30 years – it is important to get it right. That means that, in the end, we're all involved with that process. Again, nonpartisan. Nonpartisan.

When the government is saying that they are not looking to refer this to committee, that is very disappointing, and to infer that the opposition is not interested in diversifying our economy is also an error on their part. I don't believe that the intent of any one of my colleagues would be to say that we don't want to see diversity in Alberta as well. I think that there are a lot of opportunities we can do and make sure that we hit those opportunities right so that we don't have to go back and correct it or where it costs billions of dollars, like what's happened with the Balancing Pool, where the government went in and made changes. They implemented a carbon tax.

In the end, what we've seen here is massive amounts of money going out to corporations because the government didn't understand all of the interconnections that came with that. That would have come out... [The time limit for questions and comments expired]

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

5:00

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway.

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my honour to rise today and speak on my colleague's motion to refer Bill 1, the Energy Diversification Act, to the committee. Once again with this NDP government – let me rephrase it. My hon. colleague from Edmonton-Manning said "new diversification party." I think let's go back to the reality; it's like a nondevelopment party, in my humble opinion, but anyway, that's a discussion for another day.

Once again with this NDP government bill we always get, like, this mixed bag of legislation. We don't truly understand what are

the ramifications of this bill without going into details with this bill. We do know that this bill includes hundreds of millions of dollars of taxpayers' money. That for sure we do know. This bill uses a variety of incentives with the goal of diversifying Alberta's petrochemical industry and other industries. Should these incentives prove successful, we could see boosted industrial development around Alberta. Alberta's Industrial Heartland northeast of Edmonton, Red Deer, Medicine Hat, and Grande Prairie could benefit. That's certainly a lofty goal, but only if they're successful.

We're not saying that we should not do this. We're just trying to say: let's look into the bill. Again, we do need time to delve into the details of this legislation. Even more importantly, the members of this House need to have the confidence that the companies at which these incentives are aimed actually want and need these incentives. Those are, of course, two different things, Madam Speaker. I mean, needing them to spur investment is one consideration, and wanting them is another one. We have seen the track record of this government when it comes to consultation: Bill 6, minimum wage, and the list can go on. But I want to stick to this bill right now.

When we're talking about hundreds of millions of dollars, I think as legislators we need to make sure that, you know, we take some responsibility for taxpayers' money. We need to make sure that they will do what this government wants them to do, which is what the whole ultimate goal of this bill is, to diversify the economy. As we all know, this government has a terrible track record of understanding the needs of the businesses. In fact, it has made great and alarmingly successful attempts to push business out of Alberta. We've seen that, like, almost approximately close to \$40 billion in investment has fled this province because of this government's policies.

This hasn't been lost on Albertans. The NDP is heralding Bill 1 as a piece of legislation that will counter its poor record. All of a sudden this government wants to be the champion of this province after, like, \$40 billion has fled this province yet has made clear to investors that their money is not welcome here. I don't know. That's the sense that this government is sending to investors around the world. I know my colleague from Edmonton-Manning is thinking it's funny, but it's not. You know, the contradictions are baffling, hon. member, and if they are baffling to Albertans, you can imagine how much confidence the investors can have in these statements made by this government. In fact, these incentives are spread over the next eight years. Then you really have to see if this bill is actually window dressing.

We're not saying that it is window dressing. I think the government is trying to make an attempt, but it is going to take more scrutiny to determine whether it actually builds a worthwhile foundation for more petrochemical investments. If that's the goal, surely the NDP doesn't mind waiting a few months as the Resource Stewardship Committee reviews it. After all, the NDP has already waited three years before trotting it out despite all the talks about diversification during that time. The government waited three years. Why can't we send it to the committee for a few months and let them involve the stakeholders, let them engage all the industries and see if this is a good thing for Albertans or not?

It is quite ironic that it has a new-found interest in attracting investment. Once again, in this province where we used to attract investors from all around the world, they have left this province. It is because of this government's poor policies. When this government was elected, Madam Speaker, and they immediately hiked corporate taxes, investors simply crossed Alberta off their list, just like, "Not interested," and went wherever it was an investment-friendly zone to them. So when the NDP brings forward a bill in the third year of its mandate and holds it up as the answer

to diversification, we are wondering if it is window dressing. What is the real intent of this government? If the NDP's track record was better at keeping and attracting businesses, this bill would have been another matter, right? That would have been another matter, but we've all seen the track record of this government with investment and businesses. That's why we're wondering, like: what is going on here?

