



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Thursday afternoon, March 22, 2018

Day 9

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (NDP), Speaker
Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (NDP), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (UCP),
Deputy Leader of the Official Opposition
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Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (UCP)
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (NDP)
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)
Bilous, Hon. Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)
Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (NDP)
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (NDP)
Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (NDP)
Clark, Greg, Calgary-Elbow (AP),
Alberta Party Opposition House Leader
Connolly, Michael R.D., Calgary-Hawwood (NDP)
Coolahan, Craig, Calgary-Klein (NDP)
Cooper, Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UCP)
Cortes-Vargas, Estefania, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (NDP),
Government Whip
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Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (NDP)
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Eggen, Hon. David, Edmonton-Calder (NDP)
Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (UCP)
Feehan, Hon. Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP),
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Fildebrandt, Derek Gerhard, Strathmore-Brooks (Ind)
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Official Opposition Deputy Whip
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Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)
Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)
Hanson, David B., Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (UCP)
Hinkley, Bruce, Wetaskiwin-Camrose (NDP)
Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)
Horne, Trevor A.R., Spruce Grove-St. Albert (NDP)
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Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC)
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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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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Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

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| McIver | |

Standing Committee on Private Bills

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Standing Committee on Public Accounts

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| Fraser | Nielsen |
| Hanson | Rosendahl |
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| Kleinsteuber | Vacant |
| Loewen | |

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, March 22, 2018

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

I'm just curious if anybody in the Assembly has bought a new pair of shoes today.

We have a very busy day, so I'd ask you to keep your introductions concise and descriptions of tablings brief.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

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

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure if the students from Webber Academy are here; I was told that they would be in later. But while I have this moment, I'd certainly like to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Legislature the students from Webber Academy, located in the fine constituency of Calgary-West. They are accompanied by their teachers, Mrs. Valerie Ellard, Ms Jennifer Harriman, and Mr. Steve McMurdo. I'd like everybody to give them the warm welcome of this Assembly, if not now, when they do arrive.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to introduce to you and through you to Members of the Legislative Assembly the staff of the Alberta Teachers' Association, who are joining us today as a professional development opportunity to learn a bit more about the work of the provincial government. If we can give them the traditional welcome of the Legislature, I would appreciate it.

Thank you.

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

Loyola: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour and privilege to introduce to you and through you to all the members of this Assembly 112 students from Michael Strembitsky school in the riding of Edmonton-Ellerslie. They're joined by their teachers, Tanya Boyko, Peter Utivlugt, Kelly Boudreau, and Lynnell Gagnon, as well as their parent chaperones, Daisy Rai, Eric Chi, Maninderjit Sauger, and Samar Al-Hajjaj. Please give them the warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

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

Seeing and hearing none, the hon. Member for Peace River.

Ms Jabbour: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to the Assembly three of your special guests, who are currently sitting in your gallery. I'll ask them to rise and remain standing when I call their name. First of all, Perry Deering is the president of the Medicine Hat & District Chamber of Commerce. Along with his wife, Chris Deering, Perry runs his family business, Deerview Meats, in Cypress county. His wife, Chris Deering, is not here yet. Sarah MacKenzie is the first vice-president of the Medicine Hat chamber of commerce, who has worked at family-owned, Medicine Hat-based MacKenzie Eye Care along with organizing a number of local community-building and volunteer initiatives. Lisa Kowalchuk is a long-time

executive director of the chamber of commerce, who – I don't think anyone will disagree – has been a linchpin of that organization and a true advocate for southeastern Albertans. Please give these three members the warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Ms Jabbour: I have another introduction, Mr. Speaker. The other introduction is a guest of mine. Sylvia Johnson is the president of the region 6 Métis Nation of Alberta, who's travelled from Peace River to be with us today. I'm not sure if she's in the gallery yet, but please give her a warm welcome.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore, I understand you have three introductions.

Mr. Nielsen: Yes, with your permission. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly an amazing woman, Colleen Chapman. Colleen Chapman is the president and founder of the Friends of Church Street, past president of the British Columbia Bereavement Helpline, and volunteer co-ordinator for the *Boyle McCauley News*. Today she's involved in many projects in the Edmonton inner city, including supporting truth and reconciliation initiatives. Thank you so much for rising. If we could please extend to her the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

It's also a pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a very special group of guests. My member's statement today will speak about the student conference that my constituency office assisted Balwin school in organizing for the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. We had numerous guest speakers, and I'm pleased to introduce many of them attending here today: Chevi Rabbit; Bean Gill; Paula Kirman; Katherine Swampy; Beatrice Ghettaba; trustee and board chair, Michelle Draper; and Wati Rahmat, representing Mona Ismaeil. If you could all please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly. Thank you, again.

It's also a pleasure to rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Principal Christina Jones, Assistant Principal Andy Connelly, and the leadership team who assisted in making yesterday's event a huge success: Kelsey Kindred, Sarah Ferrante, Chanelle Cluett-Alstad, and Ann Gariano. I would ask you all to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

Mr. Westhead: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce two leaders from the business community in the Bow Valley. I'd ask my guests to rise and remain standing as I call their names. Casey Peirce is the executive director of the Association for Mountain Parks Protection and Enjoyment. Casey and AMPPE advocate for a balance between sustainable tourism, ecological integrity, and a positive visitor experience in Canada's Rocky Mountain parks. Brian McClure is the founding president of the Bow Valley Chamber of Commerce, that recently celebrated its first anniversary. The chamber is off to a great start thanks to his leadership along with the founding executive board and its members. I'd ask my colleagues to extend to my guests the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: My guests are not yet in, Mr. Speaker. If I could possibly get up later.

The Speaker: Are there any other guests, hon. members? The Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly Mr. Gerry Steinke and Mrs. Karen Becker. Both of them are representatives of the Public School Boards' Association of Alberta, but more importantly they're fast becoming friends. Karen is a trustee with the Wetaskiwin school division and has actually baked doughnuts for my constituency cup basketball tournament, that I have in my constituency. Gerry is the father of Nathan Steinke, a former legislative co-ordinator for the Wildrose Party. Could you please give them the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Any other introductions? The Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour today to introduce two people that are with the Grande Prairie Regional College. Of course, they're still glowing over the recent announcement of the degree-granting status. Obviously, thanks to the Minister of Advanced Education and the government for doing that. If you could please rise as I say your name. Mark Evans is director of communications, and Carmen Haakstad is the vice-president of external relations. If we could please give them the warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Are your guests here now?

Dr. Swann: They have arrived, Mr. Speaker. It's my great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the House our passionate, articulate, and fearless leader in the Alberta Liberal Party, David Khan. I'll ask him to stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly, and with him Nicolaas Jansen, vice-president of policy for the Alberta Liberal Party, a bright and generous volunteer with a master's in public policy from the University of Calgary.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Members' Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Diabetes Fundraiser in Peace River Constituency

Ms Jabbour: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The people in my constituency truly exemplify the spirit of innovation and drive, creating wonderful events that are not only good for the community but also a lot of fun.

I was able to participate in one such event earlier this month when I was invited to help judge High Level's first-ever Battle of the Bands: A Tribute to Merle Haggard. The range of talent was truly impressive, with musicians competing for over \$7,000 in prize money. These included Fort Vermilion's Tamarackin', Twangin' Country from John D'Or, Calvin and Taryn from La Crête, Vanishing Breed from the Northwest Territories, and Wayne Lambert and Smokin' Country, comprised of players from across northern Alberta.

1:40

Once the formal judging was done, the fun truly began. All the musicians, including one of the judges, took to the stage to back up Calvin and Taryn's sweet harmonies. Soon we were enjoying acrobatic fiddle antics and audience members performing impromptu jigs. Everyone was having a great time, but that enjoyment was only a small part of what this was all about.

Val Courtoreille, a dedicated community organizer, spearheaded this initiative on behalf of the Team Diabetes Fort Vermilion fundraiser for Diabetes Canada. Given that statistics indicate that 70 per cent of indigenous women are at risk for developing diabetes, this fundraiser is incredibly important to the north.

Another of Val's projects is the Northern Alberta Fiddling and Jigging Championships, which will showcase the Ivan Flett Memorial Dancers and Ryan Keplin this year on May 5 in Fort Vermilion. Val started this to revive traditional dance and music and to encourage tourism to the north. I've had the honour of participating as judge support every year since its inception. Community youth are given jigging classes, and talented dancers and fiddlers travel from afar for this wonderful event.

Our next Battle of the Bands: A Tribute to Merle Haggard competition is set for June 2, with Merle Haggard's sons Ben and Noel confirmed for the main event. Join us for a lot of fun and to support a great cause.

Of course, Val doesn't do this all alone. She has a team of volunteers who readily give their time and energy to help make these events successful and memorable. Thank you to all of you. You all make our community a great place to live, work, and play.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

Agricultural Society Funding

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With all the uncertainty around crops, weather, moisture, drought, grain cars, and such as of late it came as a pleasant surprise that this government isn't going to cause Alberta's ag societies further grief this year. It's been announced that our seven regional and 283 primary agricultural societies will receive stable funding in an announcement earlier this week. After being left with nothing but uncertainty around funding last year, our agricultural societies can depend on predictable funding and budget accordingly. That's good news.

But it's not all sunshine and good times for those societies, Mr. Speaker. We live in a world where the myth of social licence has brought us a punitive carbon tax. That means that it costs more to heat community halls, run curling rinks and rec centres, and it means severely increased costs to run the ice plant at the local hockey rink, many of which are funded by your local ag society. That means that funding levels, although fairly consistent over the years, just won't pay the same amount of the power bills, buy the same amount of supplies, and pay to keep the water flowing and the heat on.

That's because this government has chosen once again to raise their tax on everything to \$30 a tonne. That means our ag societies have to make do with less because this government's ideological experiment didn't factor in how much this actually harms nonprofits. This also means those services provided to our rural communities may offer less, be available less often, and cost more to the end-user. And it's going to get worse as this government has tied themselves into Trudeau's Liberal scheme to raise the carbon tax a further 67 per cent, to \$50 per tonne, meaning these organizations will soon have even less to work with, all of this

simply because this government sees this punitive tax as buying us access to tidewater.

Most Albertans live in the real world, Mr. Speaker, not some virtual one, where social licence may buy you something.

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

Budget 2018

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today is budget day in Alberta, and we'll get some insight into what the government's priorities are. There's a lot of pomp and circumstance around budget day. There are traditions like the Finance minister's new shoes. There are endless scrums and interviews about what the budget means or who got left out or what the big numbers are. But eventually the cameras leave, ministers and MLAs go home, and tomorrow will just be the day after budget day.

What we need to remember is that for Albertans every day is budget day. One way or another the financial plan that the government puts out will affect every one of us every day of the year: a line in the budget for carbon tax revenue and what it means for Alberta families, funding for AISH and income supports, and how much money someone has to house and feed themselves for the month. Borrowing money might mean the government can deliver much-needed services today, but it also means that the next generation will be responsible for the services we use. All this is to say that a budget is a collection of choices, and those choices impact the lives and livelihoods of everyone in Alberta.

In the coming weeks we'll be sitting down to go over estimates. We'll be asking specific questions about what the government is funding and what it means for Albertans. For many this will be the only time that they'll have to put a voice to the questions directly to the government. We need to treat that process with the appropriate respect. If we go into committees with the intent of scoring political points or the intent to obscure answers to legitimate questions behind layers of bureaucracy, we're doing a disservice to Albertans. This is an opportunity to represent our constituents, to find out what this budget means for them, beyond the talking points.

Our caucus didn't release a shadow budget because we thought we could solve all of Alberta's problems. We did it because we wanted to engage Albertans in a conversation about choices that matter the most. We won't stop talking to Albertans because we just put out that document, just like I hope the government will listen to the opposition's concerns out of respect for those that we represent. Today is for speeches and interviews and traditions, but for Albertans every day is budget day.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Energy Industry Diversification

Cortes-Vargas: Mr. Speaker, in Strathcona county a lot of hard-working and highly skilled Albertans lost their jobs during the downturn that resulted from the oil price shock of 2014. These hard-working Albertans tell me they're tired of the boom-and-bust cycle. They want and deserve stability and security, just as Peter Lougheed envisioned when he began the process of diversifying Alberta's energy sector decades ago. They want this current recovery to be built to last.

Since being elected in 2015, I have been a vocal voice for expansion of initiatives like the petrochemicals diversification program. Our government's recent actions to diversify our energy sector were welcomed by industry leaders and families in the Industrial Heartland: supporting commercialization of additional partial upgrading for more refineries and increasing the capacities

of our current and future pipelines; incentives to help petrochemical facilities upgrade raw resources into higher value products; and the second round of our already successful petrochemicals diversification program.

That's why I don't understand why the Leader of the Opposition is so opposed to energy diversification. He claims that the government shouldn't be supporting winners and losers. On this side of the House we don't need to take any lessons about picking winners and losers from folks who, when they were in government, awarded their favours to people that they had on their speed-dial.

The truth is that right now we're losing out to Texas, Pennsylvania, and Louisiana, and they're winning the hunt for investors. If the Leader of the Opposition has his way, they will go on winning. Members on this side of the House are picking Albertans, Alberta workers and Alberta families, to win, and we will keep picking Albertans to win each and every time.

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

Balwin School Student Conference on Racism

Mr. Nielsen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's disheartening that Alberta, too, has seen its own incidents of racism, Islamophobia, and homophobia since I was elected in 2015. I have zero tolerance for any form of discrimination in my riding.

Yesterday was the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Together with Balwin school we organized a student conference to inspire the students to make a difference in the world and combat racism. The students from Balwin school were joined by students from Belvedere school to listen to numerous guest speakers, that included all of the guests that I introduced today as well, including folks like the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, Bashir Mohamed, the Member for Edmonton-Centre, Jasdeep Panesar, Japman Bajaj, and Seada Karalic. It was a wonderful day of embracing our diversity and celebrating all of our differences.

It was such an honour to be a part of this very special day. I would like to commend Balwin school for being an exemplary model in celebrating the diversity found within their school and making every student feel special, cherished, and loved. I would also like to give a special thank you to everyone who made this day special, because together we can eliminate racism and discrimination once and for all.

Oral Question Period

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

Oil Sands Advisory Group Former Co-chair

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, a few days ago on 630 CHED the environment minister said that Tzeporah Berman was put on the NDP's oil sands advisory group as co-chair because CAPP invited her. We have repeatedly asked in this Chamber if that is, in fact, true. This time, though, because the environment minister continues to dodge it, I will ask the Premier. Is it true that Tzeporah Berman was put on the advisory panel for the oil sands by you because CAPP requested it? Yes or no?

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

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member is making reference to my remarks from a radio interview in which I could have been clearer. It is true that a group of individuals, including

Ms Berman, came forward to government with a proposal on the emissions cap. Among those individuals was the past president of the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers. Our government has no current relationship with Ms Berman, and her position on energy infrastructure is not only irrelevant; it is wrong.

1:50

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, this environment minister continues to try to muddy the waters. The fact is that at the radio station she said that Tzepporah Berman, an individual who compared our oil sands to Mordor, an individual who said that the oil sands should be shut, was put on the advisory panel by the NDP at the request of CAPP, not a former president of CAPP, not somebody who's formerly been associated with CAPP but on behalf of CAPP. Is it true, or is it similar to meetings with the mayor of Rocky Mountain House?

The Speaker: Hon. member, there's been a ruling in the House on that matter.

The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, a group of individuals, including Ms Berman, came forward to government with a proposal on the emissions cap, in 2015. Among those individuals were a number of companies and the past president of the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers. We find Ms Berman's comments on Alberta's need for extra pipeline infrastructure and a replacement of the current TMX line to be offensive, and we also believe that her comments are an insult to the hard-working men and women of this province.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, clearly, this government continues to want to blame other people for their mistakes. They will not address whether the statements of the environment minister are, in fact, factual from the other day on the radio. But what is true, for sure, is that at the end of the day it's the NDP who appointed this individual to their oil sands advisory group, an individual who compared the oil sands to Mordor, who said that oil is destroying our democracy. Will this Premier and this NDP government stop blaming other people for their mistakes? Will they stand up and recognize that they made a terrible mistake by putting this individual on the oil sands advisory group and apologize to Albertans for that decision?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have been very clear for some months on this issue. Of course, the oil sands advisory group's work has now concluded, and the work around the emissions cap, the legislation, has passed, and we are now moving on. Our government's plan to reduce emissions and make meaningful progress on climate change got us federal approval of two pipelines, and we will not stop until, certainly, the TMX project is moving and shovels are in the ground and Albertans are getting access to tidewater.

The Speaker: Second main question.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, the NDP may now claim that they disagree with Tzepporah Berman's position now that she's left the advisory group, but that begs the question: did the NDP agree with her before they appointed her to the group? She said in 2011, and I quote: we need to shut down the tar sands; we need to move away from the development of oil. In 2013 she said that oil is corroding our democracy. Did the Premier agree with her statements back then? If not, why did she put her on the advisory group? Or is she embarrassed now about that decision, and that's why her

environment minister is now on the radio trying to blame CAPP for that decision?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, in 2015 a group of individuals, including Ms Berman, came forward to government with a proposal on the emissions cap as part of the consultations on the climate leadership plan. There were a number of companies among those individuals, and the past president of CAPP, Dave Collyer, was among them as well. Our government has no current relationship with Ms Berman. Certainly, the climate leadership plan: that group of individuals contributed to it, and it did result in the approval of two pipelines.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, this government does have a relationship with Ms Berman. They put her on their oil sands advisory group. They now want to move away from that. I don't blame them given the things that she has said. The fact is that this government has a relationship with an environmental activist that is now illegally protesting against a pipeline that we're trying to get built, and this government, because they're ashamed of that fact – and they should be ashamed of that fact – is now going on the radio and attempting to blame CAPP for it. Again, will the minister or the Premier stand up and apologize for the ridiculous decision to put Tzepporah on their oil sands advisory group?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government has no current relationship with Ms Berman, and of course the oil sands advisory group has concluded their work. Part of that work was, of course, the passing of the Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act. Certainly, our government's plan to reduce emissions and make meaningful progress on climate change has resulted in moving the Alberta economy forward, with the approval of two pipelines, but it also put forward to Canadians a credible climate leadership plan that is substantive and that grows the economy while taking seriously the matter of climate change and protecting . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, the environment minister continues to stand up in this House and try to avoid her relationship with Tzepporah Berman. That is ridiculous, and Albertans are not falling for it. The question that has been asked over and over in this Chamber in the last couple of days: is what the environment minister said on the radio about CAPP true? Yes or no? She refuses to answer that question. We're not talking about former presidents of CAPP. We're not talking about people that may have met her in a hospitality suite. We want to know if CAPP asked to have Ms Berman on that panel, yes or no, because that is what the environment minister has said on the radio. Is it true, or is it not true?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A group of individuals, including Ms Berman, came forward to government with a proposal on the oil sands emissions limit, which is why she was on the oil sands emissions limit. Among those individuals was the past president of CAPP and a number of companies.