Another problem we have with this government is that it loves throwing money around. Our province has, like, a \$10 billion deficit. Actually, sorry, it's going to be – what? – \$9.998 billion or something tomorrow. We'll find out. That's a little bit better. Now the government is keen to spend \$200 million in grants for partial upgrading and \$500 million in loan guarantees for feedstock and infrastructure. And there's more. It's topping it off with \$800 million in loan guarantees for partial upgrading. So far we're at \$1.5 billion. Those aren't large figures to this NDP government because when you're used to \$10 billion, \$11 billion – I don't know even know – by the time this government is done, \$70 billion, \$80 billion, \$100 billion. I don't know the deficit. This \$1.5 billion is nothing for this government, but it is a lot of money for the Alberta taxpayers. Is it a good use of taxpayers' money? That's a good question, and I think the stakeholders need to be at the table to answer that question promptly and accurately, if this is a good use of the taxpayers' money. Perhaps we will find out that this is a good approach by the government.

Right now we have this complex bill before us, and for all the reasons I mentioned, I think it needs some more discussion. I think the members on this side of the House, everybody is working in good faith, saying: let's send this bill to committee. I've personally seen us regardless of what party we represent put aside the partisan environment that is obviously on full display in the House. When we're working in committee, we tend to work together and come to good conclusions. The committee can reach out to stakeholders, as I said, Madam Speaker.

5:10

I think it's a good approach to send this bill to a committee. Yes, it does take time but not a lot of time for the scope of things that we're looking at. Like, this government took three years to get to this level, and now all of a sudden a few months is too much time. In my humble opinion it will get the right results. I think it's worth while. The results are very good when the committee is tasked with reviewing legislation. There's no doubt in my mind, Madam Speaker, that this kind of methodical review needs to occur with this Bill 1. Another reason for sending this bill to committee is that the inexperienced NDP government has a poor track record of creating legislation that has unintended consequences.

Madam Speaker, we had Bill 201 by my hon. colleague from Highwood. It was Bill 201, Employment Standards (Firefighter Leave) Amendment Act, 2018, which the hon. Member for West Yellowhead spoke on from the government side, the hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville spoke on from the government side, and the hon. Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater spoke on from that side.

I have a copy of the *Hansard* right now, March 19, 2018, page 207. I was just searching it while I was here. This is from the hon. Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater, and this is their explanation of why the government wanted to send this important bill to the committee.

Now, one thing I would have to say, though, in looking over the bill, is that I think the intent is excellent. However, this isn't something that I've actually had an opportunity to talk to people in my riding about. I haven't had a chance to talk to the fire chiefs that I know on just how this is going to work in practice. I think,

you know, that like so many things that come before the House, sometimes the devil can be a bit in the details.

The Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater, basically, is justifying why we need to send Bill 201 to the committee for bigger engagement.

If the government can take a stand on that bill, Bill 201, which is a very important bill alongside this bill as well – I think they're both important – to send it to committee for a fulsome consultation, I'm just wondering: what is the problem with sending this bill to the committee? Why are there two different standards? When the opposition members bring a bill, it needs to go to committee, which will never see the day, but when it's a government bill, then it needs to be pushed right away. I think it's a double standard.

Let's pause, legislators from all sides. Let's do the right thing while we're all here to represent our constituents, represent Albertans, over 4 million people, and investors and send this bill to committee so that we can have a fulsome discussion. Hopefully, this is the best thing the NDP has ever discovered. We will find out.

I hope that we can get the support on this thing. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other speakers wishing to address the amendment?

Seeing none, are you ready for the vote?

[Motion on amendment REF1 lost]

The Deputy Speaker: We're back on the main bill. Any further speakers? The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

Mr. Westhead: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I move that we adjourn debate on Bill 1 at this time.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Consideration of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor's Speech

Ms Sweet moved, seconded by Mr. Malkinson, that an humble address be presented to Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor as follows.

To Her Honour the Honourable Lois Mitchell, CM, AOE, LLD, the Lieutenant Governor of the province of Alberta:

We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.