Mr. Speaker, the only reason I can see that the members opposite are fixated on this issue is because they have no plan to address climate change, and in fact they can't even get a handle on the science. The Finance critic for that party even financed a climate

change denying film. He promotes climate change denying books on social media. I certainly wouldn't want him managing my books.

The Speaker: Third main question.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, this environment minister wrote an introduction to a book, *An Action a Day Keeps Global Capitalism Away*, that talks about taking illegal action to protest inside of this province.

But we'll digress from that. Here is the fact. They put Ms Berman on their panel, an individual who said that we need to shut down the tar sands, that we need to move away from the development of oil, that oil is corroding our democracy, an individual that is in B.C. right now illegally protesting a pipeline that we're trying to get built, at protests, by the way, Mr. Speaker, that have seen RCMP officers hurt. This minister went on the radio and said that CAPP is the one that wanted her on this panel. Yes or no?

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, Ms Berman's comments are offensive to the hard-working women and men of this province and to all Canadians because this project is certainly in the national interest.

Mr. Speaker, the hon. member across the way seems to want to take a trip down memory lane. Might I remind that party that trips down memory lane often end in a lake of fire. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, that is one of the most desperate displays I've ever seen from this government. This government is so desperate that they will dig in on anything to do but answer the question.

The question, Mr. Speaker, is so simple. This minister said on the radio that CAPP asked to have Ms Berman put on the oil advisory council. Did that happen or not? You can't get any more simple than that question. Now, I get why they want to avoid it, because they want the public not to remember that they put this individual on the panel. But this minister said that on the radio. Is it true, or is it not true?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member is making reference to my remarks from a radio interview in which I could have been clearer. A group of individuals, including Ms Berman, came forward to government with a proposal on the emissions cap. Among those individuals were a number of companies and the past president of the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, I agree with the minister. She was very clear on the radio. She said that CAPP asked for Ms Berman to be part of the oil advisory council. That is the question. The minister does not want to answer the question. It is embarrassing that a minister of the Crown would continue to stand up in this House and mislead Albertans this way. Is it true that CAPP asked for Ms Berman to be on this panel? Yes or no? Stop hiding from Albertans, and tell the truth in this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, let's take a trip down memory lane. The government put together the oil

sands advisory group, which put forward a proposal, which informed our climate leadership plan, which led to the federal approval of two pipelines. I'm very proud of the work that our government has done and our minister of environment has done in securing a pipeline approval, something that the Leader of the Opposition couldn't do when he was in Ottawa for 20 years.

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

Emergency Medical Services Funding

Mr. Fraser: Mr. Speaker, on Monday I questioned the Minister of Health on whether or not she would finally commit to properly funding EMS and support paramedics. The minister responded by pointing her finger to anyone she could, claiming that a four-year-old budget that was never passed in this House was the source of the current struggles for EMS workers. I imagine that if that were the case, the minister would have no trouble addressing that shortfall within the three, soon to be four budgets that she's been present for. To the Minister of Health: do you believe that three years as Minister of Health has been long enough to address this funding issue for EMS, or will front-line workers continue to have to wait?

2:00

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm incredibly proud to stand in this House and defend our government's record, which included stopping the drastic cuts that were proposed by that member's party when they were in government. In a few short minutes we'll be able to discuss the budget in great detail. I can tell you that what we have done is brought forward stability in terms of health care funding. What we have done is brought forward stability in terms of leadership for Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services, things that the members opposite failed to do because they don't believe in public health care. On this side of the House we do. We protect our front lines, and we protect the Albertans who rely on those services.

Mr. Fraser: Well, Mr. Speaker, let's go down memory lane. Last year that minister cut EMS by \$17.5 million. When you talk to paramedics today, things are getting worse. In fact, they've gone to CBC, and a CBC article revealed that the call volume is up since 2012 by 20 per cent, and the number of paramedics increased only by 3.4 per cent. I'll gladly admit that our previous government didn't get it right in three of the last six years, but this minister has been at the helm for the last three years. To the minister: will you take any responsibility at all for the shortfall?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am very proud of the fact that response times haven't gone up, that we have found ways to increase front-line service providers, and that we continue to do that. We'll be happy to talk about this year's budget in just a few minutes. Let's again remember what happened under the then government, oh, of which the leader of that party was the Health minister. They brought forward a proposed billion-dollar cut. They brought forward a proposed health care tax. Even in their proposal for this year's upcoming shadow budget they're proposing those same failed solutions. You can't cut a billion dollars from health care, bring in a new tax, and expect things to get better. On this side of the House we're standing up for Albertans.

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

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I honestly believe that the minister has the best interest of Albertans at heart and that this oversight in funding for EMS is simply a mistake. But it's a mistake that puts lives at risk, so I feel compelled to stand up and continue to question her about this issue. It's been identified, the solutions are within the minister's purview, and the need is only growing. Regardless of how we got here, we need to start moving forward to ensure that Albertans have access to life-saving emergency care. To the same minister: if you won't take responsibility, will you at least take some action?

Ms Hoffman: I'm proud to do both, Mr. Speaker. We've taken responsibility for reversing the cuts that were proposed by Mr. Mandel, the leader of the party that's asking the very question. We've taken action on making sure that we protect front-line services throughout our province, including expanding capital, including expanding EMS services. We took action on putting the paramedics under the Health Professions Act, something that the member opposite appears to have attempted to do and that was not done when he was in government but that we did on this side very shortly after taking government. We've taken action on bringing in power structures. In a few short minutes we'll have an opportunity to take action on discussing our vision, including our budget, including that for EMS in this province, and we'll see . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Tourism in Banff-Cochrane Constituency

Mr. Westhead: Mr. Speaker, Banff-Cochrane is home to the rolling foothills and the majestic Rocky Mountains, some of Alberta's most iconic scenery. The region attracts millions of tourists each year who enjoy four-season recreation and excellent hospitality. To the Minister of Culture and Tourism: what strategies are being developed to leverage the incredible tourism assets found in the Banff-Cochrane constituency?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Culture and Tourism.

Miranda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Travel Alberta works with tourism partners like Banff/Lake Louise Tourism to leverage marketing opportunities through the co-operative marketing program, to develop new as well as to enhance existing tourism product experiences. This year's program, held in Banff from March 5 to 8, was on developing new winter and year-round experiences to increase visitation in the shoulder season. Through the visitor services innovation fund with the Banff/Lake Louise Tourism Bureau we have offered mobile social media counselling to provide visitors with convenient trip-planning services, resulting in a 35 per cent . . .

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

Mr. Westhead: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that the Stoney Nakoda First Nation is eager to see an expansion of indigenous tourism in Alberta, do you have a strategy to help them accomplish this?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Miranda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud that our ministry was the first provincial government to provide a \$100,000 grant to establish an indigenous tourism association in Alberta. We know that indigenous people in Alberta have inspiring stories to tell. They can offer authentic educational experiences that visitors are looking

for, creating good-paying jobs in indigenous communities. We're going to continue working with the Stoney Nakoda First Nation to explore opportunities, to attract investments, and to expand tourism products and experiences in the area.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Westhead: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: given that there are ample opportunities to expand and diversify the tourism sector through sport-related activities such as mountain biking and ecotourism, what actions are being taken to help fill up hotel rooms during shoulder seasons?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Miranda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're working on a nature-based tourism action plan to help identify key opportunities and strategies to diversify Alberta's nature-based tourism experiences and attractions. Also, the tourism entrepreneur start-up seminars currently being offered throughout the province will provide a strong foundation, with expert knowledge and business fundamentals to help those interested in exploring opportunities in this very exciting industry.

Thank you.

Electric Power System

Mr. Panda: It is clear that this NDP government has mismanaged electricity and that Albertans are stuck with the bill. Enmax transferred the carbon credits to the Balancing Pool and received \$5 million in the settlement over the PPA agreements. This PPA scandal is costing us up to \$2 billion. To the minister: why did you hide these numbers last week? The \$2 billion would have brought the green line LRT to suburban Calgary without any carbon tax.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. You know, just over a year ago we took action to protect Alberta families, and I'm pleased to say that we've settled all PPA disputes with companies and provided a loan, as was mentioned, to the Balancing Pool. If we had not acted, customers would have seen great spikes in their bills. In fact, in the next coming while their bills will be 78 per cent below what they would have been had we not taken action.

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, given that Enmax lost \$30.3 million last year and given that the third-quarter financial report of the NDP government showed borrowing of \$650 million for the Balancing Pool, why is the NDP government denying dividends to Calgarians, who own Enmax, and saddling Alberta taxpayers with a multibillion-dollar burden for the NDP's mismanagement?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, we're pleased to have concluded the agreement with Enmax. As was stated many times last week on that agreement, there is no impact on Albertans. It was very clearly stated. It was a question of turning in carbon credits for an offset. The company clearly does belong to Calgary. This agreement is good for Enmax, it's good for the owners of Enmax, and it's good for our province.

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, given the record price of 3.7 cents for a kilowatt hour set in round 1 of the renewable electricity program

auctions and since rounds 2 and 3 are under way, will the minister admit that the record prices do not include the price to build new transmission lines all over Alberta or the cost to build the backup natural gas plants? Why is your NDP hiding the real cost to consumers and taxpayers?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yeah. We were very pleased to get record-setting prices in our first REP auction, 3.7 cents. You know, Alberta is blessed with a fairly robust system. The projects that were chosen are right near the line, and there will be no extra costs for that because that's the way we planned it, and that's the way it's going to be.

Carillion Highway Maintenance Contract

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker, given that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta meeting yesterday heard from the minister that the company Carillion has a contract to maintain 43 per cent of Alberta's highways and is in receivership and given that the government of Alberta will pay \$8.9 million on behalf of Carillion to make sure they have items like sand and gravel, which are important, in stock to keep the highways maintained, to the Minister of Transportation: is it legal for the government to pay the expenses of one of the winners of the road maintenance tenders while others that won the tenders don't get that support? And even if it is legal, is it fair to the other contractors?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Mason: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. I appreciate his concern for all of the other companies, but the fact of the matter is that Carillion's parent company is in receivership, and they're losing money on these contracts. In order to make sure that they can pay their suppliers and continue to get things like sand, gravel, and other supplies, fuel, and be able to pay their workers and keep our highways clear and safe until the end of winter, it is important that we support that company's operations. The alternative . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

2:10

Mr. McIver: The fairness question went unanswered.

Given that the minister told the large room of RMA attendees yesterday that the \$8.9 million, as he said, is to get us to the end of April and given that April can be a high snowfall month, which makes our highways an important safety issue – it makes sense – to the Minister of Transportation: what are you doing to make sure that the standards of care provided by this company in receivership will not go downhill during this important time, putting Albertans' safety at risk?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Well, thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. That's precisely what we have done. We've ensured that we keep the suppliers and the employees whole, that the company is able to continue its operations. I might suggest that the contracts awarded to Carillion took place when that member was the Minister of Transportation.

Mr. McIver: The contracts are not in question, Mr. Speaker.

Given that it's unfair to companies maintaining Alberta's highways without Alberta financing to now be competing with a company who banks at the government of Alberta and given that

Albertans should know that the safety of their highways is in the hands of a company that can afford to operate, to the minister: in order to have Alberta's roads looked after by a viable company in the future, on what date will you or your ministry put out the next tender for the 43 per cent of roads now under the care of Carillion, and if you do not know the answer today, will you tell us on what date you will inform the House?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, there are a variety of contracts that have been established under the previous government for the maintenance of our highways, and in fact they expire at different times. In this particular case there are a number of options that we're considering in order to deal with the areas that Carillion has bid on, which, I might add, is about 43 per cent of the roads in the province. They are certainly the largest operator. We are working on contingency plans. I want to assure the House and all Albertans that we are going to ensure that our highways are safely maintained during winter, summer, all year-round. That's our obligation. We take it very seriously.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

The Member for Calgary-West.

Justice System

Mr. Ellis: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government knows that an accused must stand before a justice of the peace within 24 hours of their arrest, which is now the sole responsibility of Crown prosecutors. Yet we now know that judges are dropping charges and letting accused offenders walk free because Alberta Justice is not meeting this critical time limit. Minister, you cut funding for prosecutors in your very first budget and left 35 positions vacant and, in doing so, you put Albertans at risk. Did you not consider the serious consequences that might occur?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, it was our government who acted on the recommendations of the committee, after the tragic death of Constable Wynn, to look into our bail system in order to move it forward. It was our government that advanced the funding to allow those Crown prosecutors to be in courtrooms to start to move the system forward. It's our government that's been investing in both RCMP and Crown prosecutors, and we'll have more to say about that in the future. We take our responsibilities very seriously.

Mr. Ellis: Let's be clear, Mr. Speaker. It was that minister and that government that cut the Crown's budget by \$5 million in 2015-2016, and now we're playing the catch-up game. Given that rural Albertans are expressing great concern about the revolving door that is setting offenders free to continue preying upon vulnerable citizens and stealing their vehicles, ATVs, tractors, and the list goes on and on and on, Minister: what are you doing to fix this problem?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and to the member for what is really a very important question. We all know that the Jordan ruling was a massive change in law. That resulted in us having to rethink the way we were doing business. In order to ensure that we're able to meet those timelines, this government advanced funding to a number of areas in Justice. We continue to monitor the situation and continue to work with all of our partners

throughout the system to see where those pressures continue to evolve, to keep moving forward. This is a government with a history of investments in front-line services and ensuring we provide the services that Albertans need, and we will continue to do that.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the minister likes to avoid responsibility by claiming issues lie in the federal realm and given that because it is the responsibility of the provinces to create an efficient bail hearing process and the minister has a clear role to play in closing the revolving door that is instilling fear in law-abiding citizens, Minister, you have a responsibility to protect the citizens of this province. When will you start protecting the victims?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we believe we have a responsibility to the citizens of this province. That's why we've taken the step of investing throughout law enforcement. I was very interested to see that the members opposite were not interested in supporting those investments in the supplementary supply. We will continue to make those investments. Our seven-point plan allows more RCMP officers not only to be in the field but takes those RCMP officers out of the back offices and puts them on the front lines so that they can continue to assist in ensuring that we are catching those perpetrators.

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

Carbon Levy Rebate for Seniors

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Tuesday I asked the minister of seniors some questions that were not answered but dodged, so today I will be tabling a ministerial order in which the minister of seniors very quietly decided to allow the government housing foundations to include carbon tax as a portion of seniors' income for rent calculation purposes, forcing some of the poorest in society to pay higher rent. But, curiously, seniors who receive direct-to-tenant rent supplements are exempted from including carbon tax rebates for rent calculation purposes. Minister, please explain that.

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

Ms Sigurdson: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, we know that our climate leadership plan is working. We know that approximately 260,000 seniors are eligible for up to \$300 annually for the carbon levy rebate. We continue to invest in seniors, make sure that they're well taken care of in this province, and we're very proud of our record.

Mr. Orr: Seniors don't consider an increase to their rent helping them out.

Anyway, given that we will see a further 67 per cent hike to the carbon tax and given that seniors who live in these government-subsidized facilities are there because they are very low income, often due to no fault of their own, how do you suppose these low-income seniors will make it once this increase comes into effect? I can't really imagine the implications well.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Sigurdson: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We certainly worked very closely with the housing management bodies

across the province. We have over 100 housing management bodies that provide affordable housing. We have a significant investment. We gave them \$88 million this year to do energy upgrades, things to help them in that regard. We know that the opposition would be cutting billions of dollars from that budget. We inherited a billion dollars in deferred maintenance, outstanding maintenance, so that wouldn't be taken care of. We are investing and supporting seniors in our province.

Mr. Orr: If the seniors pay for it.

I will ask again, Minister. Since we know that the carbon tax affects everything that low-income seniors buy, from gas in their car to groceries at the store, how could you, Minister, use this rebate to force a carbon tax driven increase in rent for an already low-income senior who depends on subsidies, especially after they've spent their life building this province from the ground up?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Sigurdson: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, we know that seniors built this province and deserve to retire in dignity. That's why we invest significantly in seniors' programs. We've increased the Alberta seniors' benefit. We invest significantly in affordable housing. Right now we have 62 projects under way in this province. Our government absolutely has seniors' backs. We support them. That government would be cutting significantly from their programs.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-South West.

New Edmonton Hospital

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My constituency of Edmonton-South West is one of the fastest growing communities in the province, and as this community grows, so too does our need for services like schools and hospitals. That's why I was pleased to stand with the Premier and Minister of Health to announce over \$400 million to fund a new hospital in the constituency. But with the urgency of this facility, to the Minister of Infrastructure: what is being done to ensure that the project will be delivered on time?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an exciting project. Hospital projects like the Edmonton hospital are particularly complex, so it's very important that in the planning stages of a project like this, extensive work is done to meet the desired outcome. Of course, the significant outcome of the planning stage is that we deliver a project that's on time and on budget. Right now our efforts are diligently focused on the Edmonton hospital. The project team is working very hard on this to adhere to the work schedule, and the timeline is on time right now.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for the update. To the same minister: when can my constituents actually expect the design phase and the construction phases to be completed?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member. I know he's very excited, as are we all, about this project coming down the pike. You know, as we move forward on this, we anticipate that the design concepts will start in about 2019, with the

design work getting under way in 2020. We expect the initial site work to begin in 2020 as well, and a completion date on this very complex build is going to be 2026.

2:20

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, major projects like this can involve noise and traffic congestion both during and after construction and when the project is complete. To the Minister of Infrastructure again: what strategies are being taken to help mitigate or address these issues?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, one of the big issues that we have to deal with when we're doing a project this big and this complex is that it's going up oftentimes in a community that's fairly dense with population, with residential homes, and with businesses, and we take that into consideration in the project planning. Take, for instance, the Calgary cancer centre. One of the great things that was done in the planning of the cancer centre was that specific sites were set up where workers could go and park at those sites. Shuttle buses would then take people over to the site to do the work. There are a lot of mitigation efforts done in terms of making sure that there is as little disruption as possible.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

The Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Pharmacy Funding Framework

Mr. Yao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've heard a substantial amount of feedback on the new pharmacy agreements that the government is implementing. Pharmacists entered discussions with Alberta Health and Blue Cross, fully anticipating a collaborative and open approach. The government delayed discussions when they chose to hire a third-party negotiator and allowed only a few members of the Pharmacists' Association to negotiate, and they had to sign nondisclosure agreements. How is this an open and transparent government?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We were very clear at the beginning, when we formed government, that we weren't going to move forward with 12 per cent increases like we'd seen in some years, but we also weren't going to move forward with deep cuts. Instead, we've brought forward stability. We've brought forward a proposal, that we sat down with RxA to negotiate, that saw a 4.3 per cent increase rather than the 12 per cent that was negotiated under the former government, of which the member is a caucus member now. What we found was that we came up with a solution that protects the front-line services, the people of this province, and comes up with reasonable increases. We think 4 per cent is reasonable, we think 12 per cent isn't, and we think the opposition's proposals for deep cuts are also unreasonable.