[Adjourned debate March 20: Mr. Bilous]

The Deputy Speaker: Any members wishing to speak to this? The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

Ms Kazim: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is my honour to rise today in the Assembly to respond to the Speech from the Throne as the Member for the amazing constituency of Calgary-Glenmore. The word "Glenmore" is derived from a Gaelic word, "mór gleann," which means big valley in English, and my name, Anam, is a Gaelic term for soul. Therefore, I'm pleased to say that it is my honour to be the anam mór gleann, soul of the big valley, by being the MLA for Calgary-Glenmore.

Madam Speaker, Calgary-Glenmore is a vibrant constituency that consists of highly active and engaged community members, leaders, and associations. It is known for its beautiful parks,

landmarks, churches, synagogues, highly reputable schools, long-term care facilities, and seniors' homes.

The uniqueness of this riding is evident when we look at the Glenmore reservoir. The reservoir is a source of drinking water for Calgarians and also connects various parks of the constituency with each other, namely: Heritage Park, the only living history museum in Canada to represent the western culture; North Glenmore park; South Glenmore park; and Weaselhead/Glenmore preservation park, which is one of the three designated natural parks in Calgary. I'm especially proud of the recently opened Variety park in my constituency as it is an inclusive park for people with disabilities, the only park of its kind in Calgary. I advocated strongly for this park, which was able to open due to the strong support of our government and community members. In addition, the Glenmore reservoir connects the Calgary Canoe Club and the Calgary sailing club, which is run by people with disabilities.

I'm also very proud of our government's southwest Calgary ring road project that not only reduces commuters' time but also helps further strengthen and connect our communities to one another.

The other important places that offer services to our constituents and many other Calgarians on an everyday basis include the Rockyview hospital, Calgary Jewish Centre, SouthWest Communities Resource Centre, and the community associations of Braeside, Cedarbrae, Chinook Park, Kelvin Grove and Eagle Ridge, Haysboro, Oakridge, Palliser, Bayview and Pump Hill, Lakeview, and North Glenmore Park.

In our riding we have a variety of excellent schools that give parents a choice in education for their children. For example, there are Calgary board of education public schools, Calgary Catholic public schools, charter schools, private schools, and home schools.

In the Speech from the Throne Her Honour talked about all the work that's ahead of this government, and I'm pleased to be able to play a part in this. As mentioned by Her Honour, when our government was first elected, we inherited an economy in free fall. The boom had ended, and the bust had just begun. But this bust was unlike others that had come before, different not only for its severity but in how we chose to respond by working to make life better and putting the priorities of regular people first. We did not rest idle or turn our backs on the day-to-day needs of people and families.

After years of overcrowding, hundreds of new schools have either been built or are under construction. More will be announced this year. Furthermore, we introduced a new school nutrition program to help kids get a good, healthy meal to start the day. This year that program will expand. I'm proud to step up today to support our government's initiatives to ensure our children have access to the best education in schools of their choice.

Another factor that makes our constituency so special is the fact that it borders on the Tsuut'ina Nation reserve. There has been a continuous engagement between the Tsuut'ina Nation people and the residents of Calgary-Glenmore. In the Speech from the Throne Her Honour mentioned that when our government was first elected, we made a government-wide commitment to make sure that the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples was respected in all policy deliberations.

Our government is working to keep that promise, and it is paying dividends. Initiatives such as affordable housing for indigenous people living off-reserve, the climate leadership plan, the renewable energy program, the curriculum review, work to better protect children in care, and more have all been strengthened because we engaged with indigenous people and their interests in a constructive and practical dialogue. The government will also take action in response to the child intervention panel so that we can do more to help vulnerable children and to reduce the number of indigenous children in government care.

5:20

Madam Speaker, when there is balance, there is fairness, and when there is fairness, there is success. Calgary-Glenmore is a perfect example of this balance, and I'm honoured that I have the opportunity to bring my constituents' voices to this Assembly every day. Fairness is also at the heart of our government, and the Speech from the Throne highlighted this commitment. As Her Honour mentioned, when government fails to work for people, inequality rises. Since coming to office, our government has ensured that Alberta makes progress in building a fairer province.