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, one thing that stood out about this agreement was the rejection of a proposal by pharmacists to expand their capabilities. Pharmacists approached the government with 40 procedures that they could perform for Albertans and provide at a relative cost savings. Why did this government reject those proposals that the pharmacists provided to you?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, what we did is that we sat down at the table – just to clarify, if there was any confusion, the 4.3 per cent is for growth in that area, and that's reasonable. If there are new people that need new prescriptions, we have growth to fund that. What we did is that we sat down at the table and we said: this is what we can afford; help us come up with a formula to get there. Instead of going from being 50 per cent higher than the next highest jurisdiction for flu immunization, we went to being tied for the highest. I think a number of those changes were done in partnership with the RxA, and they came up with a formula that is going to help us achieve these realistic budget targets for growth but at the same time will be sustainable for the . . .

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, Alberta Health has committed to reinvest at least half of the underbudget savings that will result from this agreement in mutually agreed upon pharmacy services. To the Health minister: what exactly are these services, and what do you do with the other 50 per cent?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What we have done is to come up with a proposal that will see an increase, obviously, with respect to demand and the needs in the area without moving forward with an unsustainable growth model. We have reduced the level of increase because we think it's important for us to have sustainability for all of us in the province of Alberta. What we are doing is finding ways to increase access for the citizens of the province as well and reduce their expenses and keep money in their own pockets. For example, I had seniors reach out to me – I imagine that some of the other members may have as well – saying that they had to get prescriptions refilled daily or weekly. Instead, now it's only twice a month, reducing the copay.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mental Health Services for Children

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, according to statistics from AHS the success rate for mental health services for children has steadily fallen under this NDP government. In 2015, when they took office, only 1 in 10 children were not offered an appointment for mental health services within 30 days. Two years later nearly 4 in 10 children are not able to access the treatment that they need within 30 days. Can the minister please explain to parents waiting for these services why their vulnerable children cannot get the care they need?

The Speaker: The hon. Associate Minister of Health.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Our government knows how important it is, when Albertans reach out for help, for them to get that help as quickly as they can and close to their communities. That's why we funded new counselling supports for survivors of sexual and physical abuse such as the Zebra Child Protection Centre, opened the new Rutherford mental health clinic for children and youth in Edmonton and surrounding areas, and we're building a new eight-bed youth detox facility in Red Deer. This is among our many actions that we are taking across the province to help support children and their families.

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, given that investment has increased yet outcomes have decreased and that this ministry consistently produces poor results despite increases in spending, to the minister:

would you please update this House on why the nearly 4 in 10 children who are suffering from mental health issues cannot get the timely services that they deserve?

The Speaker: The Associate Minister of Health.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, we inherited a system where mental health was underfunded and not really given the importance that it deserved, which is why one of the first actions our government took was to commission the Valuing Mental Health review, and we've been moving forward on implementing the recommendations from that. We've been working in partnership with communities across the province, including with school boards, to make sure that there's access to supports in schools and working on capacity building and resiliency in classrooms as well as communities from the top of our province to the southern borders. We know that it's important to reach out to children . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, the outcomes have gotten worse under this minister. All we ever get are talking points around the right health care in the right place at the right time. My question is simple. When can the nearly 4 in 10 Alberta children suffering from mental health challenges expect to have the right health care in the right place at the right time? Under this minister they don't have any of it, and it's gotten worse, not better.

Ms Payne: Mr. Speaker, working under the leadership of the Valuing Mental Health: Next Steps and the advisory group, which has representatives from the northern part of our province to the southern, we are working to expand those supports for children. We have supported mental health initiatives in 85 communities across the province, from Fort Chip down to Milk River. These guys keep talking about wanting to have billions of dollars of cuts to health care. That's not going to lead to enhanced supports for children and youth who are struggling with mental health. That'll lead to longer wait times, fewer services, and more children at risk.

Mackenzie County Gas Supply Disruption

Mr. van Dijken: Mr. Speaker, during an extremely cold spell this winter a state of emergency was declared in Mackenzie county due to low natural gas pressure in the lines of the Northern Lights Gas Co-op. Apparently, the distribution line is too small and runs to a dead end, leaving hundreds of residents without heat. The population is growing, economic development is limited because of a restricted natural gas supply, and there is a fear of a year-round natural gas shortage. What steps has the NDP government taken to ensure that this emergency never happens again?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll take the first part. Yeah, in that situation it was very unfortunately in cold weather. It happened in one of the natural gas co-ops, and one of the things in my looking into the issue – and I'll let my colleague minister explain. Over the years no one had looked at decommissioning, when the event would come that there was decommissioning, and that's been happening now. I've been in touch with a couple of the councillors in Mackenzie county to look at how we can work with that, and I have also said that I'll be working with my colleague the Minister of Ag and Forestry to look at solutions for this problem.

Mr. van Dijken: Mr. Speaker, given the representatives of Northern Lights Gas Co-op and Mackenzie county have met with the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, looking for a solution to ensure that the homes are heated and industries remain open next winter, will the NDP government ensure that a solution will be found and the gas co-op will not miss the construction season over administrative minutiae and bureaucratic red tape, which would put the lives of residents at risk again next winter?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the very good question. It's important to note that there are a couple issues here. The gas field that's currently supplying a lot of these residences and communities is getting dry, and the other one is aging infrastructure in the pipelines. There are a couple issues here. We're talking to those communities, talking to the Federation of Alberta Gas Co-ops as well to ensure that we have a plan in place to ensure that those communities, those residences have the necessary natural gas they need to heat their homes, working with Energy and my department colleagues, ministry colleagues, you know, right across the front bench here to ensure that we do have a plan and that those residences have the gas they need.

2:30

Mr. van Dijken: Mr. Speaker, given that the processing industry in parts of Mackenzie county has to shut down during low gas pressure situations and given the concern in Mackenzie county that the NDP government in Edmonton is not looking out for their interests when presented with things like the caribou range plan, will this government continue to treat Mackenzie county as an abandoned territory, a territory larger than the province of New Brunswick, or will this government partner with Mackenzie county to help sustain their industries and communities and to promote economic development throughout their region?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you. I can just touch on a couple of things. Actually, I would say that it's more of a crossministry. There are 342 municipalities in this province, and we're concerned about every single one of them. Safety is paramount. The Alberta Emergency Management Agency, who are under Municipal Affairs, took it upon themselves to pump in extra gas to Mackenzie. I've also been in contact with them. I was up in La Crête and in High Level a few months back and had a conversation, and I did it recently as well. We will always be concerned about safety. Whenever these things happen, we will take action immediately or as quickly as possible.

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

Affordable Housing

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This NDP government's best friend in Ottawa, Mr. Trudeau, has announced a 10-year plan for a \$40 billion national housing strategy. On a per capita basis Alberta should receive \$4 billion of that total amount; however, the stakeholders I've been talking to are saying that we're only getting approximately \$560 million from that amount. Minister, since we all know that Justin Trudeau will not stand up for Albertans and our resource industry, will you at least ask him to be fair and provide us with the share our citizens deserve on this important issue?

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

Ms Sigurdson: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, our government is committed to making sure Albertans have the affordable housing we need, and we work with our federal partners regarding that. There is a bilateral agreement that we're beginning negotiations on very soon, and we absolutely will advocate for Albertans although here in Alberta we already are doing a significant amount, \$1.2 billion in investments, which is creating 62 new projects across the province. We're doing a lot in Alberta already.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the stakeholders I'm talking to would like to see this government resurrect Alberta's support of the supportive living initiative program, which saw the government partner with the private industry to efficiently and cost-effectively build affordable accommodations for seniors and given that this public-private model not only proved efficient at addressing the pent-up demand for accommodations, it also used taxpayers' money cost-effectively, Minister, was your decision to end this successful public-private partnership made for fiscal reasons, or was it simply to support your NDP world view?

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I do encourage the member to ask members of his own caucus who were part of that process. I can tell you that when I sat down and reviewed those contracts with officials, they weren't based on what was in the best interest of even the folks living in these communities. Having a retrofitted hotel serving takeout food from the restaurant next door is not the quality care that I would expect for anyone that I loved who was requiring these services. So we sat down. We very carefully reviewed the contracts. We found ways to improve the level of care where it was needed and to work with the providers to get the best outcomes for those projects.

I'm really proud that they're moving forward. We're on track to open many of them this quarter, and last quarter we . . .

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

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the NDP is intending to move to a purely public model and that the minister said that they want the best outcome, let me share some numbers that Albertans understand. Given that Willow Square in Fort Mac, which is fully public, will cost Albertans \$763,000 per unit and that Bridgeland in Calgary, also fully public, will cost \$650,000 per unit and given that under the former public-private program the average cost per unit was \$65,000, can the minister please tell me: if you truly believe in serving Albertans, why won't you maintain public-private . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.
The Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Under the former government we know that the pendulum swung very far towards proposing projects that were only in the interest of their friends and insiders. We know that it's important to have balance. We know that it's important to have seniors as the focus. We are going to continue to move forward with the projects that we announced, many of which were through partnerships, including private industry as well as nonprofits, as well as moving forward with some public projects.