Our government understands that the people who work across our public sector are integral to the services Albertans rely on. We have already reached practical agreements, with no raises and better job stability, with many labour partners, including teachers and nurses, and a tentative agreement has been reached with our allied health professionals such as paramedics, lab technologists, and X-ray technologists. We have also extended the pay freeze that covers all government managers for two more years while also expanding its reach.

At the same time our government is committed to making sure that taxes on people and businesses remain the lowest in Canada. Building on our work to reduce exorbitant salaries in government agencies, boards, and commissions, work that has seen salaries cut significantly, with some executives seeing their salaries cut to the tune of hundreds of thousands of dollars a year, we will now focus on our postsecondary institutions. We owe it to our students to ensure that funding for education goes where it belongs, the classroom.

Madam Speaker, I'm very proud to stand up for my constituents and work with our government to protect continued funding for our schools, hospitals, and the services on which Albertans rely. Those times are gone when the poor and the most vulnerable have been left behind in recoveries of the past. In this time of economic recovery our government makes sure that this recovery works for everyone. Therefore, our government is working hard to make sure that every Albertan can live to their fullest potential by supporting our most vulnerable neighbours through improving income support programs. In addition, a review of the persons with developmental disabilities program is being conducted to determine how best to support persons living with disabilities.

Madam Speaker, families, children, and seniors are at the centre of Calgary-Glenmore, and I'm proud that our government has made the well-being of children, families, and seniors as the centre for our government as well. In the Speech from the Throne Her Honour talked about the fact that hundreds of thousands of families have received financial support through the Alberta child benefit and the enhanced Alberta family employment tax credit. Further, more affordable housing for people has been built and better supports for seniors have been introduced. Our government also pioneered a new, affordable, high-quality child care program so that the paycheques of new parents go further. I'm looking forward to working with our government to expand that program this year.

I am very proud to be a voice for the residents who work day and night for the success and sustainability of the communities in Calgary-Glenmore. As a resident of Calgary-Glenmore I want the best for my neighbours. I want to ensure that my constituents are employed with good jobs, that can support their families, and enjoy the quality of life that makes Alberta the best place to live in. I'm looking forward to participating in the steps our government will be taking to further diversify our economy and build a more resilient future. As more workers are finding more jobs in manufacturing, tourism, and renewable energy and our economy is looking up, now is the time to help more Albertans find jobs in new areas of opportunity.

There will be three bills aimed at diversifying our economy, with the first bill focusing on the diversification of the energy sector. This will help diversify the markets our energy resources can access via pipeline. We will also do more to add value to our resources right here at home.

Madam Speaker, in conclusion, community building is my passion, and I will continue working hard to strengthen communities in Calgary-Glenmore. The word "community" can be seen as the combination of communication and unity because, to me, the key to a strong community is communication and unity. As such, I will ensure that my constituents are continuously engaged and involved in this process to build the best vision for our constituency and communities.

Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) allows for five minutes of questions and comments.

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to be able to rise and speak in this House in response to the Speech from the Throne, which, with all due respect, really appears more than anything else to be a government trying to position themselves for the next election. I assume some of that probably comes from the reality that recent polls show Albertans expressing a significant amount of distrust for this government. They have no faith in this government's ability to stand up for them or their interests. As a matter of fact, I think a recent ThinkHQ poll revealed that 55 per cent of Albertans feel that the NDP has had a negative impact on their life since taking office.

However, whatever their motivation underneath may be for this throne speech, let's look at some of the details. I will say that I'm pleased and thankful to see that a throne speech delivered on International Women's Day gave credit and recognition to the women of our province and indeed to the world. I truly believe that the women of our communities should be celebrated and acknowledged and cherished for all that they do because many of them do really make a sincere and strong contribution to our province, to our communities, and to our lives. I just really want to take the opportunity also to express my own personal appreciation and thank you to all the women of our communities.

I would like to take a minute also to look at the portion of our throne speech that refers to the need for Alberta energy to get to Canadian tidewater. This has been an important issue and a bone of contention for many Albertans, who look with confusion, quite frankly, at the flip-flop that this NDP government has demonstrated. Leading up to and in the beginning of this NDP government's tenure, they were adamantly opposed, quite frankly, to the oil and gas sector as a way to build prosperity in this province. They wanted anything and everything but that and looked for every opportunity to disparage the oil and gas industry, the wealth that it produced, as somehow something that was tainted and, actually, the people that contribute to it.

However, in the throne speech, after months of sitting idle on the Trans Mountain pipeline, all of a sudden now they've come out and they speak about their new, united conviction that a new pipeline to a Canadian coast is a must, has to be built, and how the land lock must end. It sort of sounds like something out of a Conservative playbook, but let it be. Let it be. I'm glad to see that they now agree with us and have stated in the throne speech that billions of dollars have in fact been wasted and lost, that thousands of good, mortgage-paying jobs have been tossed out the window, that money that should have been in the pockets of hard-working Albertans – actually, the phrase in the throne speech was "Canadians." But,

really, it's Albertans that earned that for the benefit of the rest of Canadians. In fact, all that wealth has made its way where? South of our border, to our competitors.

Indeed, I find it fascinatingly interesting that the *Globe and Mail* has pointed out just recently that there are thousands and thousands of U.S. lobby dollars spent to shut down Canada's economy and prosperity, \$40 million in fact to hundreds of enviropolitical activists who shut down Canada's economy, who disparage our industry and our product and the people who produce it and, in fact, have brought a great deal of loss to the Canadian economy.

5:30

But it isn't just the lack of NDP support for the pipeline that has sent business south of the border; it has been NDP erroneous ideological policies that have also hurt business growth and sent investors out of this province by the billions. Minimum wage has hurt businesses. The carbon tax, labour compliance laws, WCB's lack of clarity: all of these things and multiple other reasons have contributed to investors picking up and leaving or, worse, going out of business. There are many restaurants in this province that have gone out of business.

The sunflower seed plant in southern Alberta finally had enough, closed up shop. Where did they go? They moved their operation to the U.S. and set up, and they're going to continue the same thing in the U.S., where the environments are better. In my riding, when I first came to office, Rahr Malting was looking at doing a major, major expansion here in Alberta to produce brewing malt. Because of endless regulatory compliance issues, their company finally decided to forget it. They went to the U.S. and set up a whole new plant there, and they're producing it in the U.S. We grow the best barley. The production should be here. But, no, now our barley is going to get shipped south of the border, and they'll produce it there. Not to mention all of the oil and gas companies, the oil and gas service companies, the oil and gas manufacturing companies who have closed up shop or have been severely curtailed, laid off hundreds and hundreds of people. There are literally acres of industrial shops and warehousing in the Red Deer region that are closed and empty because of the policies of this government.

Regarding the dispute with British Columbia, which has triggered an attack on Alberta's jobs, this should have been dealt with immediately. This is why Albertans need a government that will stand up for their jobs, for their economy, for their prosperity, and for their future.

I'm actually glad there's at least an opposition that stands up and speaks. The United Conservatives have been offering common-sense solutions to everyday Albertans and to the real problems that we've got. They're actually interested in common-sense, real solutions. We're committed to defending Alberta and its industries against a host of ideological policies not only from this Alberta NDP but from their cousins in British Columbia and then also from their friends in Ottawa, who have threatened our long-term viability. Not only that; our prosperity and, in fact, the honour of what Alberta produces as a product and a service enriches Canada. We have governments that are more interested in virtue signalling than in providing good jobs for people and taking care of them and providing the kinds of fundamental, system-wide policies that allow industry to prosper and to grow.

The statement that this government has been vigilant in defending workers is just simply not accurate, and Albertans know that. To date very little has really been done. Albertans can only hope that the talk is going to be more than just talk. I will say, though, that time is ticking, and the Alberta NDP should really have taken up UCP's calls for these things and come back to the House early in February for an emergency debate on these issues, with

what's happening in B.C. Perhaps we could have even had this resolved by now if we had done that.

There's been a considerable amount of confusion also of late regarding the plan to balance the budget depending on pipeline construction. That's like gazing into a crystal ball. This government early in its tenure was so against using resource money to employ Albertans, and now it's done a complete one-eighty. It's no wonder Albertans are confused. Under the section where you discuss how things are looking up so great and so wonderfully, there are a lot of Albertans that find that very hard to believe, a lot of Albertans who are very confused by that kind of language. They struggle in their own reality to see that actually happening.