I know that the idea of having choice, including public options, isn't something that they support, but we think that it's important to have all options, Mr. Speaker. We're going to continue to move forward protecting the people of this province and building . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Condominium Property Regulations

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. More and more Albertans, including my constituents, are choosing to live in condos. What's the government doing to protect condo owners?

The Speaker: The Minister of Service Alberta and of Status of Women.

Ms McLean: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for his question. This government cares about everyday Albertans, and we believe Albertans deserve to be protected when they make a purchase, especially when it's as important as buying a home. I'm proud to say that on January 1 the new phase of the condo regulations came into effect. These new protections will provide more information for buyers at time of purchase, give the option to cancel a contract if a unit doesn't look like what they were promised, and protect Albertans' money when they're putting deposits into a trust.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I understand that these new regulations relate mostly to buying a condo, something that I had experience with, over 800 transactions in my 30-year career. However, once a condo is purchased, people still continue to live in them. I'm wondering: what's the government doing to make life better for Albertans living in the condos once the transaction is over and to improve the day-to-day operations of condo boards?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McLean: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are wrapping up consultations on the second phase of regulations, that will address living in a condo, including condo governance. This past summer we invited Albertans to open houses that we held across the province so that they could tell us how we could improve condo living for them. Based on what we heard, we launched an online survey to continue this important conversation. Finally, we have followed this up with targeted stakeholder meetings to obtain further feedback. We're confident that the final regulations will reflect what we've heard from Albertans and make life better for condo owners.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, despite the proposed regulations to make living in a condo better, I've heard from my constituents that conflicts have arisen between condo owners and their condo boards. Currently the only recourse for the two parties is through the courts. What is the government doing to allow Albertans a lower cost alternative to court action?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McLean: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As part of the third phase of regulations we are also consulting on a dispute resolution mechanism for Albertans, including the determination of the tribunal's

jurisdiction and structure. Albertans want and need a more efficient, less expensive way to resolve condominium disputes than having to proceed through the court system. The dispute tribunal is intended to provide them with that alternative.

Oil Sands Advisory Group Former Co-chair (continued)

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, is it true, the statement that the environment minister made on the radio that CAPP asked for Tzaporah Berman to be appointed to the oil sands advisory group? [interjections]

The Speaker: Order, please.

The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member is making reference to my remarks from a radio interview in which I could have been clearer. A group of individuals, including Ms Berman, came forward to government with a proposal on the emissions cap. Among those individuals and representatives from some companies was the past president of the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers. Our government has no current relationship with Ms Berman, and her position on energy infrastructure is not only irrelevant; it is also wrong.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, the minister was crystal clear.

I'll try it a different way. Is it false, what the minister said on the radio, that CAPP asked for Tzaporah Berman to be appointed to the oil sands advisory group?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, the oil sands advisory group has concluded its work. They provided us advice on a 100-megatonne cap on oil sands emissions. The legislation has since passed, to take effect in terms of how we manage our oil sands emissions going forward. Of course, this cap was proposed to us by a group of individuals, including Ms Berman, who came forward to government with that proposal.

Mr. Nixon: Was the minister of environment's statement on the radio the other day true, that CAPP requested that Tzaporah Berman be put on the advisory group? Yes or no?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, a group of individuals, including Ms Berman, came forward to government with a proposal on the emissions cap. Part of that group were a number of companies. The past president of CAPP indeed was part of it. It is quite possible that I could have been clearer, but what is also clear is that Ms Berman's views on energy infrastructure that is in the national interest are not only irrelevant, but they are wrong. This line of questioning has become somewhat repetitive.

2:40

Members' Statements (continued)

Pharmacy Funding Framework

Dr. Starke: Mr. Speaker, Alberta pharmacists are trusted and highly skilled. In many communities the pharmacist is the only health care professional that has remained constant. Ninety-five per cent of Albertans named their pharmacist as the most accessible health care professional. Their close connection and dedication to

their patients and their ability to identify and prevent health problems saves our system hundreds of millions of dollars every year.

But pharmacists don't just save money; pharmacists save lives. That's why it's incredible how this government has treated this group of trusted professionals. The pharmacy association was forced to sign a nondisclosure agreement during negotiations on a new funding agreement. Now, we're being told that this is standard practice, but it's funny that the Alberta Medical Association sends regular updates to its doctors when their funding framework is being discussed. Maybe this government thinks pharmacists can't be trusted.

Pharmacists with advanced prescribing authority provide enhanced patient care and have been compensated accordingly. The new framework eliminates that. Pharmacists administered over 50 per cent of the flu vaccinations in Alberta last year. The new framework cuts that fee, and some pharmacists will be unable to provide the service. How many more cases of flu will that result in, and what will that cost? And starting next year, Alberta Health will withhold at least 10 per cent of fees payable to pharmacists and only pay it out if they meet their budget targets. Now, they call that risk sharing. Pharmacists call it: using my income to backstop Alberta Health. Maybe the money is needed to pay for unionized laundry services or the government's new superlab.

Pharmacists came to the table with over 40 proposals to cut health care costs. Alberta Health accepted none of them. Mr. Speaker, all Albertans, including pharmacists, want to curb health care costs, but the first principle of medicine is: do no harm. This framework will seriously harm the financial viability of pharmacists and put their patients' health in jeopardy. That's not what I call making life better for Albertans.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees

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

Mr. Coolahan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As chair of the Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund it is my pleasure to table five copies of the report covering the committee's activities in 2017. This report fulfills the requirements of Standing Order 55 and section 6(4)(c) of the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund Act. This report will be posted on the Assembly's website, and copies are also available at the committee's office.

Thank you.

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The Government House Leader and Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to give oral notice of a motion for the Order Paper, that motion being: "Be it resolved that the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices be authorized to meet during the consideration of the 2018-19 main estimates."

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

Dr. Starke: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. This time I would like to table a petition that was presented to me just about an hour and a half ago signed by over 150 Albertans protesting the government's cuts to pharmacy through the new pharmacy framework.

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

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings to present today. The first is a copy of a ministerial order from the Department of Seniors and Housing outlining the change to rent calculation and carbon tax rebates.

The second one is copies of many letters addressed to the Premier regarding the fact that time lost without heart treatment equals irreparable heart muscle loss and death for up to 35 central Alberta region patients annually. Central region patients receive a lower standard of care in relation to the Calgary region, which receives up to 20 times more funding per capita.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm rising to table the requisite five copies of the schedule for consideration of main estimates. I can indicate that pursuant to Standing Order 59.01(3) consultation with House leaders on this schedule has taken place.

In addition, in accordance with Standing Order 59.01(5)(b) I am advising the House that government business is scheduled for consideration on the afternoon of April 4 as well as the afternoon of April 10. I have the estimates here.

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

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier today in my response to the Speech from the Throne I made contrast of our plan to that of the UCP by referencing this RBC economic outlook report, which I am tabling the requisite five copies of. This shows that our numbers are up while currently Saskatchewan's are down.

The Speaker: Hon. members, we have achieved the target ahead of time. We'd like to move to Orders of the Day, and in order to allow adequate time to prepare for the Budget Address by the hon. President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance this afternoon, the House is recessed until 3:15 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned from 2:46 p.m. to 3:15 p.m.]

The Sergeant-at-Arms: Order!

The Speaker: Please be seated.

Orders of the Day

Transmittal of Estimates

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

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I've received certain messages from Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, which I now transmit to you.

The Sergeant-at-Arms: Order! All stand, please.

The Speaker: The Lieutenant Governor transmits estimates of certain sums required by the offices of the Legislative Assembly for the service of the province for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2019, and recommends the same to the Legislative Assembly.

The Lieutenant Governor transmits estimates of certain sums required by the government for the service of the province for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2019, and recommends the same to the Legislative Assembly.

Please be seated.

Mr. Ceci: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the 2018-19 offices of the Legislative Assembly estimates as well as the 2018-19 government estimates. In addition, I also wish to table the 2018-21 government of Alberta strategic plan and the Budget 2018 ministry business plans.

Government Motions

Budget Address

13. Mr. Ceci moved:

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

Mr. Ceci: Mr. Speaker, I now wish to table the government's Budget 2018 fiscal plan.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present Budget 2018. Before I begin, I would like to acknowledge that we are gathered here on the traditional territory of Treaty 6. I would also like to acknowledge the Métis people of Alberta, who share a deep connection to this land.

Mr. Speaker, this budget is based on extensive consultations with Albertans, and it reflects their priorities. I want to thank Albertans for their constructive and thoughtful input.

Alberta's economy is coming out of the worst recession in generations. When the global price of oil collapsed and the recession hit, we had a choice: cut or build. We chose to build. In making that choice, we focused on the priorities of regular people and families, creating badly needed jobs, building our province for the future, making life more affordable for people, and protecting the schools, hospitals, and public services all Albertans rely on. That plan is working. Today in Alberta things are looking up. Jobs are up, 90,000 last year, Alberta's economy is growing faster than any province in Canada, and the budget deficit is coming down. Though we have come a long way from the recession's low point, there's still much more to do.

3:20

Mr. Speaker, that's what Budget 2018 is all about, making sure this recovery is built to last and built for working Albertans. Budget 2018 is built on three pillars: first, controlling costs to stay on a path to balance; second, investing in jobs and diversification; and third, protecting public services and supporting Albertans.