The speech talks about new jobs, yet we still have over 165,000 unemployed Albertans, 26,000 more than when this government took office. Last month alone 10,500 jobs were lost and replaced by part-time gains and low-paying jobs that don't really pay the mortgages. There are currently nearly 43,000 unemployed youth in Alberta. The youth unemployment rate is 13.1 per cent, the highest outside of Atlantic Canada. There were 92,000 fewer payroll jobs in Alberta at the end of 2017 than there were before the recession came. Calgary currently has the second-highest unemployment rate in Canada's major cities, and this government tells us that everything is looking up and beautiful. This government doesn't acknowledge that Edmonton is currently tied for the third-highest unemployment among Canada's major cities. People are making less money. They've got fewer job prospects. Things are not going well at the personal level for many of these people who've had to take much lower paying jobs.

Then if you still want to think that Albertans should believe that the tough times are behind us, the reality is that 73 per cent of businesses surveyed have repeated that their costs have increased due to the carbon tax and all kinds of other things. They're actually predicting about 60,000 fewer jobs by 2019 due to the increase in minimum wages across the country and, as I've said, the carbon tax and labour compliance and some of these other things.

The tourism industry is reporting that it's struggling. The government wants to tell us that it's all up and beautiful. Well, except for the mountain parks, which are the only bright spot in this province right now, the tourism industry is down. The Hotel & Lodging Association has been very clear about the fact that their room rental rates are down with the increased costs. We have figures from them that indicate that the carbon tax levy on room rates impacts them by about \$300 a year. That's \$30,000 that they're paying for a 100-room hotel just on that. They're saying, quite truthfully, that the industry is not healthy, that they're not actually making money, and that things are not looking good for them.

I just had a conversation last week with a major high-density housing builder in Calgary. They're struggling. They're hardly able to sell a house at what it costs them to build it, and they're selling very, very few houses because things are not up. Jobs, housing, tourism, hotel and lodging, restaurants, and construction. Also, I know guys who were making lots of money in construction who are actually trying to build furniture in their garages now to survive. You know what? The government wants to say that things are looking up, looking up, looking up. Well, we're so far down the hole at the moment with these policies that it's going to be a long ways up.

Albertans themselves are not convinced that the tough times are all behind us. They're not thrilled about where we're at, and they're still struggling. What we should be talking about in this province is that we really need to continue to work hard, we need to dig down deep, and we need to do what Albertans do when things are tough and make things better. To just sort of try and present some fairy

tale that everything is getting better and all is well: just not true. C.D. Howe Institute said that the NDP plan to boost the province's minimum wage will probably lead to a loss of 25,000 jobs long term. This is a stark reality. Things are not necessarily looking up, and we can't pretend that Albertans don't realize this reality.

I don't dispute that we would all like to see things looking up. I think the members on the opposite side want to see things looking up, but that's not the reality we're at yet. We may get there at some point, but the truth is that we are not actually there yet. To try and somehow just keep saying it enough times and hope it's actually going to come into existence isn't being very realistic. I really believe that this government does want to do what's best. What I dispute is that the government's disastrous ideologies are not working, ideologies for which they did not have a mandate, no matter how much they want to try and say that they did. Most people didn't know what was coming.

I believe also that all of the members on the other side of the House are starting to actually believe that these disastrous ideologies aren't working; otherwise, why the flip-flop, the complete one-eighty a year before the general election? Or is it just electioneering? Why is it that I can go through the Speech from the Throne and pick out multiple places where it sounds just like they came out of a Conservative handbook? Very strange indeed. Electioneering. It's a sign of a desperate government that's willing to say anything to try and get re-elected.

5:40

As much as the stark reality of this economy stares us in the face, I think it's time that we begin to actually look at the future with

some realism, with some real confidence instead of fairy dust and determine to build a more resilient economy, one that puts us back on the path to economic security, one that builds fundamental and systemic policies instead of picking select businesses to have as bragging points. The reality is that Albertans are looking for better days and hoping for it, but they're not going to find it with this government, and this throne speech won't be able to deliver it to them in the end.

Once again, with all due respect, as I read through the throne speech, I just see an NDP government positioning themselves for the next election instead of listening to real . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, the hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Yes. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I move that we adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you again, Madam Speaker. I want to thank all participants for the excellent debate we've had this afternoon and move that we adjourn the House until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:42 p.m.]

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