To set the context, let me begin by looking more closely at the economic recovery under way in Alberta. Mr. Speaker, in 2017 Alberta's economic rebound surpassed expectations. Real GDP grew an estimated 4.5 per cent, with nearly every sector expanding. Exports increased by nearly 30 per cent on rising oil production and an expanded manufacturing base. Housing starts grew by 20 per cent. Retail sales expanded by 7.5 per cent. Rig activity jumped 66 per cent, and the labour market strengthened throughout the year.

Not only that, Mr. Speaker. Alberta also outperformed the rest of the country on a number of key economic metrics: the highest per capita GDP, the highest average weekly earnings, and the highest employment rate in the country. An improving economy supports an improving fiscal picture. We are forecasting a \$1.5 billion reduction from the deficit forecast at last year's budget, to \$8.8 billion. This forecast is based on an economic growth projection of 2.7 per cent and an oil price of \$59. These forecasts are in line with those of the private sector. In short, following a very difficult recession in Alberta, today jobs are up, the deficit is coming down, and our economy continues to grow.

With that economic momentum we can continue on our path to balance by 2023. For too long Alberta has been locked in a cycle of boom-and-bust spending that tracked the price of nonrenewable

resource revenues. Earlier this decade when oil prices were high and the economy was growing, the budget remained unbalanced, and savings were not put aside for the future. Between 2010-11 and 2014-15, for example, oil prices averaged \$90 a barrel while the economy grew more than 5 per cent per year, more than double the national average, yet over this period the government ran deficits in all but one fiscal year. Boom-and-bust spending was inefficient and unstable.

Upon taking office, our government set out to fix this. We embarked upon a thoughtful and strategic plan to smooth out the wild spending swings that characterized budgeting in Alberta. First, we restored progressive taxation, asking the top 7 per cent of income earners to pay a little more to support health care and education; second, we raised the general corporate tax rate by 2 percentage points to 12 per cent; and third, we implemented an economy-wide price on carbon. With Alberta's economy in recession, every dollar raised through the carbon price was reinvested in the economy in rebates, infrastructure investments, and initiatives to lower greenhouse gas emissions and improve energy efficiency. Even with those changes Albertans and Alberta businesses pay at least \$11.2 billion less in taxes than they would in any other province. Mr. Speaker, Alberta's tax advantage is secure.

Today, with the private sector gaining momentum, these important and long-overdue tax reforms will help reduce our overreliance on nonrenewable resource revenue. Revenues from corporate and personal income taxes are forecast to grow by as much as \$1.2 billion, with the amount increasing over time as our economy grows. Moreover, as our economy relies less on government stimulus, additional carbon revenue will help contribute to an improving bottom line. Beginning in 2021, additional revenue resulting from the federally imposed carbon price tied to the construction of the Trans Mountain pipeline will be used to support vital public services as the province stays on track to balance the budget by 2023. Mr. Speaker, this is an important step in the direction of stable, predictable budgeting, that this province needs.

But to succeed, it must be joined by other measures to keep spending growth down to stable and manageable levels. First among these is the government's ongoing efforts to eliminate waste and find efficiencies without compromising core public services. It's no secret that by 2015 many spending priorities had become severely distorted. The sky palace, a few hundred metres from here, is only one of the most high-profile examples of this. Less well known were the golf club memberships handed out to highly paid executives in an ever-growing alphabet soup of agencies, boards, and commissions. The same goes for annual government hospitality bills.

Mr. Speaker, from the beginning the government has worked to tackle this legacy and bring down costs. We eliminated perks such as golf club memberships. We slashed travel and hospitality expenses. We introduced sunshine laws to open up the books on public salaries. We eliminated or consolidated 26 agencies, boards, and commissions, and we slashed exorbitant salaries at those agencies, boards, and commissions, with some executives seeing their salaries cut by hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Mr. Speaker, in Budget 2018 that work continues. This year we are extending our salary review to postsecondary executives and school superintendents. We are keeping tight control over discretionary spending, with restrictions on travel, conferences, and hospitality, and we are consolidating services such as communications, information technology, finances, and human resources. This work is important not only for the money it saves but also for the trust it builds. To work effectively, government

must demonstrate that the money it spends is spent efficiently and on things that matter to everyday families.

Mr. Speaker, an effective government is also one that responds quickly in a economic crisis. When the oil price collapse hit, tens of thousands of Albertans were thrown out of work. On taking office, the government took the advice of the former Bank of Canada governor David Dodge and injected stimulus into the economy by dramatically increasing spending on infrastructure, developing a capital plan that led the country in investment. This made economic and fiscal sense. Interest rates were low, the economy was depressed, and Albertans needed work. As a result of the government's infrastructure investments, tens of thousands of jobs were created and supported, and Alberta will have the modern, economic, and social infrastructure we need to compete and win in the global economy and build strong communities.

Today, with our economy growing and the private sector creating jobs, we continue to follow Mr. Dodge's advice. It is time to rein back capital spending to more normal levels. Last year's capital plan budgeted \$29.5 billion over four years. This year's capital plan returns to more normal levels of spending, \$26.6 billion over five years, and makes good on previous promises while promoting growth through strategic infrastructure investments. Reductions are being achieved by extending capital grants across the five years of the capital plan. Capital project cash flows are being closely managed to reduce borrowing costs.

3:30

Mr. Speaker, Budget 2018's measures to scale back capital expenditures are joined by the government's ongoing efforts to manage public service compensation in the interests of all Albertans. Alberta's public servants work hard each and every day to make life better for people and to protect Albertans. The government has 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. As negotiations in other sectors advance, we will continue to take the same practical approach that values our public service providers and recognizes the province's fiscal realities.

In addition, Budget 2018 continues the freeze on salaries for non-union staff across the public sector until September 2019, and it keeps the growth in the public service flat, with new hires focused on front-line service delivery.

Mr. Speaker, taken together, these steps will keep Alberta's economy growing and on a path to balance by 2023 without reckless measures that would hurt families and harm the recovery. Budget 2018's path to balance is supported by realistic and achievable spending and the revenue targets built on the best available private-sector forecasts in oil and economic growth, and it is leading towards a stronger and more secure future.

To balance our budget and stabilize our finances, we must continue to diversify our economy and create good jobs for Albertans. This is a top priority of Albertans, and it is a top priority of this government. While 2.3 million Albertans today have work, with more people working in Alberta than at any point in our history, the economic recovery has not reached each and every household. An economic recovery that fails to reach every Albertan is no recovery at all.

The economic recovery must keep going, our economy must keep growing, and more jobs must be created. To do that, we must move on all fronts. We must get top dollar for the energy resources we export. We must get more value out of our energy products here at home. We must support new and emerging industries. We must

continue to diversify our agricultural markets and build on our growing strength in agrifoods. And we must make sure that Albertans have the training and skills they need to get the jobs of tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker, we have secured the approval of critical energy infrastructure projects such as the Keystone XL pipeline, Enbridge's line 3 replacement, and Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain pipeline expansion. We backed Keystone XL with a commitment of 50,000 barrels a day for 20 years, construction on line 3 has begun, and we are leading the fight to build the Trans Mountain pipeline with the full support of this Chamber. We will continue to make sure that construction on the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion begins without undue delay and that our constitutional rights are respected as partners in Confederation. When complete, these pipelines will provide critical market access as oil sands production rises and emissions remain capped, supporting new investments and jobs. The addition of these pipelines is forecast to lift Alberta's GDP by about 1.5 per cent to 2 per cent by 2023. As our economy grows with diversified export markets, we will continue to work with our energy industry partners to diversify our energy sector, encouraging more value-added production.

Mr. Speaker, Budget 2018 begins our commitment to a new round of investments in the petrochemical diversification program along with partial upgrading and the petrochemical feedstock program. These investments will support up to \$13 billion in new investment. More importantly, these programs will create good jobs, continue to help diversify our energy sector, and allow us as Albertans and owners of this resource to generate more wealth and value here at home.

Mr. Speaker, beyond our energy sector, Budget 2018 helps businesses hire and grow and helps students train for the jobs of tomorrow. The Alberta investor tax credit and the capital investment tax credit will be extended to help even more businesses grow and attract investment. The new interactive digital media tax credit will make Alberta a more competitive place for our growing and exciting interactive digital media industry.

To make sure Albertans can get the skills they need for good careers in our growing technology sector, we are creating 3,000 new postsecondary technology spaces and a new scholarship program to support technology and other emerging sectors. Budget 2018 provides \$6 million to begin investing in 3,000 new technology-related postsecondary program seats, which will grow to \$43 million per year by 2022-2023.

Mr. Speaker, these training and diversification measures will take place in the context of an economy that has already benefited from major capital investments during the height of the downturn. Hundreds of new schools are either built or being built. A new cancer centre is being built in Calgary, and a new hospital is being planned in south Edmonton. The construction of the green line in Calgary is the single largest public infrastructure project in that city's history, and it will create tens of thousands of jobs. Across Alberta highways are being made better and safer, bridges are being built and strengthened, and new infrastructure is making it easier for people to get around in our growing province, all the while creating thousands of good jobs.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans have been very clear: bring the budget back to balance while protecting the things that matter to ordinary people. Albertans deserve a balanced plan for a secure future, one that carefully and responsibly controls costs while protecting vital public services. From day one we resisted the call to respond to the oil price collapse by making deep cuts to hospitals and schools. Instead, we made sure Albertans would have the services they need when they need them.

Budget 2018 takes that same approach. I'm proud that we have built hundreds of new schools for our kids and for future generations. These investments create good construction jobs in the short term and modern spaces for our kids to grow and learn in the long term. Mr. Speaker, in Budget 2018 nearly \$400 million will be allocated to build more badly needed new schools for our children. This budget includes 20 new schools, including support for new schools that will primarily serve indigenous students. These new schools are backstopped by our commitment to continue funding enrolment growth, which will add 600 new teachers and 300 new support workers to Alberta's classrooms.

This year we will also expand our school nutrition program. When the school nutrition program began, it helped make sure 5,000 young Albertans got a healthy meal while at school. This year that program expands to 30,000 students – 30,000 students – helping more kids across our province focus on their studies and not their hunger.

3:40

Mr. Speaker, people come to our colleges and universities in search of better lives. A well-funded postsecondary system is vital to making sure our province can help people get skills and keep people working here in Alberta. For Albertans who decide to get trades training or pursue a degree at a growing number of degree-granting institutions in Alberta, we are in their corner. In addition to thousands of new spaces in technology as well as dedicated new scholarships, funding for postsecondary education will remain stable and predictable with an increase of 2 per cent over the last year and an additional \$17 million to support the tuition freeze.

More indigenous people will be able to get the skills they need to build the futures they want with more support for indigenous training providers and targeted financial supports for learners. With Grande Prairie Regional College and Red Deer College beginning the work to become degree-granting institutions, people in northwest and central Alberta will be able to get a degree closer to their homes and families.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans depend on getting quality health care when they need it. Spending on health care will increase this year by 3 per cent. In addition to making sure our front-line health professionals have the stable, predictable funding they need to care for Albertans, these funds will also increase support to combat the opioid crisis, increase support to combat substance use, and increase support for mental health.

Mr. Speaker, as we protect and support our schools and hospitals, we will do more to help keep children and families safe. Support for child protection will increase. With a \$60 million increase over last year's budget, more than \$800 million has been allocated this year toward strengthening the child intervention system. These funds support the work of the all-party committee and will deliver both prevention and intervention programs to help keep young Albertans safe.

Mr. Speaker, to better help working families emerge from the downturn, we will continue to make their lives more affordable. This year more new moms will have an easier time joining the workforce, and more young families will benefit from affordable child care. We are expanding upon and learning from our \$25-per-day child care pilot program. This year we will create an additional 4,500 affordable child care spaces across Alberta.

More needs to be done to bring affordable child care within reach of more families, and we are committed to continuing this important work. At the same time the Alberta child benefit will continue to make life more affordable by providing direct financial assistance to lower income families, and the Alberta family employment tax

credit will continue to help low- and middle-income families make ends meet.

From the day this government took office, through recession, and now into recovery, we have strengthened and improved supports that make life better and more affordable for families. In making sure this economic recovery is built to last and built for ordinary people, we must make sure that more families emerge from the downturn stronger and more secure. This budget helps families do exactly that.

Mr. Speaker, Budget 2018 also makes communities and families across this province safer. When it comes to crime, especially in rural areas, we have heard the concerns of Albertans loud and clear. That's why we are taking action to ensure that they feel safe in their communities. Together with the RCMP we launched a new rural crime strategy. This strategy put more boots on the ground in rural areas by expanding the RCMP's rural crime reduction units, which focus on putting thieves behind bars. We are adding new supports to keep more police in their communities rather than sitting behind their desks.

We are hiring more Crown prosecutors focused on rural crime, hiring additional intelligence co-ordinators to track offenders, utilizing GPS technology to catch thieves in the act, and supporting citizen-led crime watch and patrol groups. That work will be bolstered by the new police officers funded by this budget. All Albertans should feel secure at home, from our biggest cities to our smallest towns, and we will keep supporting our police.

Women in Alberta should also feel secure. Sadly, that is not always the case. Too many women do not have the supports and services they need to come forward and find help after an assault. For that reason, we are significantly increasing support to help survivors of assault. More than \$11 million will be provided to the Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services to expand counselling and crisis support.

Mr. Speaker, affordable housing is a key building block to security and stability for people and families. More needs to be done to improve existing facilities, build new ones, and help seniors and families with this most basic of needs, a warm, safe place to call home. We will continue to make sure that our affordable housing units contribute to healthy lives and healthy communities.

This budget also increases funding for seniors' housing so more of our neighbours can live with dignity and safety, and it commits to building new affordable housing across Alberta. In Calgary, Edmonton, Fort Saskatchewan, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Red Deer, Slave Lake, and Whitecourt we will build roughly 400 new units. These will be good new homes for seniors, youth in need of security, people with disabilities, and people prone to periods of homelessness. As our population ages and grows, the need for affordable housing grows, too, and this budget continues our commitment.

Mr. Speaker, during the recession we stood by our municipalities to make sure they could continue to deliver high-quality services for their residents. As we dial back our capital spending to reduce our debt burden and reduce our borrowing costs, the government will make changes to the municipal sustainability initiative, and small reductions will be made to other municipal grants. Alberta's transfers to municipalities will remain above the national average. As we bring our budget into balance and as the expiry of MSI

approaches in the fiscal year 2021-22, funding arrangements with municipalities will be reviewed.

Through the city charter discussions we have been working with Alberta's two largest cities on a long-term revenue-sharing formula that will support their continued growth and recognizes the unique opportunities and challenges they face. In addition, the government recognizes the invaluable contributions that cities, towns, and counties of all sizes have on the quality of life of Albertans and on economic diversification opportunities they create. New funding arrangement discussions will begin with municipalities large and small. Pending those agreements, the government will aim to make legislative changes this year to have a new system operational by the time MSI is set to expire.

Building on the \$3 billion we have already committed in LRT funding, we will also work with Edmonton and Calgary to establish a long-term provincial transit investment plan that will support growth in the cities and the surrounding communities.

3:50

Mr. Speaker, Alberta's best days are ahead of us, not behind us. As we come out of this recession and keep our province on a responsible path to a balanced budget, we do so surrounded by new signs of hope and determination. Albertans are united behind our efforts to get a new Canadian pipeline built to the Canadian coast. Our kids are getting high-quality education in great public schools. Our loved ones are getting world-class health care in modern hospitals. Our streets are safer, with more police and new supports to fight crime. More education and training will mean more Albertans have the skills they need to get good jobs. More affordable housing is helping more people put roofs over their heads and new dreams within their reach. More kids are getting nutritious meals at school. More jobs are being created, and more Albertans are working than ever before.

When the recession hit, we made the choice to put the priorities of ordinary people first. We are going to keep putting ordinary people first. To those Albertans who have yet to experience the recovery, who are counting on us to do more, we will stand up for them, together, always. We are going to keep fighting to make sure that this economic recovery is built for working people and built to last.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. That was a lot to unpack. In the coming weeks I fully anticipate a lot of debate in this Assembly, but for the time being, I would suggest that we adjourn debate, and therefore I will move such.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

The Speaker: The Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the hon. Treasurer for his great speech and move that we adjourn the House until 10 a.m. on April 3.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 3:53 p.m. to Tuesday, April 3, at 10 a.m.]

Bill Status Report for the 29th Legislature - 4th Session (2018)

Activity to Thursday, March 22, 2018

The Bill sponsor's name is in brackets following the Bill title. If it is a money Bill, (\$) will appear between the title and the sponsor's name. Numbers following each Reading refer to Hansard pages where the text of debates is found; dates for each Reading are in brackets following the page numbers. Bills numbered 1 to 200 are Government Bills. Bills numbered 201 or higher are Private Members' Public Bills. Bills numbered with a "Pr" prefix are Private Bills.

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

The date a Bill comes into force is indicated in square brackets after the date of Royal Assent. If a Bill comes into force "on proclamation," "with exceptions," or "on various dates," please contact Legislative Counsel, Alberta Justice, for details at 780.427.2217. The chapter number assigned to the Bill is entered immediately following the date the Bill comes into force. SA indicates Statutes of Alberta; this is followed by the year in which it is included in the statutes, and its chapter number. Please note, Private Bills are not assigned chapter number until the conclusion of the Fall Sittings.

Bill 1 — Energy Diversification Act (McCuaig-Boyd)

First Reading — 6 (*Mar. 8, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 50-51 (*Mar. 13, 2018 morn.*), 184-87 (*Mar. 15, 2018 aft.*), 233-43 (*Mar. 20, 2018 morn.*), 301-08 (*Mar. 21, 2018 aft., adjourned*)

Bill 2 — Growth and Diversification Act (\$) (Bilous)

First Reading — 118 (*Mar. 14, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 243-46 (*Mar. 20, 2018 morn.*), 294-96 (*Mar. 21, 2018 aft.*), 314-25 (*Mar. 22, 2018 morn., adjourned on amendment*)

Bill 3 — Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2018 (\$) (Ceci)

First Reading — 184 (*Mar. 15, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 221-26 (*Mar. 19, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 261-68 (*Mar. 20, 2018 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 296-98 (*Mar. 21, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 4 — Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2018 (\$) (Ceci)

First Reading — 165 (*Mar. 15, 2018 morn., passed*)

Second Reading — 226-32 (*Mar. 19, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 268-75 (*Mar. 20, 2018 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 298-301 (*Mar. 21, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 5 — An Act to Strengthen Financial Security for Persons with Disabilities (Sabir)

First Reading — 200-201 (*Mar. 19, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 201 — Employment Standards (Firefighter Leave) Amendment Act, 2018 (W. Anderson)

First Reading — 118 (*Mar. 14, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 201-14 (*Mar. 19, 2018 aft., referred to Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future*)

Bill 202 — Alberta Taxpayer Protection (Carbon Tax Referendum) Amendment Act, 2018 (Kenney)

First Reading — 179 (*Mar. 15, 2018 aft., passed*)

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